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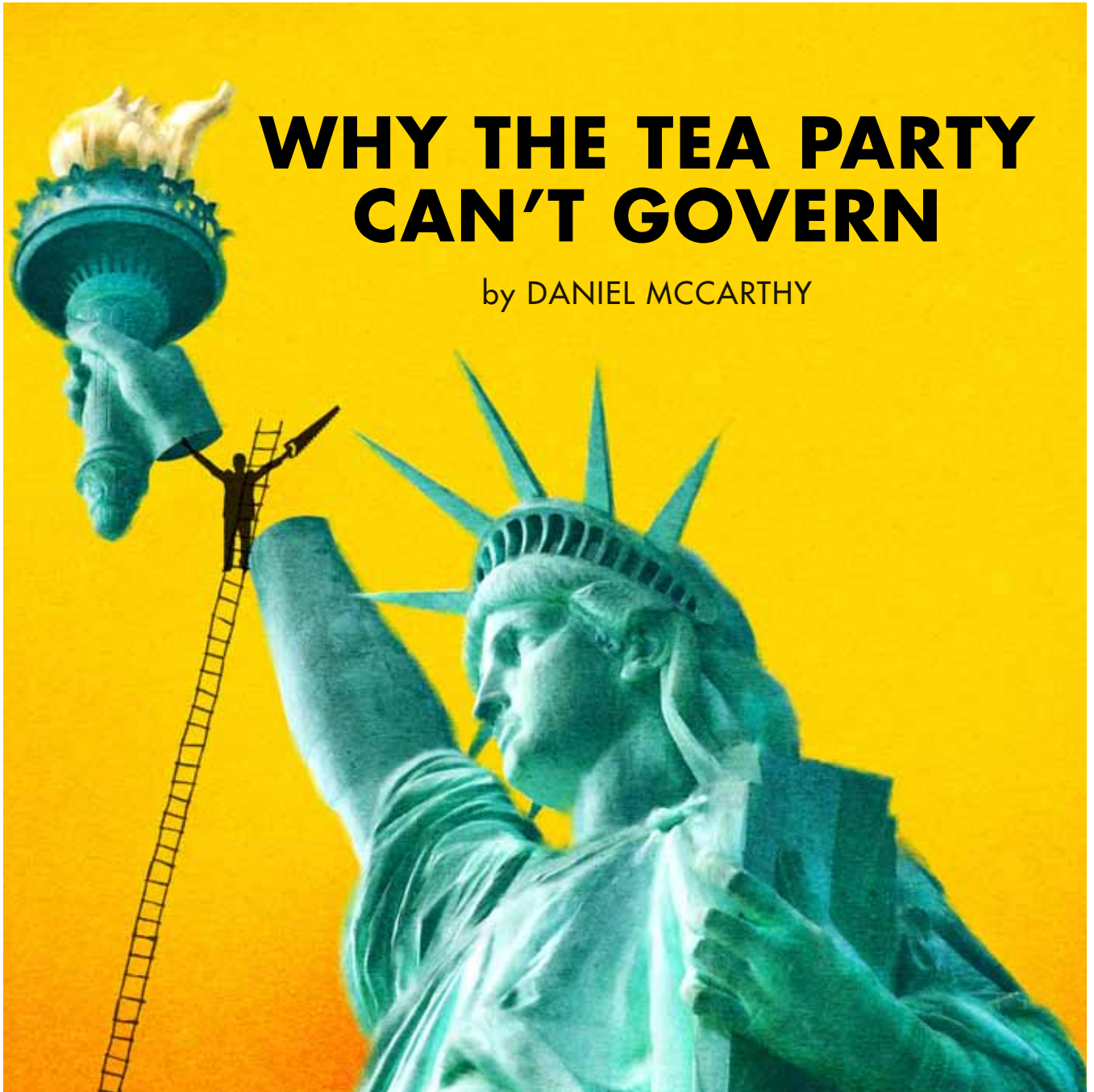
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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2013

The American Conservative

IDEAS OVER IDEOLOGY • PRINCIPLES OVER PARTY



WHY THE TEA PARTY CAN'T GOVERN

by DANIEL MCCARTHY

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TAXING CARBON ISN'T CONSERVATIVE

Andrew Moylan's "conservative carbon tax" ("How to Tax Carbon," Sept.-Oct.) is political fantasy. If conservative leaders advocate a carbon tax, they will divide the movement, demoralize their base, and promote the left's war on energy.

Moylan faults conservatives for not having a plan to cut income taxes and repeal EPA's greenhouse gas regulations. They do have a plan. It's to win big in 2014 and 2016.

Washington's big spenders have no interest in "tax reform" that does not also "enhance revenues," and the environmental establishment has no intention of bartering away the litigation-driven, EPA-run regulatory system.

Yes, British Columbia has a revenue-neutral carbon tax, which so far has done no noticeable economic harm. But the BC carbon tax is not a model for the U.S. Hydropower provides 90 percent of BC's electric generation but only 7 percent in the United States. Small service-oriented businesses are the backbone of the BC economy, whereas energy-intensive manufacturing and energy production are major U.S. industries.

The BC carbon tax actually provides a cautionary tale, as only five years after enactment there have been calls to hike the tax to fund progressive projects. It was a factor in the BC premier elections this year, and the winner, Christy Clark, campaigned on freezing the tax.

Enactment of any carbon tax, however small, affirms the warming movement's alarm narrative, but no carbon tax, however large, ever will be enough to satisfy the movement's demands.

Conservatives cannot advocate a carbon tax without giving credibility to those who scare the public to justify government control of energy markets.

A conservative movement that is pro-energy and anti-tax challenges a

progressive establishment that is pro-tax and anti-energy. For conservatives to follow Moylan's advice would be to squander their energy advantage.

MARLO LEWIS

*Senior fellow, CEI
via email*

Andrew Moylan replies: My friend Marlo Lewis dismisses my case for a conservative plan to tax carbon while eliminating taxes on entrepreneurship as "political fantasy." Though well-meaning, Lewis is mistaken. He contends that revenue-neutrality is impossible and that liberals will never relinquish their grip on onerous climate regulation. However, liberals like Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) have proposed a revenue-neutral "cap-and-dividend" plan, and even climate crusader Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) included partial preemption of EPA's regulation in his infamous 2009 "cap-and-trade" bill.

Absent from Lewis's critique is any significant attempt to dispute the positive results from British Columbia's tax, which he concedes "has done no noticeable economic harm." There's a good reason for that: the tax didn't increase the burden of government one Canadian dime. It simply shifted it away from income and toward pollution. Lewis explains away this success by pointing to BC's service-heavy economy and its reliance on hydropower for electricity. But America's economy is actually more service-oriented than BC's and our greater reliance on fossil fuels actually provides a broader base for a potential tax, thus allowing for much more dramatic cuts to anti-growth taxes.

The real political fantasy is hoping that Republicans win the presidency, maintain the House, and secure the 60 votes in the Senate necessary to dismantle EPA's regulatory scheme despite facing approval ratings of 28 percent.

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The American Conservative

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The Turning Tide of 2013

As 2013 draws to a close, it's worth taking stock of how far conservatives—and the country—have come over this past year.

In March, Sen. Rand Paul took to the Senate floor to filibuster John Brennan's nomination to head the CIA, calling attention to Obama's drone warfare at a time when attitudes toward it wavered between approving and indifferent. Even as the president courted the Kentucky senator's fellow Republicans at dinner, Paul spoke about the Constitution and the necessity of having explicit, public checks on the government's war powers here at home. He left the Senate floor 13 hours later in a country won over to his view.

The idea of breaking up the biggest Wall Street banks, meanwhile, found some traction inside the Beltway this spring. Louisiana Republican Sen. David Vitter joined with Ohio Democrat Sen. Sherrod Brown to introduce a bill aimed at curtailing big banks' implicit government subsidies and preventing future bailouts.

This summer, Americans seemed to be once more hurtling into a Mideast war as Obama called for U.S. airstrikes against Syria in retaliation for chemical-weapons atrocities in that country's civil war. But this time a wary public curbed Washington's rush to war. Obama felt compelled to seek permission from Congress even for a strike Secretary of State Kerry described as "unbelievably small." This surprising deference to the constitution—which does, after all, place the power to declare war in Congress's hands, not the president's—allowed time for a Russian-proposed diplomatic solution to prevail, saving the United States from becoming entangled in another war in a Muslim country.

When NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed the overreaches of the surveillance state, recent history suggested Congress would simply excuse any extralegal collection of intelligence conducted under the auspices of national security. But Michigan congressmen Justin Amash, a

Republican, and John Conyers, a Democrat, forged a bipartisan coalition to scale back the NSA's activities. That coalition fell short in its first attempt but continues to grow. Even the (somewhat) remorseful author of the Patriot Act, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), is helping lead the fight against the national security state's abuses. Real reform seems to be in the offing.

And a year after Mitt Romney's "47 percent" gaffe helped cost Republicans the 2012 election, there were signs this fall that the GOP is eager to court working families again. Romney wrote off almost half the country when he said, "there are 47 percent who are with [Obama], who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it."

What he overlooked was that many Americans pay no income tax—but certainly do pay other taxes—because of Republican successes in reducing the burdens on families and the poor. Utah Sen. Mike Lee has now unveiled a family-friendly tax reform plan that suggests at least some Republicans have learned from Romney's mistakes.

Taken together, these episodes point to a nation whose citizens are no longer so fearful for their safety that they are willing to overlook the infringement of their civil liberties. And Congress, after many years of ceding its authority to the president and his agencies, is starting to claw back its abandoned responsibilities—and to rein in the executive's war powers. Washington has also had to recognize popular concern about the undue influence and rent-seeking of the wealthy and well-connected.

Plenty of roadblocks remain ahead for a genuine politics of realism and reform. But for the first time in perhaps a decade, Americans are taking a sober look at national security and economics and concluding that they want their republic back. ■

Front Lines

Tea Party Communitarian

Can Sen. Mike Lee get libertarian populists to put family first?

by JONATHAN COPPAGE

Mike Lee is an unlikely candidate for conservatism's most promising policy mind. A Tea Party firebrand since he swept into office in 2010, Lee was the driving force behind efforts to defund Obamacare that led to a 16-day government shutdown this October. Yet the past year has also seen him reveal another side to his populist conservatism: a communitarian agenda for policy reform.

At the American Enterprise Institute in September, Lee set out a tax-reform proposal centered around a per child tax credit that would apply to income and payroll taxes alike. At the unveiling, Lee said: "Now, if you are like me—a conservative with a libertarian streak—you might at first raise an eyebrow at all this. My plan, you might say, may share some features of traditional conservative tax reform but it's no flat tax. It's no consumption tax," two policies long favored by conservatives for their economic efficiency or ostensible fairness.

"That's right," he continued. "It's better."

With the slightest hint of braggadocio that only a humble Utahn can muster, Lee broke with the economic individualism of the conservative establishment to prioritize instead the family, "the first and foremost institution of civil society." There was a sound economic basis for this, to be sure. Lee drew attention to

what he called the "Parent Tax Penalty" whereby parents doubly contribute to entitlement programs through their taxes and the expenses they incur raising future taxpayers. And he insisted, "Here, I am not speaking about the family as a moral or cultural institution, strictly as a social and economic one." But that in itself is significant: the family, not just the individual, is what economics must be about.

"Conservatives sometimes get criticized for putting too much emphasis on the family in policy debates," he acknowledged. But "the real problem may be that we don't think about the family enough. For family is not just one of the major institutions through which people pursue happiness. Is the one upon which all the others depend."

At the Heritage Foundation in April, Lee delivered a communitarian manifesto of sorts entitled "What Conservatives Are For." He emphasized "that the true and proper end of political subsidiarity is social solidarity" and explained that his "vision of American freedom is of two separate but mutually reinforcing institutions: a free enterprise economy and a voluntary civil society."

Lee's proposals focus on relieving burdens on the institutions that strengthen society in their everyday practice. This outlook goes straight back to his Utah origins. "We've always been

a state that has had strong institutions of civil society, very strong neighborhoods, very connected neighborhoods where people know each other," the senator tells me. "Sometimes people are quick to assume that that just refers to people who are members of my church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but it's not just that. There's a very strong neighborhood dynamic in Utah that perhaps traces back to the way we were settled," he explains.

"People had traveled great distances, sometimes thousands of miles to get there to what was initially a fairly desolate desert. The Salt Lake Valley was said to only have one or two trees when the first Mormon Pioneers arrived in 1847, and it required people to work together a lot to build these communities, to make the desert blossom like a rose. And that has become part of our culture, and it has thrived."

Communitarian concern for the social fabric and libertarian resistance to big-government interventions fit together naturally for the Utah senator. "Lee has been eager to show that social conservatism and concern for the family doesn't speak a different language than his kind of constitutionalism and limited government-ism," says Yuval Levin, editor of the policy quarterly *National Affairs*. Levin is encouraged by the direction he sees leaders like Lee taking.

"I think there's been a tendency for a decade or more in conservatism to move away from communitarian talk to a much more individualist talk, and it's very much in need of counterforce," he says. "Conservatism needs to be a

counterweight to radical individualism, not an enabler of it, and to me to see that being expressed again is really crucial.”

At AEI, Lee opened his proposal by speaking of “a new and unnatural stagnancy” that has trapped the poor and worn down the middle class. There are the beginnings here of a different way of talking about the economy, in contrast to the GOP’s old prosperity gospel for the upwardly mobile. Republicans a year ago proved all too ready to fan the flames of upper-class resentment with talk of the 47 percent of Americans who pay no federal income tax. Lee rebukes that mentality, pointing out at AEI that “people who pay no income tax do pay federal taxes—payroll taxes, gas taxes, and various others,” and squarely declaring, “Working families are not free riders.”

Lee rails upward instead, against the cronyism that big government and big business together have cultivated at the taxpayer’s expense. “At the top of our society, we find a political and economic elite that—having reached the highest rungs—has pulled up the ladder behind itself, denying others the chance even to climb,” he warned at AEI. At Heritage, he went so far as to say, “The first step in a true conservative reform agenda must be to end this kind of preferential policymaking. Beyond simply being the right thing to do, it is a prerequisite for earning the moral authority and political credibility to do anything else.” How, he asked, could working families take seriously a conservatism that props up and subsidizes big banks and corporate agricultural interests?

For a GOP long seen as the party of entrenched financial interests, populist credibility must be won back, and a deregulation agenda alone won’t cut it. This is where Lee’s rugged communitarianism is especially vital to his cause. In his Heritage speech, he described the conservative vision as “not an Ayn Rand novel. It’s a Norman Rockwell painting, or a Frank Capra movie: a society

of ‘plain, ordinary kindness, and a little looking out for the other fellow, too.’”

He continued,

In the last few years, we conservatives seem to have abandoned words like ‘together,’ ‘compassion,’ and ‘community’ as if their only possible meanings were as a secret code for statism. This is a mistake. Collective action doesn’t only—or even usually—mean government action. Conservatives cannot surrender the idea of community to the left, when it is the vitality of our communities upon which our entire philosophy depends.

Lee’s understanding of civil society redirects what often seems like a pure populist backlash—a mere reaction—to finding constructive ways in which limited-government constitutionalists can act on James Madison’s notion that

government is for “the happiness of the people” and Abraham Lincoln’s idea that it ought “to lift artificial weights from all shoulders, to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all.”

But can Lee sell his communitarian message to his fellow constitutionalists? Levin is hopeful: “He has a shot because to a certain extent he’s filling a vacuum, and that means he really has an opportunity to shape the arena the way he wants to.”

As Lee himself said at AEI: “For a political party too often seen as out of touch, aligned with the rich, indifferent to the less fortunate, and uninterested in solving the problems of working families, Republicans could not ask for a more worthy cause around which to build a new conservative reform agenda.” ■

Jonathan Coppage is associate editor of The American Conservative.

Where Wendell Berry Meets Martha Stewart

Kinfolk brings a crunchy ethos to entertaining.

by GRACY OLMSTEAD

“That’s so *Kinfolk*.” Nathan Williams has heard friends and acquaintances say this with increasing regularity over the past few years. Some say it when they see a simple, rustic table setting. Others say it when picking apples, canning summer vegetables, or making their own brews.

The phrase refers to Williams’s magazine, *Kinfolk*, an up-and-coming publication “for young food enthusiasts and adventure-seekers.” While other magazines focus on place settings and recipes, *Kinfolk* melds the aesthetic artistry of a photography magazine with the philosophical underpinnings of Wendell Berry. It’s a publication that refocuses entertaining on its original core: human fellowship.

Headquartered in Portland, Oregon, *Kinfolk* launched in 2011 and

has quickly earned an international following. The magazine’s rather bohemian team of designers, writers, and photographers all aim to cultivate a more thoughtful approach to small gatherings. Williams, the editor in chief, is a graduate of Brigham Young University in Hawaii, where he studied economics and conflict resolution—an odd combination in light of his current career, perhaps. But it was during college that the seeds of *Kinfolk* were sown.

Williams’s wife and two best friends loved to plan small gatherings. They cooked meals and invited friends into their homes regularly. But no blog, website, or publication “resonated” with them, according to Williams. *Martha Stewart Living*’s focus on name cards, napkins, and centerpieces seemed out of place in their homes. And publications geared toward their own age

Front Lines

group seemed to promote either an “enormous amount of alcohol, a miniscule amount of clothing, or a combination of the two.” Barhopping and clubbing seemed “very unintentional” forms of entertainment to Williams. He decided to create something else.

Williams and his collaborators wanted to provide an alternate blueprint for entertaining, without all the “frilly napkins,” to make hospitality more accessible to a younger generation. They also hoped *Kinfolk* could delve deeper into the meaning of the activity: “We were keen on focusing on the social element of entertainment: the fundamentals behind it, the people we care about,” he says.

In one of his college courses on conflict resolution, Williams encountered

“To grow bored of our tables and foods, therefore, would not only be sad and unhealthy, it would be, in every sense of the word, irreverent.”

Wendell Berry’s work. The Kentucky poet and novelist’s ideas of community rootedness, agrarian support, and simple living appealed to Williams, and he has incorporated many of them into *Kinfolk*, with principles of small-scale entertaining centered on simplicity, artistry, and spending time outdoors.

Kinfolk launched as a quarterly, 144-page, ad-free print magazine. Though the design team had no prior experience in publishing, they sold out their first edition in a couple weeks.

The magazine’s main editorial filters, according to Williams, are centered around this question: “Does it help strengthen neighborhoods, family, or friends?” This community-centric mission sets the tone for every issue. Indeed, *Kinfolk* has a recurring feature on “How to Be Neighborly.” Every issue, whether addressing urban or country readers, encourages a localist investment in the community. “We put reminders into the magazine of the value

of heritage,” Williams says.

Although the magazine does not fixate on getting “unplugged” from technology, this strand of thought weaves its way through much of its content. Williams explains that while they do not oppose online connectivity—and indeed, have flourished through the support of food and culture bloggers—they also encourage readers to escape from glowing screens through time in quiet, in company, and in nature. While one might picture the *Kinfolk* staff living merrily in the woods, Thoreau-style, some work in urban environments. But due to the inspiration its creators draw from writers like Thoreau and Berry, *Kinfolk* fosters an focus on the land: “We bring readers out into the fields,” Williams says.

Activities like campfire cooking and berry-picking emphasize a shared experience, rather than

a polished finished product. “The projects complement one another in offering ideas for things to cook, make, and do,” Williams explains, “while promoting the deeper purpose of helping to build communities around ourselves.”

Early last year the magazine began curating and hosting a series of international dinner workshops. This year, they’ve hosted between 12 and 30 per month, each with a theme like “Campfire Cooking” or “Honey Harvest.” After participating in activities like building hammocks or canning pickles, participants make a meal together.

But *Kinfolk* is more than a series of entertaining how-to’s and recipes. One of the most intriguing parts of the magazine is aesthetic: every photo and article highlights the beauty of tactile and visual experience. A floured skillet, a swinging hammock, a vase of flowers: in the *Kinfolk* lens, seemingly commonplace items become striking. This perhaps is a deeper reason behind the

magazine’s success: it re-enchants the everyday.

The articles can get rather philosophical: take, for instance, one on the “sacredness of food” by Nikaela Marie Peters. She opens by mentioning that “the world’s largest religion began with a meal,” sharing thoughts on communion and the beauty of eucharist from a Christian baker named Ryan, who “jumps, in the same breath, from Thomas Aquinas to a recipe for bread to the Book of Exodus.” Her story’s conclusion mimics the earthy language of Berry’s poetry:

The approach we take to feeding one another in our individual homes, the manner in which we gather around the table, the unspoken dividing and sharing of responsibilities, the inarticulate daily habits, are all bound by ritual and rich with ceremony. Like religious practices, these details reveal hidden graces and express our repeating and consistent gratitude. They can reflect the general peace of a household, or be the cause of divide and discord. These “ways of doing things” are not without controversy because they are specific and savory. Just like religious sacraments, their power to include, to ground and form our identities, to draw an imaginary line around our households, is as profound as their power to exclude. In our house, we are unified by the way we give and receive acts of comfort, the timings of our comings and goings, the type of milk we buy, the type of cereal. At their most basic, these housekeeping details are a simple system of kindnesses holding together the fabric of our families. At their most complicated, they are an intricate web of histories and beliefs, as paradoxical and tangled and esoteric as any religion. To grow bored of our tables and foods, therefore, would not only be sad and unhealthy, it

would be, in every sense of the word, irreverent.

They haven't run many stories in this serious philosophical vein, says Williams, yet it encapsulates much of *Kinfolk's* purpose: "It's about being more intentional how we approach food and community. It's about gratitude and reverence for the community we have. Taking an overly casual approach shows an error, that we don't appreciate them as much as we should."

Williams has just written a book in conjunction with the magazine's work: *The Kinfolk Table*, a combination narrative and cookbook, with 85 recipes and various stories from people encountered throughout Williams's travels. Each chapter focuses on a place: Brooklyn, Copenhagen, Bath, Portland, and more. And within each, Williams focuses on a handful of individuals who "personify the fact that there's something to be said for slowing down,

sitting back, and breathing deeply."

In keeping with the magazine's sensibility, few of the recipes listed are complex. But they aren't meant to be—the peoples and traditions behind them make them unique and appealing. "The humble soup or homely bread becomes a feast," Williams writes.

Kinfolk may seem overly romantic. Indeed, its simplicity and ruggedness can feel slightly staged; the bohemianism and hipster touches may be repellent to some. But underneath the affectation, there is a true love for simple beauty: for daily pleasures that often go unnoticed. In our busy, technologically driven age, simple gatherings like those *Kinfolk* represents have fallen by the wayside, and this whimsical publication does its part to bring old-fashioned ideas of community, neighborliness, and everyday artistry back into vogue. ■

Gracy Olmstead is associate editor of The American Conservative.

Conservatives continue to struggle in the polls and perform poorly in other contests ahead of the next general election, that could change. And if Cameron loses the election, his departure as party leader as well as prime minister is assured.

As home secretary in Cameron's cabinet, May runs the department that handles policing, crime, immigration, and counter-terrorism. In recent times, the office has been seen as something of a poisoned chalice. But May has done well with it. "When Labour was in office, they'd have a new Home Secretary every two years. She's held the post three-and-a-half years, and there have been no major scandals. That is a great credit to her," says Matthew Elliott, who founded the Taxpayers' Alliance and who is sometimes called "the Grover Norquist of the UK."

Part of May's success is circumstantial. When the economy is doing well, the British media closely scrutinizes the types of policies the home secretary handles. Since lately all the attention has focused on the economic crisis, May has had an easier time of it.

"She sees it as a standing post where she can show herself as a competent manager—a figure like Angela Merkel. Sure, she's gray and lacks humor, but she is competent," says Elliott.

The German Chancellor, who led her party to a decisive re-election victory in September, is widely admired in Great Britain. Like May, Merkel rose slowly but steadily. And the two women come from similar family backgrounds. May's father was a Church of England priest; Merkel's father was a pastor and theologian in Germany. Both women are childless, leaving them free to work long hours.

In interviews, May has indicated that she decided on a career in politics at a young age. She was a member of Oxford University's Conservative Association during her undergraduate years. She met her husband, Philip, at a Tory student party. He works as a banker in London—and networks tire-

Conservatives' Leading Woman

Meet Theresa May, Britain's answer to Angela Merkel.

by EMMA ELLIOTT FREIRE

Twenty-three years ago Margaret Thatcher resigned as prime minister of Great Britain. Since then, no woman has been a serious contender to lead the Conservative Party. That may be about to change. Britain's next general election is scheduled for May 2015, and polls indicate Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron is likely to lose. Speculation about who would succeed him as party leader centers on Boris Johnson, the flamboyant mayor of London. But another prospect should not be overlooked: Theresa May, named by BBC Radio as the second most powerful woman in the country—after only Queen Elizabeth II.

Right now, May is one of several "Not Boris" possibilities, but at least

one person rates her chances highly. During prime minister's question time earlier this year, Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour Party, said to Cameron, "I'm looking forward to facing her when you're in the opposition." Some MPs laughed, but May only gave her signature steely gaze.

Cameron's problems are deeply rooted. He has never been a perfect fit for the Conservative Party's traditional base, which still blames him for not winning the 2010 election outright, necessitating a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. Cameron's push to legalize gay marriage further infuriated much of the grassroots.

For now Cameron looks unlikely to meet Mrs. Thatcher's fate, toppled by a revolt from within the party. But if the

lessly on behalf of his wife's career.

May's rise through the ranks has been anything but fast. She was elected to local government in 1986 and to Parliament in 1997. Along the way, she made it her business to get other women elected. She helped develop the "A-list" system of candidate selection that dramatically increased the number of Conservative women and minor-

Theresa May's career, much like Angela Merkel's, has taught her that slow and steady wins the race.

ity MPs. She also co-founded Women-2Win, a group that supports Conservative women for office. A byproduct of these efforts is that a lot of MPs owe her favors, which could come in handy because, under Tory rules, it's the MPs who choose their new leader.

The *Guardian's* Gaby Hinsliffe recently summed up the 57-year-old home secretary's career:

Once dismissed as an over-promoted token woman, she has held her own in one of the toughest jobs in cabinet, combining classic conservative values of frugality, propriety and stoicism with thoroughly modern instincts.

Feminist causes she was once mocked for championing are now mainstream Tory thinking, and her legacy includes two things which arguably shaped the modern party ... the A-list scheme for candidate selection, which gave birth to several rising stars, and the infamous "nasty party" speech, which made Tories take a long, hard look in the mirror.

That moment of reflection came in 2002, when May served as chairman of the Conservative Party. At the annual party conference that year, she gave the now infamous address in which she

said, "Twice we went to the country unchanged, unrepentant, just plain unattractive. And twice we got slaughtered. You know what some people call us? The nasty party." The phrase has since entered the British political lexicon.

At the time her speech created an uproar. Will those words come back to haunt her if she seeks the leadership? "It will be brought up by supporters of her opponent in a hypothetical leadership race. But most people will recognize that it was a long time ago," says Elliott. "People realize that's a mentality that all the party's leadership shared. It should be considered as part of a wider analysis of where the Conservative Party was at that time."

And where is the Conservative Party today? Cameron is dogged in the polls by—among other things—the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), which is aggressively courting Tory traditionalists tired of Cameron's progressivism. UKIP has never done well in a British general election, but the party seems set to win perhaps 25 percent of the vote in the EU election scheduled for May 2014. The bounce from that could well see them winning 5-7 percent of the national vote in 2015—probably enough to deny Cameron a parliamentary majority.

That threat, atop of all the other discontents, has Conservatives already contemplating life after Cameron. Boris Johnson is the most popular politician in Great Britain, and many Tories dream of turning to him for rescue. "Boris has election-winning form. He's just won two successive elections as London Mayor. London is a Labour city. He is also very popular with the Conservative grassroots who pack in whenever he speaks at a party conference," says Elliott.

But Johnson is currently ineligible to become prime minister because he is not an MP. British law permits him to hold two offices concurrently, but he has pledged to serve only as mayor

until his term ends in 2016, by which time the Conservatives may already have lost; if Johnson became leader then he would face five years of being an opposition leader—a difficult job with a lot of slog and very little glory.

Johnson is a star who loves the limelight. He might prefer to sit out the next Tory leadership race—sure to be a bitter affair, full of recrimination—only to swoop in and become leader closer to 2020, overthrowing whoever held the post after Cameron. There is some ignominious precedent for this: Iain Duncan Smith led the Conservative Party between 2001 and 2003 but was replaced before he ever got to contest an election.

If Johnson does not run at the next opportunity, the likely prime contenders are May, who has supported gay marriage and would represent the party's "modernization" wing, and another candidate who would stand for the party's traditional base. That could be Michael Gove, the education secretary, who is very popular with the grassroots. Reports of verbal spats between Gove and May during cabinet meetings not infrequently reach the media.

May is not without some appeal to the right, however, and has come under fire from the left for proposing more restrictive policies to curb illegal immigration. She told BBC Radio 4: "Most people will say it can't be fair for people who have no right to be here in the UK to continue to exist as everybody else does with bank accounts, with driving licenses and with access to rented accommodation. We are going to be changing that because we don't think that is fair."

Could she find the balance between outreach and the base that has eluded Cameron? Even if not, should the next Tory leadership contest come down to perseverance rather than charisma, she may have an edge. Theresa May's career, much like Angela Merkel's, has taught her that slow and steady wins the race. ■

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Don't Spy on Friends

The first reports in early May of 1960 were that a U.S. weather plane, flying out of Turkey, had gone missing.

A silent Moscow knew better. After letting the Americans crawl out on a limb, expatiating on their cover story, Russia sawed it off.

Actually, said Nikita Khrushchev, we shot down a U.S. spy plane 1,000 miles inside our country flying over a restricted zone. We have the pilot, we have the camera, we have the pictures. We have the hollow silver dollar containing the poisoned-tipped needle CIA pilot Francis Gary Powers declined to use.

Two weeks later, Khrushchev used the U-2 incident and Ike's refusal to apologize to dynamite the Paris summit and the gauzy Spirit of Camp David that had come out of his ten-day visit to the U.S. Eisenhower's reciprocal trip to Russia was now dead.

A year later, President Kennedy would be berated by Khrushchev in Vienna. The Berlin Wall would go up. And Khrushchev would begin secretly to install nuclear missiles in Cuba, 90 miles from Key West.

Had there been no U-2 incident, would the history of the Cold War have been different? Perhaps.

Yet while there were critics of launching Power's U-2 flight so close to the summit, Americans understood the need for espionage. Like us, the Soviets were installing ballistic missiles, every single one of which could incinerate an American city.

Post-9/11, too, Americans accepted the necessity for the National Security Agency to retrieve and sift through phone calls and emails to keep us secure

from terror attacks. And there remains a deposit of trust among Americans that the NSA, the CIA, and the Defense Intelligence Agency are not only working for us, they are defending us. How long Americans will continue to repose this trust, however, is starting to come into question.

Last week, we learned that a high official of the U.S. government turned 200 private phone numbers of 35 friendly foreign leaders, basically the Rolodex of the president, over to the NSA for tapping and taping.

Allied leaders, with whom America works toward common goals, have for years apparently had their private conversations listened to, transcribed, and passed around. Angela Merkel has apparently been the subject of phone taps since before she rose to the leadership of Germany. A victim of the East German Stasi, Ms. Merkel is not amused.

We are told not to be naïve; everyone does it. Spying, not only between enemies but among allies, is commonplace. But why are we doing this? Is it all really about coping with the terrorist threat? Or is it because we have the ability to do it, and the more information we have, even stolen surreptitiously from friends and allies, the better?

U.S. diplomats say that one of their assignments abroad is to know what the host government is thinking and planning politically, economically, strategically. That this is an aspect of diplomacy.

But relations among friendly nations are not unlike the NFL. While films are taken of rival teams' games and studied, scouts observe practices, and rumors are picked up of injuries, there are lines that most opposing NFL teams do not

cross. The lines of unethical conduct and criminality. To learn that an owner or coach of one NFL franchise had wire-tapped the home phones of coaches and players of a Super Bowl rival would, if revealed, be regarded as rotten business.

What kind of camaraderie, cooperation, or friendship can endure in an environment where constant snooping on one's closest friends is accepted practice?

In the Nixon White House, there were serious leaks that revealed our secret bombing of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and of our fallback position in the strategic arms talks. Wiretaps were planted on aides to Henry Kissinger and White House staffers who had no knowledge of what had been leaked. Relationships were altered, some poisoned for a lifetime.

Why should we not expect a similar reaction among foreign friends who discover their personal and political secrets have been daily scooped up and filed by their American friends, and found their way into the president's daily intelligence brief?

The Cold War was a clash of ideologies and empires for the future of the world. Men took drastic measures to preserve what they had. At the end of the Cold War, the old tactics and measures were not set aside, but improved upon, and now are no longer restricted for use against the likes of al-Qaeda but against allies.

At the Cold War's end, the late Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick talked hopefully of America becoming again "a normal country in a normal time." Seems as though the normal times are never coming back. ■

Why the Tea Party Can't Govern

A populist spin can't save purely negative principles.

by DANIEL MCCARTHY

Something is seriously wrong with conservatism. Since Ronald Reagan's last year in office, Republicans have only twice won a majority of votes cast for president—both times with a George Bush atop the ticket. And neither Bush was a conservative.

For 25 years, something has prevented conservatives from winning the White House and prevented the Republicans who do win from governing as conservatives. What could it be?

The Tea Party has an answer: RINOs—liberal Republicans in Name Only—have sabotaged the right, most recently in October when they collaborated with Democrats to raise the debt ceiling and end the government shutdown. Once RINOs are extinct, true Tea Party conservatives like Ted Cruz will prevail. They will close down the federal bureaucracy and stop Washington from borrowing a penny more until Obamacare is defunded and the welfare state brought to heel. If this is extremism, it's what Barry Goldwater called extremism in defense of liberty.

But the Tea Party is wrong: this is not extremism in defense of liberty, it's extremism in defense of failure—the failure of conservatism as it has been defined since the 1970s to become a philosophy of government.

The Tea Party's critics in the conservative establishment—*National Review's* Rich Lowry and Ramesh Ponnuru, for example—are also wrong. They

insist that if only conservatives support the “rightwardmost viable candidate,” with an emphasis on “viable,” they may elect another Reagan. This, of course, is what Republican voters did every time between 1988 and 2012, when they nominated two Bushes, Bob Dole, John McCain, and Mitt Romney.

What the *NR* editors won't say is that, for them, this is good enough: they had their differences with George W. Bush, but on the whole his economic, social, and especially foreign policies were praiseworthy. To those who disagree with that judgment—the Tea Party, libertarians, crunchy cons, millennials, and a majority of Americans—the conservative establishment has nothing to sell. The viable right had its turn in power, and the country decisively repudiated the results.

The virtue of the Tea Party is that it has shaken up a Republican Party that under Bush had become a failure on every level: in foreign policy, in responding to a changing culture, in preserving prosperity. Some of the new leaders and new ideas the Tea Party encourages are among the most promising developments on the right in a generation.

But the vices of the Tea Party are just as real, and Senator Cruz exemplifies them. His foreign policy is characterized by reflexive, if partisan, nationalism—before opposing Obama's plan to bomb Syria, Cruz had in fact called for “a clear, practical plan

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to go in. ... The United States should be firmly in the lead to make sure the job is done right." The Texas senator's domestic policies, meanwhile, are the same ones the right has championed since the 1970s. Indeed, Cruz represents a brand of conservatism that belongs to that era.

Before the days of platform shoes, mirror balls, and Jimmy Carter, a different kind of conservatism held sway. It was less populist, less confrontational, and far less successful. There was a reason William F. Buckley Jr., founding father of the '50s right, could only say of *National Review's* mission, "It stands athwart history, yelling Stop, at a time when no one is inclined to do so, or to have much patience with those who so urge it."

The 40 years from Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932 to Richard Nixon's re-election in 1972 were an epoch of center-left hegemony. That was true even when Republicans won the White House. President Eisenhower was a "modern Republican," not a conservative, and *National Review* refused to endorse him for re-election in 1956. President Nixon imposed wage and price controls on the country, expanded affirmative action, and inaugurated the Environmental Protection Agency.

Through most of the Western world, the gamut of practical politics ran from social democracy and socialism on the left to the mixed Keynesian economy on the right. Nixon himself said in 1971, "I am now a Keynesian in economics," a remark often conflated with Milton Friedman's 1965 pronouncement, "We are all Keynesians now." The one Republican leader who bucked the consensus, Barry Goldwater, was dealt a crushing defeat in November 1964.

The eventual Reagan revolution of 1980 was less a culmination of conservatives' toil during the 1950s and '60s than the result of an unexpected twist in the 1970s. All around the world, the postwar consensus on what modernity meant—steady, scientific progress toward political and economic centralization—shattered, as foreign-policy journalist Christian Caryl shows in his recent book *Strange Rebels*. Caryl points to 1979 as the bellwether year: that was when Margaret Thatcher became leader of Britain's Conservative Party; Deng Xiaoping rose to power in Beijing and moved the People's Republic

toward capitalism with Chinese characteristics; Iran's Islamic revolution toppled the Shah; and Communism's final, fatal struggle with nationalism and religion commenced with Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

American politics was likewise swept by the global revival of nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and free-market economics. The formation of the Moral Majority in 1979 announced the birth of the religious right as a national force. In 1978, Jude Wanniski published what became the bible of the supply-side revolution, *The Way the World Works*, while activist Howard Jarvis organized the successful referendum campaign for Proposition 13 in California, which constitutionally limited

Each time the populist wave returns, it falls a little farther from the shore. But what is receding is not conservatism, it's the 1970s version of the American right.

Sacramento's power to tax. Earlier in 1978, William F. Buckley Jr.—representing a now mellowed Cold War conservatism—debated Ronald Reagan over the treaties to return control of the Panama Canal to the Panamanians. Reagan, though older than Buckley, gave voice to the new nationalist mood on the right that saw no reason to deprive America of a strategic asset merely to honor another nation's sovereignty.

The new conservatism of the 1970s was strikingly populist: the religious right, the anti-tax movement, and neo-nationalism mobilized voters as the conservatism of the 1950s never could. This New Right, as it came to be called, not only propelled Reagan to victory in 1980 but that same November ended the Senate careers of liberal leaders Frank Church and George McGovern.

The Tea Party today can be forgiven for thinking that this rebuilt conservative movement—evangelical, anti-tax, and proudly American—offers a timeless formula for success. It would re-elect Reagan and elect George H.W. Bush by landslides, and though the coalition cracked in 1992, after Bush failed to keep the factions happy, in 1994 Republicans would take both houses of Congress and make

tremendous gains in state governments. That the GOP still holds the House today is a legacy of this tide—particularly of the redistricting that Republican-controlled states carried out after 2000 and 2010 censuses.

Yet the electoral returns have been diminishing. The 1984 and 1988 elections were landslides, but 1994 was an off-year victory bracketed by presidential defeats. In 2000 Republicans again lost the popular vote for president and were reduced to parity with Democrats in the Senate. A rally effect after 9/11 and high hopes for the Iraq War bolstered Republicans in 2002 and 2004. But as the war's popularity ebbed, the GOP lost everything in 2006 and 2008. A comeback in the midterm elections of 2010 failed to retake the Senate, and the right was disappointed again in the Senate and presidential contests of 2012.

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American right: the coalition of fundamentalists, anti-tax activists, and nationalists. And the reason this tide continues to retreat is not only demographic: populist conservatism has never outgrown the conditions of the era in which it was born—it's still fighting the battles of 1980.

Being out of power during two pivotal movements of the last century—in the FDR-Truman era, when the New Deal/Cold War consensus took shape, and in Carter years, when it collapsed—proved a mixed blessing: the right was free to experiment ideologically, but the ideas it devised were fundamentally negative and disconnected from the practices of power: they were not philosophies of government or cultural creativity but modes of resistance to “big government” and the countercultural left.

The New Right's attitudes struck a chord with a great many Americans, sometimes a majority, for a particular historical moment—roughly the era from

the mid-1970s to the mid-2000s. As mid-century secularism, socialism, and internationalism lost their luster, the right rode to power atop the rising forces of religion, neoliberalism, and patriotism.

But the right's ideological laboratories kept refining the product, making it ever less user-friendly in the quest for theoretical perfection. Being out of power afforded the luxury of irresponsibility—of not having to live within the limits that governing imposes on what one can imagine as desirable and possible.

Consider the religious right. There was an absolutely natural backlash in the late 1970s against the hasty push from the left for further sexual revolutions. Contraception, abortion, and homosexuality had all gone from being little spoken of and sometimes restricted by law to becoming “rights.” Many Americans, particularly Christians, felt disenfranchised.

So they voted. But they did so in reaction: what they were against was always more clear than how

they could create an alternative—a modern alternative, not simply a return to an idealized past. Because the emphasis was on negation rather than a creative agenda, the question of what compromises power must make with imperfect reality could be avoided. In “principle,” divorced from practice, one can

outlaw every abortion without exception and send homosexuals back to the closet.

Christian conservatives are as well-adjusted as anyone else on these questions in their own lives. But the Christian conservative who accepts sinfulness in reality cannot accept it in theory, and one who tries is liable to be trumped within the community by someone who asserts a harder line. Religious right activists thus radicalize one another and continually refine their ideology—then demand professions of principle from candidates.

This kind of ideological straitjacketing conditioned Todd Akin—last year's hapless Republican nominee in Missouri's U.S. Senate contest—to believe that conception cannot take place when a woman is a victim of “legitimate rape.” Akin could believe this medical myth because it answered a real problem that the principle of banning all abortion could not otherwise confront: namely, what to do in cases of rape, where the public is not sympathetic to the no-exceptions approach. If there are no

pregnancies resulting from rape, then the problem is solved and the principle saved.

What is true of Christian conservatives is true as well of the libertarians and economic conservatives. A legalistic and strictly negative conception of principle prevents them from discussing such things as the minimum wage, income inequality, and unemployment with any flexibility—any libertarian who attempts to do so risks being outflanked by some more “principled” ideologue who insists that only by liquidating the banking system will we see unemployment vanish before our eyes.

The tendency throughout the right is for the extreme view to crowd out all others because the criteria of debate were set long ago by conditions of opposition, not governing. (To be sure, liberals have the opposite problem: the Democratic Party has been so shaped by the experience of wielding power, dating back to FDR, that its liberalism exhibits few principles that aren’t wholly subordinate to expedience.)

From the Moral Majority to the Tea Party, a right forged in opposition offers only images of a mythic past in place of present economic and cultural realities. Instead of a modern conservatism competing against what is in fact a creaky liberalism—whose corporate cronyism and cultural atomism have engendered wide dissatisfaction—we have only the conservatism of what was versus the liberalism of what is.

This accounts for why the Republican Party, even as it has grown more right-leaning and “extreme,” has failed for 25 years to nominate a conservative for president. No one can take the no-compromise ideology of libertarianism or Christian conservatism and make it electorally viable, let alone a philosophy of government. Rather than find leaders who can build plausible resumes in elected office before running for president, the activists of the right lend their support to symbolic candidacies that represent negative ideals—the ideals not of government but of protest.

Because ideological conservatives cannot accept the compromising complexities of a positive philosophy, the Republican old guard wins every time. The result is doubly perverse: instead of a serious conservative who speaks softly, Republicans wind up with unprincipled figures who become shrill in attempting to appeal to the right.

Even Ronald Reagan, the closest thing to a conservative candidate who governed as a conservative once he took office, could not overcome the failings of an ideology designed for opposition.

Lifted by the populist tide that rose in response to midcentury statism’s collapse, Reagan could achieve a great deal by accelerating that collapse with tax cuts and deregulation at home and by encouraging Communism’s dissolution abroad. But the next step beyond hastening the destruction of the old order was never clear.

In terms of creating a new kind of state to replace Franklin Roosevelt’s social-insurance state, Reagan and his supporters were bereft of vision. The Republican Congress of 1994 ran into the same problem. The negative vision was not enough even on its terms because the only way to truly transform or get rid of existing institutions is to propose new ones. Absent that, a negative agenda quickly runs afoul of the needs and demands of the public—and without an alternative to propose, the revolutionaries revert to the ways of the *ancien regime*.

The populist conservatism that arose in the late 1970s proved adept at winning elections for a time. But because it was every bit as much a negative philosophy as the electorally unsuccessful conservatism of the 1950s, it never learned how to govern.

By embracing the 1970s right, the Tea Party ensures that all it can do is protest and obstruct. Conservatives are better off looking deeper and thinking more creatively about the arc of history. They might begin by rediscovering how 19th century conservatives resolved their culture wars of their time—between Catholics and kinds of Protestant—and met the challenges of the Industrial Revolution, which offers the closest parallel to the upheavals of our own age of globalization and technological disruption.

Being out of power once again, the right can afford to be entrepreneurial, to rethink its premises as well as to criticize its opponents’. Indeed, the shared assumptions of both parties—neoliberalism, militarism, and social atomism—are those that most need reconsideration. The Tea Party’s insurgency has at least cleared the way for some Republicans to attempt this: one sees the beginnings in Rand Paul, Justin Amash, and Mike Lee. But the Tea Party has also injected new life—or a Frankenstein’s semblance of life—into the dead right of decades past in the shape of Ted Cruz and his tactics.

The present moment may be as much a turning point as the Roosevelt-Truman and Carter eras were. If so, this time conservatives should define themselves not as the party of reaction, but as a party with a positive philosophy of government—a philosophy to shape the age. ■

Benedict Option

A medieval model inspires Christian communities today.

by ROD DREHER

Are we Rome? The question weighed on the minds of 2,000 libertarians who gathered this summer at FreedomFest in Las Vegas to talk about whether America is headed the way of the Roman empire. Bureaucratic decay, massive public debt, an overstretched military, a political system seemingly incapable of responding to challenges—the late Roman empire suffered these maladies, and so, some fear, does contemporary America.

If libertarians on the right worry about structural collapse, cultural and religious conservatives add a moral and spiritual dimension to the debate. Rising hedonism, waning religious observance, ongoing break-up of the family, and a general loss of cultural coherence—to traditionalists, these are signs of a possible Dark Age ahead.

Christians have been here before. Around the year 500, a generation after barbarians deposed the last Roman emperor, a young Umbrian man known to history only as Benedict was sent to Rome by his wealthy parents to complete his education. Disgusted by the city's decadence, Benedict fled to the forest to pray as a hermit.

Benedict gained a reputation for holiness and gathered other monks around him. Before dying circa 547, he personally founded a dozen monastic communities, and wrote his famous *Rule*, the guidebook for scores of monasteries that spread across Europe in the tumultuous centuries to follow.

Rome's collapse meant staggering loss. People forgot how to read, how to farm, how to govern themselves, how to build houses, how to trade, and even what it had once meant to be a human being. Behind monastery walls, though, in their chapels, scriptoriums, and refectories, Benedict's monks built lives of peace, order, and learning and spread their network throughout Western Europe.

They did not keep the fruits of their labors to themselves. Benedictines taught the peasants who gathered around their monasteries the Christian faith, as well as practical skills, like farming. Because monks of the

order took a vow of "stability," meaning they were sworn to stay in that place until they died, Benedictine monasteries emerged as islands of sanity and serenity. These were the bases from which European civilization gradually re-emerged.

It is hard to overstate what Benedict—now Saint Benedict—and his followers accomplished. In the recent Thomas Merton lecture at Columbia University, law professor Russell Hittinger summed up Benedict's lesson to the Dark Ages like this: "How to live life as a whole. Not a life of worldly success so much as one of *human* success."

Why are medieval monks relevant to our time? Because, says the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, they show that it is possible to construct "new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained" in a Dark Age—including, perhaps, an age like our own.

For MacIntyre, we too are living through a Fall of Rome-like catastrophe, one that is concealed by our liberty and prosperity. In his influential 1981 book *After Virtue*, MacIntyre argued that the Enlightenment's failure to replace an expiring Christianity caused Western civilization to lose its moral coherence. Like the early medievals, we too have been cut off from our roots, and a shadow of cultural amnesia is falling across the land.

The Great Forgetting is taking a particular toll on American Christianity, which is losing its young in dramatic numbers. Those who remain within churches often succumb to a potent form of feel-good relativism that sociologists have called "moralistic therapeutic deism," which is dissolving historic Christian moral and theological orthodoxy.

A recent Pew survey found that Jews in America are in an even more advanced state of assimilation to secular modernity. The only Jews successfully resisting are the Orthodox, many of whom live in communities meaningfully separate and by traditions distinct from the world.

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Is there a lesson here for Christians? Should they take what might be called the “Benedict Option”: communal withdrawal from the mainstream, for the sake of sheltering one’s faith and family from corrosive modernity and cultivating a more traditional way of life?

Progressive Evangelicals are engaged in a widely publicized lay movement called the New Monasticism, which typically involves single adults—and sometimes families—living in an intentional community, usually among the urban poor. Yet most people, especially those with spouses and children, will not be able to live so radically. Are there any models for them to follow?

Two contemporary lay Christian communities with roots planted in both the ancient church and the rural countryside offer glimpses into how the Benedict Option might work for ordinary people today.

Andrew Pudewa and his family, traditionalist Catholics, embraced the Benedict Option in 2006, leaving their home in San Diego for rural eastern Oklahoma. They wanted a more intensely Catholic life and to live in a place where they could learn to be more self-reliant. In their case, the Benedict part of the Benedict Option was literal: the Pudewas moved to be closer to the Benedictine monks of Clear Creek Abbey.

Seven years earlier, 12 Benedictines from the traditionalist Fontgombault Abbey in France established a daughter house in the rolling Ozark foothills an hour east of Tulsa. Some of the monks were returning Americans, former students of the late John Senior, a University of Kansas professor whose popular Great Books courses in the 1970s revived interest in the Catholic sources of the Western tradition.

“We just follow the old monastic life. We pray, worship, and do manual labor and give counseling to people,” Abbot Philip Anderson, a former Senior student, told *The Washington Times* in 2003. “There’s a whole culture war going on and a series of disappointments with the Catholic Church in America. People look to this monastery as a new beginning, as a new element that has a solid backing in a long tradition of monastic life.”

Now in its second decade, Clear Creek is home to more than 40 white-robed monks and to a growing community of laymen like the Pudewas, who—inspired by the writings of Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and Wendell Berry—moved to the countryside to be near the monastery and embrace a more agrarian

lifestyle. The lay Catholic community centered on the abbey now has about 100 people in it.

Though the Benedict Option is about creating a community of shared values, the Clear Creekers are not separatists. These Catholics get along well with their Baptist neighbors. What’s more, says Pudewa, the community’s lack of formal structure is a secret to its success.

“Everybody’s on their own,” he says. “If you find property around here, that’s great, but nobody’s organizing this for you. If you love the monks and want to go to mass every day, you can, but if not, nobody’s critical. There’s very much a live-and-let-live attitude around here.”

Many Clear Creekers are teaching themselves old-fashioned skills that will allow the community to get by in case of emergency, but they are not neo-Amish. Some work the land, but no family supports itself with farming. The monastery’s abbot tells me relative material poverty exists among the laity, but there’s also a richness in spirit and family life that you can’t put a price on.

“I think there’s a kind of gratitude we all share,” Pudewa says. “That’s what bonds people together a little more, rather than that we want to push our version of how to be more Catholic on other people.”

Clear Creek’s mothers and fathers bring up their children largely disconnected from mainstream American popular culture. Yet, though home-schooled, the community’s children are not being raised in, well, a monastery. They go to Tulsa for swing dancing twice a week, for example. Still, their relative isolation makes the mission of forming the children’s character easier, Pudewa says.

Like the early medievals, we too have been cut off from our roots, and a shadow of cultural amnesia is falling across the land.

Stressing that the kids are not being taught to shun life outside the Oklahoma hills, Pudewa adds, “The purpose of the cocoon is not to be wrapped up in yourself forever; the purpose is to prepare the butterfly.”

The Clear Creek Benedictines may remain for ages, but if the lay Catholics are going to enjoy any longevity, they need long-term means of material support. Some fathers work in the area construction business. Another sells insurance in Tulsa. Others

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telecommute—like Pudewa, dependent on the Internet for an income. (Ironically, the same technology accelerating the broader culture's unraveling also enables latter-day pilgrims to sustain their families in rural exile.)

Pudewa, whose booming homeschool-teaching business employs members of four community families, balances his religious idealism with a practical

These communities offer a way for believers to thicken Christian culture in a time of moral revolution and religious dissolution.

streak. Holding on to future generations in such a geographically remote place requires commercial creativity and entrepreneurial initiative, he says. Spiritual conviction isn't enough.

"You have to grow. You can't have a community where everybody sits there doing nothing until they die," he says. "We need to be about building things and thinking evangelically. That's what attracts kids: doing things."

The Alaska town of Eagle River is now part of greater Anchorage. But in the early 1970s, the settlement at the base of the Chugach Mountains was more or less the outback. Back then, Evangelical ministry leaders Harold and Barbara Dunaway bought five acres of land in the middle of a spruce and birch forest and moved their flock north from Anchorage. Their model was L'Abri, the legendary—and still extant—Protestant ministry Francis Schaeffer founded in Switzerland.

In 1987, the entire church community converted to Orthodox Christianity, and entered the Antiochian Orthodox Church. Harold became Father Harold; the church became St. John Cathedral. Cheap land in Eagle River allowed congregants to buy and build houses within walking distance of the church. Today, about 70 families live within a mile of St. John's, in what looks like an old-fashioned village.

Father Marc Dunaway, a high-school junior when his parents, now deceased, moved to Eagle River, is today the community's spiritual leader. It wasn't founded on a particular religious vision, he says, but rather out of "a desire to hold on to the normal, human community that existed everywhere until the modern era."

The hardships the community went through in the early years—grim winters, no running water—built

strong bonds. Though everyday life is much easier now, the St. John's community still works to care for each other in times of struggle. Recently, neighbors realized that a church member was going through a difficult personal time and stepped forward to help cook and care for her children.

"Christian love can be expressed in very practical ways when people are close by," says Dunaway. "A friend is never far away. Also, community relationships can help people rub off their rough edges. This is necessary for spiritual growth."

Like the Catholics of Clear Creek, the Eagle River Orthodox don't live in a community with a formal structure. Its members mostly work around the Anchorage area and see each other at worship, at the parish school, or at social events. Sharing the church, a school, and the neighborhood, though, gives the community a sense of cohesion and camaraderie.

Over the years, some believers have parted ways, leaving in search of a stricter Orthodox communal experience. This is a perennial challenge to communities organized around ideas, religious or otherwise. What do you do when some members believe others are falling away from right belief or right practice? There are no simple answers. A certain flexibility is necessary.

"I think the cure for any community to avoid these sad troubles is to be open and generous, and to resist the urges to build walls and isolate itself," Dunaway says.

As newcomers to Orthodoxy, the communal part of St. John's life seemed off-putting to Shelley and Jerry Finkler, who converted with their children in 2007. The Finklers lived in an exurb a 20-minute drive from the cathedral, which made full participation in services throughout the week difficult and hindered the family's spiritual life. They loved the liturgies and vespers but thought living among the people you went to church with was strange.

A brief experiment in living within walking distance of the cathedral changed their view. "Even though we were way poor that year, the quality of our life was so rich because of being able to make it to the services, and also because of the relationships we had with the people there," Shelley Finkler says.

When the Finklers moved back to their exurban house, they were surprised by how much they missed Eagle River.

"In our old neighborhood, everybody was of similar economic status, and we all knew each other, but there wasn't the sense of the common good that you have when you're living around people who share your faith," she says. "That made a big difference when

it came to reaching out to help each other.”

This past summer, the Finklers sold their house and moved back to the St. John’s community—this time, as the host family for the St. James House, a cathedral ministry in which single young adults come to live for a year of prayer, work, and discernment.

“We think it is healthier for our children, ourselves, and everybody who lives around us to know that if you have a problem, there are 150 helping hands and hearts around you,” Shelley says. “There are no rules here, and we’re not closed off. There’s no weirdness. It just exists, and the center of it is the church.”

It’s easy to be pessimistic about the viability of Benedict Option-style communities. History gives countless examples of intentional communities that began with high ideals but foundered on human frailty.

In recent years, pizza tycoon Tom Monaghan’s attempt to found a conservative Catholic community in southwest Florida fell apart largely because of Monaghan’s eccentric authoritarianism. In central Texas, Homestead Heritage, a Pentecostal-style back-to-the-land commune with Anabaptist overtones, has been the target of scathing accusations. A 2012 *Texas Observer* investigation revealed what the newspaper called “families broken apart, child abuse and allegations of mind control, cover-ups and secrecy.” In a statement, Homestead Heritage denounced the charges as “slanderous and inflammatory.”

Experience suggests that in the modern world, Benedict Option settlements have to be both relatively open to the world and vigilant about respecting personal liberty.

“I think trying to understand that freedom is pretty important,” says Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, who leads a pioneering New Monastic community in Durham, North Carolina. “Part of the grace of stability is knowing that everything’s a gift. You have to hold gifts loosely.”

This is a special challenge when your community’s very existence depends on renewing a calling to stand apart. That awareness of difference can turn toxic.

“Students at some small Catholic colleges are being taught to feel that as Catholics living in America they are members of an alienated, aggrieved, morally superior minority,” says John Zmirak, who was writer-in-residence at Thomas More College in Merrimack, New Hampshire until resigning in 2012. “They are learning that they owe no loyalty to our institutions, but should be working to replace them with an aggressive, intolerant Catholic regime. In other words, they are being taught to think and act like radical Muslims living in

France.”

Zmirak, a traditionalist Catholic, concedes the appeal of Benedict Option communities to beleaguered Christians. Staying true to your values in a world that aggressively challenges them at every turn is exhausting. But withdrawal rarely works, he insists. “It’s looking for a bushel where your light will be safe from the wind.”

Yet the Clear Creek and Eagle River Christians communities have stumbled onto models that are modest, balanced, and so far sustainable. They hold on to distinctiveness without becoming rigid, intolerant, or controlling, by standing apart from the world without demonizing it.

“If you isolate yourself, you will become weird,” Father Marc Dunaway warns. “It is a tricky balance between allowing freedom and openness on the one hand, and maintaining a community identity on the other. The idea of community itself should not be allowed to become an idol. A community is a living organism that must change and grow and adapt.”

There is no way to have Benedict Option communities without giving up a significant measure of individual autonomy—and the opportunity for career advancement—as the cost of stability. For those who take the Benedict Option, though, its rewards are a pearl of great price. These communities offer a way for believers to thicken Christian culture in a time of moral revolution and religious dissolution. And if they’re successful over time, they may impart their wisdom to outsiders who crave light in the postmodern darkness.

In this way, they might fulfill Pope Benedict XVI’s prophecy that believing Christians in the West would soon be fewer, but would serve as a “creative minority”—and in so doing, determine the future.

Those taking the Benedict Option—Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox—are tiny minorities, certainly, but they may yet have more influence than anyone can now imagine. After all, St. Benedict didn’t set out to save Western civilization; he only wanted to start what he called a “school for conversion.” He was the right man for his moment, a period of calamitous transition—but also one of opportunity.

Wilson-Hartgrove, who has lived in the New Monastic community he founded for a decade, says this is another era of profound civilizational transition, and yes, opportunity. For Christians responding creatively to it, it’s a time of trial and error. Yet all the major religious orders and movements in Christian history arose from experiments undertaken by ordinary people engaging the challenges of their place and time. “That’s the only way the church ever finds these things out,” he says. ■

One Percent Republic

Without citizen soldiers, plutocracy rises unchecked.

by ANDREW J. BACEVICH

In evaluating the Global War on Terrorism, the overriding question is necessarily this one: has more than a decade of armed conflict enhanced the well-being of the American people? The war fought by citizen-soldiers at the behest of Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt did so. Can we say the same for the war launched by George W. Bush and perpetuated in modified form by Barack Obama?

Before taking stock of what a decade of war has actually produced, recall the expectations that prevailed shortly before war began. On the eve of World War II, the mood was anxious. For a nation still caught in the throes of a protracted economic slump, the prospect of a European war carried limited appeal; the previous one, just two decades earlier, had yielded little but disappointment. By comparison, expectations on the near side of the Global War on Terrorism were positively bullish. For citizens of the planet's "sole remaining superpower," the 20th century had ended on a high note. The 21st century appeared rich with promise.

Speaking just prior to midnight on December 31, 1999, President Bill Clinton surveyed the century just ending and identified its central theme as "the triumph of freedom and free people." To this "great story," Clinton told his listeners, the United States had made a pivotal contribution. Contemplating the future, he glimpsed even better days ahead—"the triumph of freedom wisely used." All that was needed to secure that triumph was for Americans to exploit and export "the economic benefits of globalization,

the political benefits of democracy and human rights, [and] the educational and health benefits of all things modern." At the dawning of the new millennium, he concluded confidently, "the sun will always rise on America as long as each new generation lights the fire of freedom."

What the president's remarks lacked in terms of insight or originality they made up for in familiarity. During the decade following the Cold War, such expectations had become commonplace. Skillful politician that he was, Clinton was telling Americans what they already believed.

The passing of one further decade during which U.S. forces seeking to ignite freedom's fire flooded the Greater Middle East reduced Bill Clinton's *fin-de-siècle* formula for peace and prosperity to tatters. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the United States touched off a conflagration of sorts, albeit with results other than intended. Yet for the average American, the most painful setbacks occurred not out there in wartime theaters but back here on the home front. Instead of freedom wisely used, the decade's theme became: bubbles burst and dreams deflated.

Above all, those dreams had fostered expectations

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of unprecedented material abundance—more of everything for everyone. Alas, this was not to be. Although “crisis” ranks alongside “historic” atop any list of overused terms in American political discourse, the Great Recession that began in 2007 turned out to be the real deal: a crisis of historic proportions.

With the ongoing “war” approaching the 10-year mark, the U.S. economy shed a total of 7.9 million jobs in just three years. For only the second time since World War II, the official unemployment rate topped 10 percent. The retreat from that peak came at an achingly slow pace. By some estimates, actual unemployment—including those who had simply given up looking for work—was double the official figure. Accentuating the pain was the duration of joblessness; those laid off during the Great Recession stayed out of work substantially longer than the unemployed during previous post-war economic downturns. When new opportunities did eventually materialize, they usually came with smaller salaries and either reduced benefits or none at all.

As an immediate consequence, millions of Americans lost their homes or found themselves “underwater,” the value of their property less than what they owed on their mortgages. Countless more were thrown into poverty, the number of those officially classified as poor reaching the highest level since the Census Bureau began tracking such data. A drop in median income erased gains made during the previous 15 years. Erstwhile members of the great American middle class shelved or abandoned outright carefully nurtured plans to educate their children or retire in modest comfort. Inequality reached gaping proportions with 1 percent of the population amassing a full 40 percent of the nation’s wealth.

Month after month, grim statistics provided fodder for commentators distributing blame, for learned analysts offering contradictory explanations of why prosperity had proven so chimerical, and for politicians absolving themselves of responsibility while fingering as culprits members of the other party. Yet beyond its immediate impact, what did the Great Recession signify? Was the sudden appearance of hard times in the midst of war merely an epiphenomenon, a period of painful adjustment and belt-tightening after which the world’s sole superpower would be back in the saddle? Or had the

Great Recession begun a Great Recessional, with the United States in irreversible retreat from the apex of global dominion?

The political response to this economic calamity paid less attention to forecasting long-term implications than to fixing culpability. On the right, an angry Tea Party movement blamed Big Government. On the left, equally angry members of the Occupy movement blamed Big Business, especially Wall Street. What these two movements had in common was that each cast the American people as victims. Nefarious forces had gorged themselves at the ex-

As much as or more than Big Government or Big Business, popular attitudes toward war, combining detachment, neglect, and inattention, helped create the crisis in which the United States is mired.

pense of ordinary folk. By implication, the people were themselves absolved of responsibility for the catastrophe that had befallen them and their country.

Yet consider a third possibility. Perhaps the people were not victims but accessories. On the subject of war, Americans can no more claim innocence than they can regarding the effects of smoking or excessive drinking. As much as or more than Big Government or Big Business, popular attitudes toward war, combining detachment, neglect, and inattention, helped create the crisis in which the United States is mired.

A “country made by war,” to cite the title of a popular account of U.S. military history, the United States in our own day is fast becoming a country undone by war. Citizen armies had waged the wars that made the nation powerful (if not virtuous) and Americans rich (if not righteous). The character of those armies—preeminently the ones that preserved the Union and helped defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan—testified to an implicit covenant between citizens and the state. According to its terms, war was the people’s business and could not be otherwise. For the state to embark upon armed conflict of any magnitude required informed popular consent. Actual prosecution of any military campaign larger than a police action depended on the willingness of

citizens in large numbers to become soldiers. Seeing war through to a conclusion hinged on the state's ability to sustain active popular support in the face of adversity.

In their disgust over Vietnam, Americans withdrew from this arrangement. They disengaged from war, with few observers giving serious consideration to the implications of doing so. Events since, especially since 9/11, have made those implications manifest. In the United States, war no longer qualifies in any meaningful sense as the people's business. In military matters, Americans have largely forfeited their say.

As a result, in formulating basic military policy and in deciding when and how to employ force, the state no longer requires the consent, direct participation, or ongoing support of citizens. As an immediate consequence, Washington's penchant for war has appreciably increased, without, however, any corresponding improvement in the ability of political and military leaders to conclude its wars promptly

Apathy toward war is symptomatic of advancing civic decay, finding expression in apathy toward the blight of child poverty, homelessness, illegitimacy, and eating disorders also plaguing the country.

or successfully. A further result, less appreciated but with even larger implications, has been to accelerate the erosion of the traditional concept of democratic citizenship.

In other words, the afflictions besetting the American way of life derive in some measure from shortcomings in the contemporary American way of war. The latter have either begotten or exacerbated the former.

Since 9/11, Americans have, in fact, refuted George C. Marshall by demonstrating a willingness to tolerate "a Seven Years [and longer] War." It turns out, as the neoconservative pundit Max Boot observed, that an absence of popular support "isn't necessarily fatal" for a flagging war effort. For an inveterate militarist like Boot, this comes as good news. "Public apathy," he argues, "presents a potential opportunity"

making it possible to prolong "indefinitely" conflicts in which citizens are not invested.

Yet such news is hardly good. Apathy toward war is symptomatic of advancing civic decay, finding expression in apathy toward the blight of child poverty, homelessness, illegitimacy, and eating disorders also plaguing the country. Shrugging off wars makes it that much easier for Americans—overweight, over-medicated, and deeply in hock—to shrug off the persistence of widespread hunger, the patent failures of their criminal justice system, and any number of other problems. The thread that binds together this pattern of collective anomie is plain to see: unless the problem you're talking about affects me personally, why should I care?

For years after 9/11, America's armed force floundered abroad. Although the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq began promisingly enough, in neither case were U.S. forces able to close the deal. With the fall of Richmond in April 1865, the Civil War drew to a definitive close. No such claim could

be made in connection with the fall of Kabul in November 2001. When it came to dramatic effect, the staged April 2003 toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square stands on a par with the September 1945 surrender ceremony on the deck of the *USS Missouri*. There, however, the comparison ends. The one event rang down the curtain; the other merely signified a script change. Meanwhile, Americans at home paid little more than lip service to the

travails endured by the troops.

Beginning in 2007—just as the "surge" was ostensibly salvaging the Iraq War—a sea of troubles engulfed the home front. From those troubles, the continuation of war offered no escape. If anything, the perpetuation (and expansion) of armed conflict plunged the nation itself that much more deeply underwater. Once again, as in the 1860s and 1940s, war was playing a major role in determining the nation's destiny. Yet this time around, there was no upside. Virtually all of the consequences—political, economic, social, cultural, and moral—proved negative. To a nation gearing up for global war, FDR had promised jobs, help for the vulnerable, an end to special privilege, the protection of civil liberties, and decisive military victory over the nation's enemies. To a considerable degree, Roosevelt

made good on that promise. Judged by those same criteria, the Bush-Obama global war came up short on all counts.

The crux of the problem lay with two symmetrical 1 percents: the 1 percent whose members get sent to fight seemingly endless wars and that other 1 percent whose members demonstrate such a knack for enriching themselves in “wartime.” Needless to say, the two 1 percents neither intersect nor overlap. Few of the very rich send their sons or daughters to fight. Few of those leaving the military’s ranks find their way into the ranks of the plutocracy. Rather than rallying to the colors, Harvard graduates these days flock to Wall Street or the lucrative world of consulting. Movie star heroics occur exclusively on screen, while millionaire professional athletes manage to satisfy their appetite for combat on the court and playing field.

Yet a people who permit war to be waged in their name while offloading onto a tiny minority responsibility for its actual conduct have no cause to complain about an equally small minority milking the system for all it’s worth. Crudely put, if the very rich are engaged in ruthlessly exploiting the 99 percent who are not, their actions are analogous to that of American society as a whole in its treatment of soldiers: the 99 percent who do not serve in uniform just as ruthlessly exploit the 1 percent who do.

To excuse or justify their conduct, the very rich engage in acts of philanthropy. With a similar aim, the not-so-rich proclaim their undying admiration of the troops.

As the bumper sticker proclaims, freedom isn’t free. Conditioned to believe that the exercise of global leadership is essential to preserving their freedom, and further conditioned to believe that leadership best expresses itself in the wielding of military might, Americans have begun to discover that trusting in the present-day American way of war to preserve the present-day American way of life entails exorbitant and unexpected costs.

Yet as painful as they may be, these costs represent something far more disturbing. As a remedy for all the ailments afflicting the body politic, war—at least as Americans have chosen to wage it—turns out to be a fundamentally inappropriate prescription. Rather than restoring the patient to health, war (as currently practiced pursuant to freedom as

currently defined) constitutes a form of prolonged ritual suicide. Rather than building muscle, it corrupts and putrefies.

The choice Americans face today ends up being as straightforward as it is stark. If they believe war essential to preserving their freedom, it’s incum-

Americans have begun to discover that trusting in the present-day American way of war to preserve the present-day American way of life entails exorbitant and unexpected costs.

bent upon them to prosecute war with the same seriousness their forebears demonstrated in the 1940s. Washington’s war would then truly become America’s war with all that implies in terms of commitment and priorities. Should Americans decide, on the other hand, that freedom as presently defined is not worth the sacrifices entailed by real war, it becomes incumbent upon them to revise their understanding of freedom. Either choice—real war or an alternative conception of freedom—would entail a more robust definition of what it means to be a citizen.

Yet the dilemma just described may be more theoretical than real. Without the players fully understanding the stakes, the die has already been cast. Having forfeited responsibility for war’s design and conduct, the American people may find that Washington considers that grant of authority irrevocable. The state now owns war, with the country consigned to observer status. Meanwhile, the juggernaut of mainstream, commercial culture continues to promulgate the four pop Gospels of American Freedom: novelty, autonomy, celebrity, and consumption. Efforts to resist or reverse these tendencies, whether by right-leaning traditionalists (many of them religiously inclined) or left-leaning secular humanists (sometimes allied with religious radicals) have been feeble and ineffective.

Americans must therefore accept the likelihood of a future in which real if futile sacrifices exacted of the few who fight will serve chiefly to facilitate metaphorical death for the rest who do not. ■

JFK, Warmonger

His foreign policy was worse than George W. Bush's.

by JUSTIN RAIMONDO

Fifty years is long enough to mold history into mythology, but in the case of John Fitzgerald Kennedy it only took a decade or so. Indeed, long before Lyndon Johnson slunk off into the sunset, driven out of office by antiwar protesters and a rebellion inside his own party, Americans were already nostalgic for the supposedly halcyon days of Camelot. Yet the graceless LBJ merely followed in the footsteps of his glamorous predecessor: the difference, especially in foreign policy, was only in the packaging.

While Kennedy didn't live long enough to have much of an impact domestically, except in introducing glitz to an office that had previously disdained the appurtenances of Hollywood, in terms of America's stance on the world stage—where a chief executive can do real damage quickly—his recklessness is nearly unmatched.

As a congressman, Kennedy was a Cold War hardliner, albeit with a “smart” twist. After a 1951 trip to Southeast Asia he said the methods of the colonial French relied too much on naked force: it was necessary, he insisted, to build a political resistance to Communism that relied on the nationalistic sentiment then arising everywhere in what we used to call the Third World. Yet he was no softie. While the Eisenhower administration refused to intervene actively in Southeast Asia, key Democrats in Congress were critical of Republican hesitancy and Kennedy was in the forefront of the push to up the Cold War ante: “Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the

Free World in Southeast Asia,” he declared in 1956, “the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike.”

As Eisenhower neared the end of his second term, Democrats portrayed him as an old man asleep at the wheel. This narrative was given added force by the sudden appearance of a heretofore unheralded “missile gap”—the mistaken belief that the Soviets were out-running and out-gunning us with their ability to strike the United States with intercontinental ballistic missiles.

This storyline was advanced by two signal events: the 1957 launching of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to go into orbit around the earth, and the equally successful testing of a Soviet ICBM earlier that summer. That November, a secret report commissioned by Eisenhower warned that the Soviets were ahead of us in the nuclear-weapons field. The report was leaked, and the media went into a frenzy, with the *Washington Post* averring the U.S. was in dire danger of becoming “a second class power.” America, the *Post* declared, stood “exposed to an almost immediate threat from the missile-bristling Soviets.” The nation faced “cataclysmic peril in the face of rocketing Soviet military might.”

The “Gaither Report” speculated that there could be “hundreds” of hidden Soviet ICBMs ready to launch a nuclear first strike on the United States. As we now know, these “hidden” missiles were nonexistent—the Soviets had far fewer than the U.S. at the

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time. But the Cold War hype was coming fast and thick, and the Democrats pounced—none so hard as Kennedy, who was by then actively campaigning for president. “For the first time since the War of 1812,” he pontificated on the floor of the Senate, “foreign enemy forces potentially had become a direct and unmistakable threat to the continental United States, to our homes and to our people.”

To arms! The Commies are coming!

It was all balderdash. Barely a month after Kennedy was sworn in, this was acknowledged by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara: there were “no signs of a Soviet crash effort to build ICBMs” he told reporters, and “there is no missile gap today.” Kennedy’s apologists have tried to spin this episode to show that Kennedy was misled. Yet Kennedy was briefed by the CIA in the midst of the 1960 presidential campaign, by which time the CIA’s projection of Soviet ICBMs had fallen from 500 to a mere 36. Kennedy chose to believe much higher Air Force estimates simply because they fit his preconceptions—and were politically useful.

When Eisenhower came into office, he swiftly concluded the Korean War and instituted his “New Look” defense policy, which cut the military budget by one third. He repudiated the Truman-era national-security doctrine embodied in “NSC-68,” a document prepared by Truman’s advisors that said the U.S. must be ready to fight two major land wars—and several “limited wars”—simultaneously. The U.S. was instead to rely on the threat of massive nuclear retaliation, a defensive posture derided at the time by Kennedy and his coterie as “isolationist.”

As president, Kennedy swiftly reversed Eisenhower’s course. McNamara rehabilitated NSC-68 and embarked on a massive buildup of conventional land, sea, and air forces in order to “prevent the steady erosion of the Free World through limited wars,” as Kennedy put it in a 1961 message to Congress. The promise of “limited” wars would soon be fulfilled by the two of the biggest disasters in the history of American foreign policy: the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Vietnam War.

While plans to overthrow Fidel Castro originated during the Eisenhower administration, the Bay of Pigs plot was conceived by the CIA shortly after Kennedy was sworn into office. During the last presidential debate before the election, Kennedy had

attacked Eisenhower for his alleged complacency in the face of a “Soviet threat” a mere 90 miles from the Florida coastline. This left Kennedy’s rival, Vice President Richard Nixon, in the uncharacteristic position of defending a policy of caution. It was a typically disingenuous ploy on Kennedy’s part: the Democratic nominee had been briefed on the CIA’s regime-change plans shortly after the Democratic convention.

Kennedy, for his part, was enthusiastic about eliminating Castro. Once in office, he eagerly approved the CIA’s plan, and preparations began in earnest. The operation was a farce from the beginning. It depended on two projected events, neither of which occurred: the assassination of Castro and a widespread uprising against the Cuban government.

While Lyndon Johnson usually gets the blame for escalating the Vietnam War, it was Kennedy who ordered the first substantial increase in direct U.S. involvement.

This was the “they’ll shower us with rose petals” argument advanced 40 years before George W. Bush’s “liberation” of Iraq. It took less than two days for Cuban forces to squash the invaders.

Lurching from disaster to catastrophe, Kennedy, after barely a year in office, authorized an increase in aid to South Vietnam and sent 1,000 additional American “advisors.” While Lyndon Johnson usually gets the blame for escalating the Vietnam War, it was Kennedy who ordered the first substantial increase in direct U.S. involvement.

In his famous “pay any price, bear any burden” inaugural address, Kennedy put the Soviets on notice that his administration would prosecute the Cold War to the fullest, declaring that we “shall meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” In Vietnam, this meant supporting the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, whose dictatorship became increasingly repressive as Viet Cong forces gathered strength.

While the initial strategy, originated under Eisenhower, was predicated on supporting indigenous anti-Communist forces with aid and as many as 500 “advisors,” by 1963 U.S. troops in Vietnam numbered some 16,000. Long before the “COIN” theory

Politics

promoted by Gen. David Petraeus in Iraq and Afghanistan, President Kennedy championed the doctrines of counterinsurgency to fight the Communists on their own terrain: the idea was to not only defeat the enemy militarily but also to materially improve the lives of the populace, whose hearts and minds must be won.

Thus was born the “Strategic Hamlets” program, which involved forcibly relocating millions of Vietnamese peasants from their villages and corralling them in government-run compounds. The idea was to isolate them from the pernicious influence of the Communists and provide them with healthcare, subsidized food, and other perks, while compensat-

turned out to be not so strategic after all. The ranks of the communists increased by 300 percent.

Kennedy, instead of holding his advisors—or himself—responsible for this abysmal failure, instead did what he always did: he blamed the other guy. After the Bay of Pigs ended in what the historian Trumbull Higgins called “the perfect failure,” Kennedy put the onus on the CIA—although he had approved the original plan, which called for U.S. air support for the Cuban exile force, only to withdraw his promise on the eve of the invasion. Similarly when it came to the unraveling of South Vietnam, he blamed Diem.

By 1963 Diem had opened back-channel talks with the North Vietnamese and sought to end the war with a negotiated settlement, but Kennedy was having none of it. The president soon concluded that the increasingly unpopular Diem was the cause of America’s failure in the region and—disdaining the advice of the Pentagon—agreed to a State Department plan to overthrow him.

A cash payment of \$40,000 was made to a cabal of South Vietnamese generals, and on November 2, 1963, the president of the Republic of Vietnam was murdered, along with several members of his family. The coup leaders were invited to the American Embassy and congratulated by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge.

Chaos ensued, and the Vietcong was on the march. In response, U.S. soldiers increasingly took the place of ARVN troops on the battlefields of Vietnam. The Americanization of the war had begun. According to Robert Kennedy—and contrary to Oliver Stone’s overactive imagination—JFK never gave the slightest consideration to pulling out.

The mythology of Kennedy’s “dazzling” leadership, as hagiographer Arthur Schlesinger Jr. once described it, reaches no greater height of mendacity than in official accounts of the Cuban missile crisis. In the hagiographies, the heroic Kennedy stood “eyeball to eyeball” with the Soviets, who—for no reason at all—suddenly decided to put missiles in Cuba. Because Kennedy refused to back down, so the story goes, America was saved from near certain nuclear annihilation.



Michael Hogue

ing them with cash for the loss of their dwellings.

The program was a horrific failure: torn from their homes, which were burned before their eyes, Vietnam’s peasants turned on the Diem regime with a vengeance. The compensation money that was supposed to go to the dislocated villagers instead filled the pockets of Diem’s corrupt officials, and the hamlets, which were soon infiltrated by the Viet Cong,

This is truth inverted. To begin with, Kennedy provoked the crisis and had been forewarned of the possible consequences of his actions long in advance. In 1961, the president ordered the deployment of intermediate range Jupiter missiles—considered “first strike” weapons—in Italy and Turkey, within range of Moscow, Leningrad, and other major Soviet cities. In tandem with his massive rearmament program and the continuing efforts to destabilize Cuba, this was a considerable provocation. As Benjamin Schwarz relates in *The Atlantic*, Sen. Albert Gore Sr. brought the issue up in a closed hearing over a year and a half before the crisis broke, wondering aloud “what our attitude would be” if, as Schwarz writes, “the Soviets deployed nuclear-armed missiles to Cuba.”

Kennedy taped many of his meetings with advisors, and those relevant to the Cuban missile crisis were declassified in 1997. They show that Kennedy and his men knew the real score. As Kennedy sarcastically remarked during one of these powwows: “Why does [Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev] put these in there, though? ... It’s just as if we suddenly began to put a *major* number of MRBMs [medium-range ballistic missiles] in Turkey. Now that’d be *goddamn* dangerous, I would think.”

National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, not known for his sense of humor, helpfully pointed out: “Well we did it, Mr. President.”

Kennedy and his coterie realized that the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba didn’t affect the nuclear balance of power one way or the other, although the president said the opposite in public. In a nationally televised address on the eve of the crisis, the president portrayed the Soviet move as “an explicit threat to the peace and security of all the Americas.” In council with his advisors, however, he blithely dismissed the threat: “It doesn’t make any difference if you get blown up by an ICBM flying from the Soviet Union or one that was 90 miles away. Geography doesn’t mean that much.” In conference with the president, McNamara stated, “I’ll be quite frank. I don’t think there is a military problem here ... This is a domestic, political problem.”

The “crisis” was symbolic rather than actual. There was no more danger of a Soviet first strike than had existed previously. What Kennedy feared was a first strike by the Republicans, who were sure to launch an attack on the administration and accuse it of being

“soft on Communism.”

Thus for domestic political reasons, rather than to address a real military threat, Kennedy risked an all-out nuclear war with the Soviet Union. His blockade of Cuba and the public ultimatum delivered to the Soviets—withdraw or risk war—brought the world to the brink of the unthinkable. Yet as far as anyone

Stripped of glitz, glamour, and partisan myopia, the Kennedy presidency was the logical prelude to the years of domestic turmoil and foreign folly that followed his assassination.

knew at the time, it worked: the Soviets withdrew their missiles, and the world breathed a sigh of relief.

Only years later, as new materials were declassified, was the secret deal between Kennedy and Khrushchev revealed: Kennedy agreed to withdraw our missiles from Turkey and promised not to invade Cuba. Another aspect of the Kennedy family mythology was exposed by these releases: brother Robert, far from being the reasonable peacemaker type he and his family’s chroniclers depicted in their memoirs and histories, was the most Strangelove-like of the president’s advisors, calling for an outright invasion of Cuba in response to the ginned up crisis.

Perhaps in this matter he was taking his cues from his brother, who during the Berlin standoff had actually called on his generals to come up with a plan for a nuclear first strike against the Soviets.

Stripped of glitz, glamour, and partisan myopia, the Kennedy presidency was the logical prelude to the years of domestic turmoil and foreign folly that followed his assassination. President Johnson was left to carry the flag of Cold War liberalism into what became the “Vietnam era,” but that tattered banner was lowered when LBJ fled the field, McGovernites took over his party, and the hawkish senator Scoop Jackson’s little band of neocons-to-be made off to the GOP. This is the real Kennedy legacy: not the mythical “Camelot” out of some screenwriter’s imagination, but the all-too-real—and absurdly hyperbolic—idea that America would and could “pay *any* price” and “bear *any* burden” in the service of a militant interventionism. ■

Gettysburg Gospel

How Lincoln forged a civil religion of American nationalism

by RICHARD GAMBLE

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address has achieved a status as American Scripture equaled only by the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Washington's Farewell Address. In merely 271 words, the wartime president fused his epoch's most powerful and disruptive tendencies—nationalism, democratism, and German idealism—into a civil religion indebted to the language of Christianity but devoid of its content.

That the Gettysburg Address achieves so much in so little space has a lot to do with what Lincoln didn't say on that November day in 1863. An odd vacancy runs through the speech. Pronouns without antecedents carried Lincoln's words away from the things he was supposedly talking about. The speech was abstracted from the place where he stood and the suffering he memorialized. Lincoln mentioned "a great battle-field" but not the town and surrounding farms of Gettysburg. He invoked the "fathers" but left them unnamed. He extolled the "proposition that all men are created equal" but left the Declaration of Independence implied.

He honored "brave men" but not a single commanding officer or soldier by name. He spoke of a "nation" five times but avoided anything as definite as geographic America, the United States, the republic, the Constitution, the North, the South, or even the Union. The Union was the very thing he had been insisting since 1861 that he fought to preserve. Perhaps most striking of all, even though this speech followed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation by nearly a year, he never mentioned slavery. Instead, we have "freedom."

Lincoln omits these tangible details of place and moment with such skill that readers do not notice the empty spaces. For anyone who does not already know something specific about the Civil War, the speech creates no picture in the mind. It could be adapted to almost any battlefield in any war for "freedom" in the 19th century or thereafter. Perhaps the speech's vacancies account for its longevity and proven usefulness beyond 1863—even beyond America's borders. Lincoln's

speech can be interpreted as a highly compressed Periclean funeral oration, as Garry Wills showed definitively in his 1992 book *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. But unlike Pericles' performance, this speech names no Athens, no Sparta, no actual time, place, people, or circumstances at all.

Into this empty vessel Lincoln poured the 19th-century's potent ideologies of nationalism, democratism, and romantic idealism. Together, these movements have become inseparable from the modern American self-understanding. They have become part of our civil religion and what we likewise ought to call our "civil history" and "civil philosophy"—that is, religion, history, and philosophy pursued not for their own sake, not for the truth, but deployed as instruments of government to tell useful stories about a people and their identity and mission. Polybius praised Rome's forefathers for having invented religion for just this public purpose. Religion, history, and philosophy can all be domesticated to make them tools for the regime.

In 1967, sociologist Robert Bellah launched the modern career of "civil religion" as a concept, a way to examine how, on the one hand, the state adopts religious language, ritual, holidays, and symbolism to bind a nation together and how, on the other hand, it elevates its own values and ideas to the status of holy doctrine. Regarding the first type, University of Toronto political theorist Ronald Beiner recently defined civil religion as "the appropriation of religion by politics for its purposes." Lincoln had been doing this to the Bible since at least 1838. He ended his Lyceum Address by applying Matthew 16:18 to American liberty: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." More famously, in 1858 he quoted Matthew 12:25 to characterize the precarious state of the Union: "A house divided against itself shall not stand."

Such an appropriation of Christianity for politics dominates the Gettysburg Address, from its opening "four score" to its closing "shall not perish." In the

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1970s, literary scholar M.E. Bradford, in his essay, “The Rhetoric for Continuing Revolution,” identified the Gettysburg Address’s “biblical language” as the speech’s “most important formal property.” That is undoubtedly so. Lincoln drew from the King James Version’s archaic words and cadences, as he opened with the biblical-sounding “four score,” an echo of the Psalmist’s “three score and ten” years allotted to man on this earth. He continued with “brought forth,” the words in the Gospel of Luke that describe Mary’s delivery of Jesus—the first instance of what turns out to be a repeated image of conception, birth, life, death, and new birth, culminating in the promise of eternal life in the words “shall not perish”—a startling echo of Jesus’ words to Nicodemus in John 3:16 (“whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life”).

Lincoln’s speech also engages the other side of civil religion—not the appropriation of the sacred for the purposes of the state but the elevation of the secular into a political religion. Early in his career, Lincoln had explicitly promoted this kind of civil religion. Again in his 1838 Lyceum address, he called for fidelity to “the blood of the Revolution” and the Declaration,

the Constitution, and the laws to serve as America’s sustaining “political religion” now that the founding generation was passing away. In 1863, Lincoln filled the Gettysburg Address with the words “dedicated,” “consecrated,” and “hallow.” The cumulative effect of this sacred language was to set the American Founding, the suffering of the Civil War, and the national mission apart from the mundane world and transport the war dead and their task into a transcendent realm.

Bellah, a defender of American civil religion who wanted to globalize it in the post-Kennedy years, claimed that Lincoln and the Civil War gave America a “New Testament” for its civic faith: “The Gettysburg symbolism (‘...those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live’) is Christian without having anything to do with the Christian church.”

To this civil religion, Lincoln added his distinctive civil history and civil philosophy. Subtracting the “four score” years from 1863 takes us back to 1776. America was “brought forth” in 1776—not in 1787 or 1788, when the Constitution was ratified by state conventions. In his First Inaugural in 1861, the Republican president had insisted that the Union was older

than the states: it had formed at least as early as 1774 and had organically “matured” through the war years. But now at Gettysburg, the Union vanished and the claim appeared that a “new nation” was born in 1776.

Lincoln’s exclusive use of “nation” in this speech for the thing that was founded, tested, and awaited rebirth deserves careful notice. In the domestic and international context of the 1860s, this was a powerful word. In the first place, it answered the most contested political question from 1787 to 1861—and not just between the North and the South but between anyone who argued over whether a citizen’s allegiance belonged first to his state or to the Union. “Nation” swept aside all other options. Secondly, the mid-19th century was the age of Europe’s wars of national unification. To be a “nation” in 1863 meant something quite different from what it had before the French Revolution. It now signified an organic “people,” unified at the core, and raised up by a Providential history to fulfill a unique mission.

Key to understanding that mission is the idealism embedded in Lincoln’s civil philosophy. That philosophy relied on what Lincoln famously called a “proposition,” a word exposing Lincoln’s highly abstract and ahistorical way of talking about America. He took the Declaration’s affirmation that “all men are created equal,” turned it into a proposition, dedicated the nation to it, and then pulled all of American history through and from that proposition.

Lincoln’s propositional apriorism mirrors the Ger-

Lincoln’s propositional nation helped move America from the old exceptionalism to the new.

man idealism imported into the United States in the first half of the 19th century (at times secondhand via France and England). We know from Lincoln’s law partner, William Herndon, that Lincoln admired Boston’s radical Unitarian and Transcendentalist minister Theodore Parker. Parker, who died in 1860, had been one of the principal conduits of avant-garde German philosophy and theology into New England. We also know from Herndon that in 1858 he brought Lincoln a copy of Parker’s 1850 sermon “The Effect of Slavery on the American People.” Herndon recalled that Lincoln “liked especially the following expression, which he marked with a pencil, and which he in substance afterwards used in his Gettysburg address: ‘Democracy is direct self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people.’”

Just above these words, which Herndon paraphrased, Parker referred to the “American idea.” Parker warned of “two principles” struggling for “mastery” in the United States. Only one of them was truly the “American idea.” “I so name it,” he said,

because it seems to me to lie at the basis of all our truly original, distinctive and American institutions. It is itself a complex idea, composed of three subordinate and more simple ideas, namely: The idea that all men have unalienable rights; that in respect thereof, all men are created equal; and that government is to be established and sustained for the purpose of giving every man an opportunity for the enjoyment and development of all these unalienable rights. This idea demands, as the proximate organization thereof, a democracy, that is, a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people; of course, a government after the principles of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God; for shortness’ sake, I will call it the idea of Freedom.

Read alongside the Gettysburg Address, Parker’s contribution to the speech is unmistakable. At points the wording is nearly identical. This is not to say that Lincoln plagiarized from Parker. The point is to draw attention to how much Lincoln compressed into his brief speech. His civil philosophy, indebted to German Idealists like Parker, distilled something as complex, diverse, untidy, and contested as the formation of the American republic into one proposition, and then from that fragment of a fragment of the past extrapolated both the essence of America in 1863 and its purpose in the future. No part of any sentence of any document, even if that document is the Declaration of Independence, can carry this load.

Embedded in the Gettysburg Address, the proposition defined the making of America and why it fought a costly war. We cannot know how Lincoln would have wielded the proposition in pursuit of America’s postwar domestic and foreign policy; his death in 1865 left that question open, as Republicans and even Democrats used the martyred president and his words to endorse everything from limited government to consolidated power, from anti-imperialism to overseas expansion. Under all this confusion, however, Lincoln’s propositional nation helped move America from the old exceptionalism to the new. He helped America become less like itself and more like the emerging European nation-states of mid-century, each pursuing its God-given benevolent mission.

A propositional nation like Lincoln's is "teleocratic," in philosopher Michael Oakeshott's use of the word, as distinct from "nomocratic." That is, it governs itself by the never-ending pursuit of an abstract "idea" rather than by a regime of law that allows individuals and local communities to live ordinary lives and to find their highest calling in causes other than the nation-state. Lincoln left all Americans, North and South, with a purpose-driven nation.

One hundred and fifty years ago, President Lincoln, in the midst of a long and brutal war, deployed a powerful civil religion, civil history, and civil philosophy to superimpose one reading of American history onto any competitors. Ever since, generations of

Americans have come to believe that we have always been a democratic nation animated by an Idea. The alternatives have been excluded from the national creed as heresy. The way most Americans today interpret the Declaration of Independence, the purposes of the War for Independence, the principles that underlie America's Constitution, the causes and consequences of the Civil War, and the calling of the propositional nation to the rest of the world comes largely from the Gettysburg Address. To the degree we allow Lincoln's words to mediate how we read American history, they will continue to settle, preemptively, the most contested questions about America's origin, purpose, and destiny. ■

DEEPBACKGROUND by PHILIP GIRALDI

The release of the White House "Government Assessment" on August 30, providing the purported evidence to support a bombing attack on Syria, defused a conflict with the intelligence community that had threatened to become public through the mass resignation of a significant number of analysts. The intelligence community's consensus view on the status of the Syrian chemical-weapons program was derived from a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) completed late last year and hurriedly updated this past summer to reflect the suspected use of chemical weapons against rebels and civilians. The report maintained that there were some indications that the regime was using chemicals, while conceding that there was no conclusive proof. There was considerable dissent from even that equivocation, including by many analysts who felt that the evidence for a Syrian government role was subject to interpretation and possibly even fabricated. Some believed the complete absence of U.S. satellite intelligence on the extensive preparations that the government would have needed to make in order to mix its binary chemical system and deliver it on target was particularly disturbing. These concerns were reinforced by subsequent UN reports suggesting that the rebels might have access to their own chemical weapons. The White House, meanwhile, considered the somewhat ambiguous conclusion of the NIE to be unsatisfactory, resulting in considerable pushback against the senior analysts who had authored the report.

In a scenario unfortunately reminiscent of the lead up to Iraq, the National Security Council tasked the various intelligence agencies to beat the bushes and come up with more corroborative information. Israel obligingly provided what was reported to be

interceptions of telephone conversations implicating the Syrian army in the attack, but it was widely believed that the information might have been fabricated by Tel Aviv, meaning that bad intelligence was being used to confirm other suspect information, a phenomenon known to analysts as "circular reporting." Other intelligence cited in passing by the White House on the trajectories and telemetry of rockets that may have been used in the attack was also somewhat conjectural and involved weapons that were not, in fact, in the Syrian arsenal, suggesting that they were actually fired by the rebels. Also, traces of Sarin were not found in most of the areas being investigated, nor on one of the two rockets identified. Whether the victims of the attack suffered symptoms of Sarin was also disputed, and no autopsies were performed to confirm the presence of the chemical.

With all evidence considered, the intelligence community found itself with numerous skeptics in the ranks, leading to sharp exchanges with the Director of Central Intelligence John Brennan and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. A number of analysts threatened to resign as a group if their strong dissent was not noted in any report released to the public, forcing both Brennan and Clapper to back down. This led to the White House issuing its own assessment, completely divorcing the process from any direct connection to the intelligence community. The spectacle of CIA Director George Tenet sitting behind Secretary of State Colin Powell in the United Nations, providing him with credibility as Powell told a series of half-truths, would not be repeated. ■

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Seven Conservative Minds

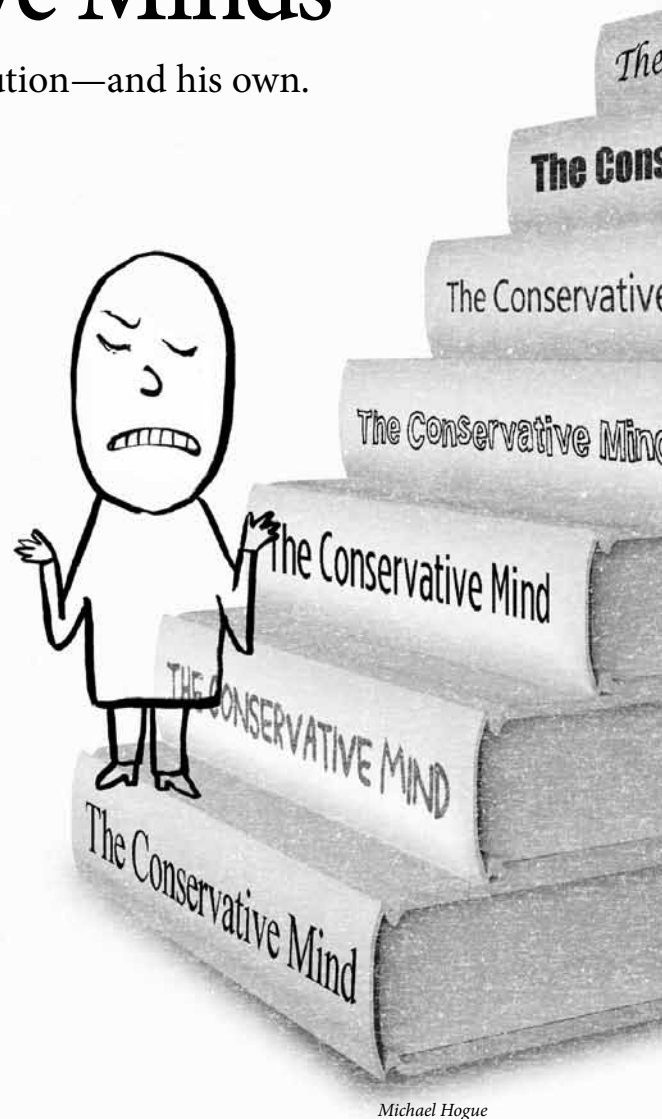
Russell Kirk's revisions trace the right's evolution—and his own.

by BRADLEY J. BIRZER

Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* became an immediate sensation upon its publication in May 1953. Prominent newspapers, magazines, and journals throughout the English-speaking world reviewed the book when it came out, sometimes twice, and almost always with depth and respect. Many disagreed with its 35-year-old Michiganian author, to be sure, but they did so with a bit of awe. Amazingly enough for any work of such depth, *The Conservative Mind* over seven editions sold well over one million copies during Kirk's lifetime, and has continued to sell well 20 years after his death.

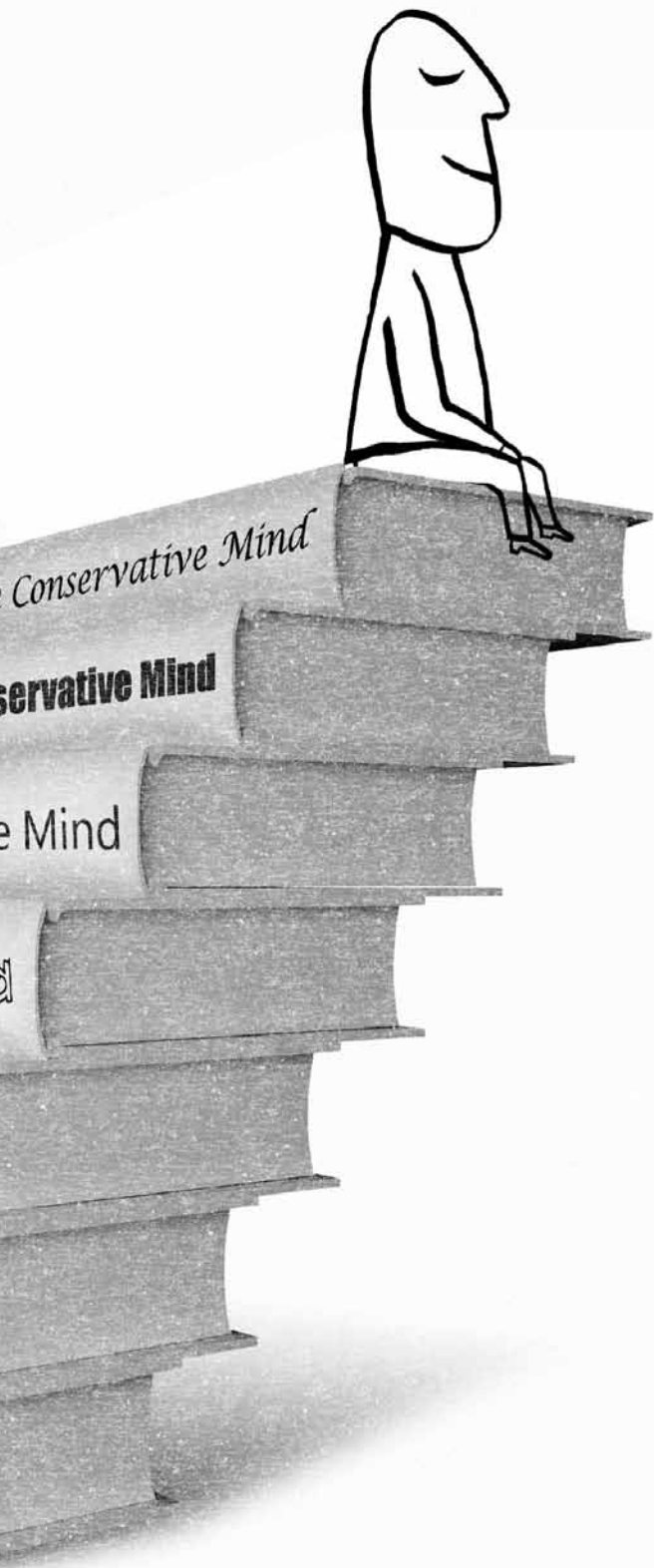
One might readily identify *The Conservative Mind* as seven books rather than as one. While the first four editions possess a righteous anger about them—Kirk even happily describing himself as reactionary at times—the last three editions carry a more comfortable feel. What had been “extreme” in 1953 had, by the seventh and final edition in 1986, become wise and almost commonplace during the second Reagan administration. Between the first edition and the last, Kirk had gone from a young Bohemian rebel to a respectable elder philosopher, the grey eminence behind conservatism's success.

Now celebrating 60 years since it was first published, *The Conservative Mind* and its permutations have as much to teach us about Kirk as they do about the meaning of postwar conservatism and libertarianism over a period of nearly four decades. No fan of Kirk, Sidney Blumenthal of the *Washington Post* recognized in 1986, the year the final edition appeared,



Michael Hogue

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that “*The Conservative Mind* was crucial in establishing the cause as a valid intellectual enterprise,” as it “offered a genealogy of conservatism.”

Kirk had written the book as his Ph.D. dissertation between 1948 and 1952, under the laissez-faire direction of Professor John William Williams—the “last

of the Whigs,” Kirk called him—at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. While Kirk had earlier found good professors and friends at Michigan State as an undergraduate, he had disliked his one graduate year at Duke, where he earned his history M.A. in record time with a thesis on the eccentric Jeffersonian John Randolph of Roanoke. Drafted into the military and stationed in Utah from 1942 to 1946, a wanderlust overtook him after the war. He discovered the work of D’Arcy Thompson, a scientist who described St. Andrews in idyllic terms, and presuming the traditional Scottish university everything he had imagined for an institution of higher education, Kirk applied and was accepted.

His days at St. Andrews were some of the best of his young life, and he relished every class and encounter. Williams, his director, had once earned a solid academic reputation, but by the 1940s students knew him only as a terror in grading, a lazy lecturer, and a drunk. He and Kirk, however, got on famously. Williams “now lives wholly in the world of whiskey, sherry, and literature,” Kirk wrote appreciatively. It is not clear that Williams ever read the dissertation in any form, but the University of St. Andrews awarded Kirk its highest degree, a D. Litt.—essentially a double Ph.D.

From the beginning, Kirk intended the dissertation as a means to revive—or at least give cohesion to—conservative thought in art, literature, and culture. On the day he conceived of the project, he wrote in his diary that he hoped it would provide an “invigoration of conservative principles.” So upon returning to the U.S., where he took up teaching at Michigan State, Kirk sought a publisher.

Alfred Knopf accepted the book, provided Kirk delete roughly a third of the work. Kirk refused, and instead he submitted the manuscript—then called *The Conservative Rout*—to the publishing firm of Henry Regnery. The book, he wrote in his submission letter,

is my contribution to our endeavor to conserve the spiritual and intellectual and political tradition of our civilization; and if we are to rescue the modern mind, we must do it very soon. What Matthew Arnold called ‘an epoch of concentration’ is impending, in any case. If we are to make that approaching era a time of enlightened conservatism, rather than an era of stagnant repression, we need to move with decision. The struggle will be decided in the

minds of the rising generation—and within that generation, substantially by the minority who have the gift of reason.

Regnery accepted the manuscript as it was, but he wanted a title change. The two men exchanged several ideas: *The Long Retreat*, *Conservative Ideas*, *The Conservatives' Course*, and *The Conservative Tradition*. On December 1, 1952, Kirk wrote to Regnery from his office at Michigan State: “Your servant is hard at work amending *The Conservative Mind*—for such, pending your approval, I am calling the book.” This decision, Kirk remembered in 1986, “seemed to have converted a rout into a rally.”

Beginning with Edmund Burke and John Adams, Kirk traced the theme of his study from the French Revolution, a horrific event that demanded an expression of conservatism, to the present age—From Burke to Santayana, as the subtitle originally read, or later From Burke to Eliot.

All editions of the book had three main characters—Edmund Burke, John Adams, and T.S. Eliot. Twenty-six other figures—many of whom had been largely forgotten by 1953, such as George Gissing and Orestes Brownson—made up the supporting

Kirk never backed down from his horror at the rise what he labeled “the machine,” anything in man’s world that lessened the particular gifts and purpose of each person as realized in relationship and community.

cast. (The fourth edition omitted Thomas Macaulay, though he appeared fully in the other six versions.)

The list of the characters who support the supporting characters, though, changed throughout all seven editions. In the first two, published in 1953 and 1954, a number of libertarians, anarchists, and individualists made this third tier. Albert Jay Nock, Isabel Paterson, and Friedrich Hayek, to name a few, appear early on. The latter two fall out in the third edition, never to return. Others, such as English poet John Betjeman, appear in the third edition and remain through the seventh.

Not only did a Burkean outlook hold these

seemingly disconnected persons together, but each, as the young author saw it, also embodied or promoted some permanent—or “timeless,” as Kirk wrote—truth in his own life, being, actions, or writing. The timeless truth one person exemplified need not be the same another did. Indeed, given the vast, often incomprehensible differences among human beings, a multiplicity of finite individuals would reveal a variety of infinite truths, some seemingly contradictory, others simply incompatible. He described this trait of humanity over time as a “principle of proliferating variety.” John C. Calhoun and Abraham Lincoln, consequently, could equally share space in Kirk’s understanding of American history, as each understood a different aspect of something eternally true.

Almost immediately upon the publication of *The Conservative Mind* in the United States, T.S. Eliot wanted to publish an edition revised for an English audience with his firm, Faber and Faber. Kirk met with Eliot in the late summer of 1953, and the two became fast and intimate friends—though one has to take into account that neither man was overly demonstrative or gregarious. Eliot wanted Kirk to slow down in his writing, take his time with scholarship, and get a serious academic job; he wanted Kirk to take a position at the University of Chicago. Elated to receive such praise from such an important figure, but determined to make his own way, Kirk took the invitation for a second edition to answer some of the critics of the first, to fix typographical and factual errors, and to refocus the book toward what he had discovered in the year since he had finished the dissertation in St. Andrews.

And as he continued to learn, he continued to revise. Thus, Kirk published seven versions of *The Conservative Mind* over his lifetime. Regnery, or one of its imprints, brought out editions one (1953); two, along with Faber and Faber (1954); three (1960); five (1972); six (1978); and seven (1986). Avon Publications published the fourth revised edition (1968) in its “Discus” series. Though the Avon iteration is the shortest, it is the most powerful in terms of argumentation and writing. Strangely enough, Avon, a Hearst imprint, was known mostly for publishing pulp romances. Its 1968 edition of *The Conservative Mind* sold for \$1.65 as a mass-market paperback, and Kirk seems to have

been at the height of his powers with this revision, balancing the righteousness of his youth with the wisdom of his later years.

Most of the changes from version to version were modest. Kirk understandably amends dates or modifies some political comment that had ceased to be relevant—for example, when a figure in power in 1953 was no longer by 1972. Kirk also took advantage of each new edition to dedicate it to a different friend or relative.

Other changes are complex and often subtle, but clearly reflect Kirk's evolving mind. The most significant changes over the seven versions come in his last chapter of each. The conclusions of versions one through three have much in common. The conclusions of versions five through seven are identical, except for a date change here or there. Again, it is the fourth edition that seems most interesting among the bunch, proudly proclaiming the poet the center of all true civilization.

Three of the larger changes suffice to show the adaptations and permutations of Kirk's thought between 1953 and 1986. First, Kirk's interest in libertarianism or its variations declines rapidly after the second version, to almost nonexistent with the third. In the first edition, Kirk lauded the work of individualists and anarchists such as Friedrich Hayek and Albert Jay Nock. He questioned the intent behind the word "individualist" but still appreciated the thought of those who promoted it. His hesitations about "individualism" were no stronger than the ones he had originally offered about T.S. Eliot and the poet's "ambiguities."

In the second edition, Kirk both removed any tentative critical judgments of Eliot, now a close friend, and argued rather bluntly that "the principal interests of true conservatism and old-style libertarian democracy now approach identity." With the third edition, however, published in 1960, Kirk not only included Eliot in the subtitle—officially making Eliot the culmination of modern conservative thought—but he also erased any explicit references to libertarian thinkers or libertarian thought. Nock remained, but he was noted for his criticism of, in Kirk's words, "the ascendancy of plutocrats and politicians, exercising the influence of an aristocracy of the Old Régime without the compulsions of *noblesse oblige*."

What had happened between the second edition in 1954 and the third in 1960 was a fateful meeting

of the Mont Pelerin Society, a gathering of classical liberals and libertarians, in 1957. Kirk attended at the invitation of his friend Wilhelm Röpke, the German economist, only to become an unnamed object of attack in an address by the society's president—Friedrich Hayek, whose remarks became the basis for his 1960 essay "Why I Am Not a Conservative." Kirk responded to Hayek extemporaneously at the meeting—and, one may gather, less extemporaneously in revising *The Conservative Mind*.

There can be little doubt that Kirk moderated his language and arguments in the later versions of The Conservative Mind.

Despite the separation from any formal connection to libertarianism, Kirk continued to assault the rise of Leviathan through all seven editions, often very effectively. He warned of a new statism:

This would not be capitalism, nor yet socialism; it is the colossal state created chiefly for its own sake. Socialists may help erect this structure; they will not endure to administer or enjoy it. The New Society, if constructed on this model, at first might seem a convenient arrangement for enforcing equality of condition; but its structure—as if a diabolical [later, "chthonian"] instinct had inspired its building—especially facilitates ends quite different, the gratification of a lust for power and the destruction of all ancient institutions in the interest of the new dominant elites. It is C.S. Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*.

Certainly these are arguments that should make any libertarian proud. Kirk never backed down from his horror at the rise what he labeled "the machine," anything in man's world that lessened the particular gifts and purpose of each person as realized in relationship and community. The machine—whether governmental, corporate, or educational—always diminished the dignity of man. Kirk considered attacking the

machine one of the most important aspects of his life and writings.

The second significant shift over the course of *The Conservative Mind's* revisions is the toning down of religious language, especially between the first several editions and the later ones. Tellingly, the first of Kirk's six canons of the conservative mind begins as follows in the first five editions: "Belief that a divine intent

Does The Conservative Mind have the power to bring together the numerous factions of modern conservatism and libertarianism?

rules society as well as conscience." By 1978, with the sixth edition, Kirk had changed this to a much more naturalistic, "Belief in a transcendent order, or body of natural law, which rules society as well as conscience."

Even more revealing, in the fourth edition he had proclaimed: "Thus the indispensable basis of any conservative order, religious sanction, remains tolerably secure." Kirk removed "indispensable" in the fifth edition, and lost it remained. Originally Kirk wrote: "It remains to be seen, within this century, whether the conservatives can contribute to force Sin, the ancient corruption of man, the proclivity to violence, envy, and appetite, back within the moral confines of Western society, injured as the old order has been by the repeated explosions of social radicalism." With the fifth edition, this became the much less robust: "It remains to be seen whether, within this century, the conservatives can contrive to restore the old motive to integrity."

Third, and perhaps most significantly, politics takes on increasing significance and even, arguably, surpasses the importance of poetry for Kirk. When the first reviews of the book began to appear in 1953, Kirk revealed considerable frustration over them. Not even the followers of the conservative humanist Irving Babbitt had laid "stress enough upon the ethical aspect" of *The Conservative Mind*, he lamented. "Politics, I never tire of saying, is the diversion of the quarter-educated, and I do try to transcend pure politics in my book"

In the first four editions, Kirk affirmed this with

increasing conviction. "Society's regeneration cannot be an undertaking purely political," he explained in 1968. "Having lost the spirit of consecration, the modern masses are without expectation of any better than a bigger slice of what they possess already." Thinking of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton, and reflecting lines from T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral," he claimed, "More than politicians, great poets shape the destinies of mankind." By 1972, however, Kirk argued instead, "No less than politicians do, great poets move nations."

There can be little doubt that Kirk moderated his language and arguments in the later versions of *The Conservative Mind*. In large part, this reflects Kirk's own views as he aged. After all, the Kirk of 1953 had no real experience in politics or marriage. The Kirk of 1972 had been involved in several campaigns, many of them national, and he was a husband, as well as a father of three daughters. What's more, despite the radicalization of culture and religion during the 1960s, a conservative vision and movement had begun to take shape.

Today, sixty years after it was first published, does *The Conservative Mind* have the power to bring together the numerous factions of modern conservatism and libertarianism? That was, in a way, what Kirk had tried to do at the beginning. Implicitly, while never succumbing to the dangers of systematic or ideological thinking, Kirk attempted to link five schools of thought together in *The Conservative Mind*: the "New Humanism" of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More; the English traditionalism of Edmund Burke and Cardinal Newman; the libertarianism and individualism of Hayek and Nock; the agrarianism of G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc; and the dystopian fabulism of Aldous Huxley and George Orwell.

Tensions existed between these schools, of course, but Kirk remarkably walked the fine line between them by maintaining the focus of the book on personalities and how those personalities manifested eternal truths in their own particular times and places. That path is still open to conservatives—and not just conservatives. After all, if we accept the premise of any of the seven versions of *The Conservative Mind*, every person is a new and particular reflection of a divine and timeless truth. ■

How many readers ever gave a moment's thought to the meaning of life? Not I. However after attending a series of lectures by Richard W. Wetherill decades ago, I embarked on a thoughtful journey, regarding the meaning of life.

Wetherill spoke of an insight he had been given, describing the true meaning of life explained by a natural law he called the *law of absolute right*. *It specifies rational, honest action with results that confirm or deny the rightness or wrongness of the action taken.*

All natural laws are self-enforcing, and if people disregard them, even slightly, what results is troublesome. Daily news-casts report a plethora of troublesome results.

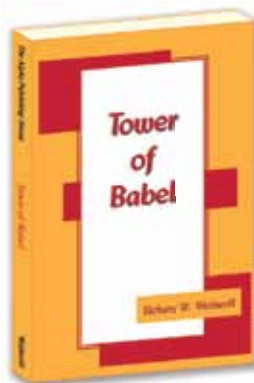
Obviously, human beings accumulate so many debilitating results from *their* decisions of right and wrong that death is just regarded as inevitable. But is death inevitable?

Created natural laws caused the action that created this planet and its people, and when obeyed, applicable natural laws support the planet and its inhabitants. It is people who, over time, have been unknowingly destroying themselves.

It is not the giver of life that destroys human life. It is the receivers of life who do not live in the rational, honest way called for by the creator's behavioral law. Instead they live as they please and finally are forced to depart this life.

Wetherill referred to the law of absolute right as the creator's moral code for people to obey. *We must all respect the fact that only rational, honest behavior assures the life and well-being of both the planet and its people.*

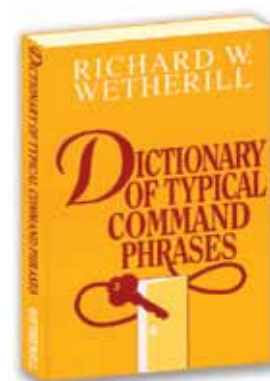
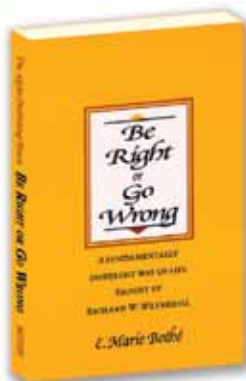
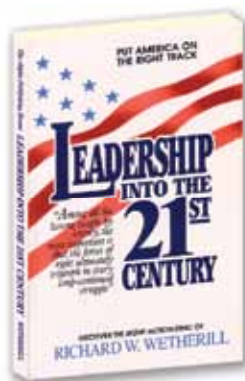
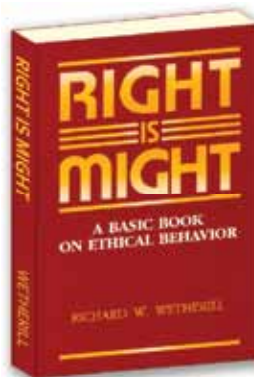
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Home Plate

BILL KAUFFMAN

What Rural America Is For

Under a slate sky that mutes all that is glorious around us, I drive to the Alexander Gun Show, as I do on the first Sunday of most Octobers.

It is election season, though an off year—"off year" meaning we vote for the offices that ought to matter most (county legislature, city council, town supervisor) but, under our centralized dispensation, barely register. When 80 percent of the county budget is effectively drawn up in Albany, what does it matter?

Yard signs endorsing candidates dot the roadside, though they are vastly outnumbered by the red, white, and blue placards that have dominated rural New York for months now and that read REPEAL NY'S SAFE ACT.

The SAFE Act was the panicked response to the Connecticut school shooting by Governor Andrew Cuomo (Mario without the intellect or introspection) and an urban-suburban controlled legislature. Drafted with appalling sloppiness—its definition of "assault weapons" is almost broad enough to include your kid's squirt gun—the SAFE Act is a suffocating welter of prohibitions, restrictions, and mandated background checks that severely constrict the historic liberties of my neighbors. (Whose violent crime rate, as is the case elsewhere in rural America, is minuscule.)

Fifty-two of the state's 62 counties have registered their opposition to the law, but these do not include the only counties that count in statewide politics: those containing New York City and its suburbs. Several county sheriffs, unlikely embodiments of Robert Frost's "insubordinate Americans," are refusing to enforce the act.

In the rusti-phobic imagination,

gun shows are stygian gatherings of edentulous Junior Samples lookalikes, but they are really rural swap meets. This show, like most, is held in a volunteer fire department, an institution that is the modern analogue of yesterday's militia. The dealers and browsers are the kind of men who serve in the wars that our liberal imperialists (Vietnam) and neoconservatives (Iraq I & II) design but never get around to shipping their own progeny off to. Absent is any glorification of the American Empire. My guess is that you'd find more vegans than Lindsey Graham fans here.

Walking the aisles, I see Winchesters, fishing lures, knives, and ammo, interrupted by "National Instant Gun Background Check" signs, an ugly intrusion of the surveillance state.

The mood is alternately defiant and resigned; there is a frustration borne of powerlessness. While huffy displays of bravado are rare, some of these men—and women—have pondered the question once posed by The Clash:

When they kick at your front door
How you gonna come?
With your hands on your head
Or on the trigger of your gun?

Hardly a week goes by without a news dispatch about the rural outliers of some state—New York, Maryland, Colorado, California—seeking to take advantage of a legal anachronism (the U.S. Constitution) that permits new states to be formed out of existing ones. (Every such article includes a stern admonition from Professor So-and-So that the deluded hicks had better shut up.)

The quickening talk of state scission—of recalibrating governance

more on the human scale—is a sign of hope, of an abiding faith in small-scale democracy, of, perhaps, the rekindling (or is it the last flicker?) of the old American ideal of local self-government. I write about this at length in my history of American secession movements, *Bye Bye Miss American Empire*.

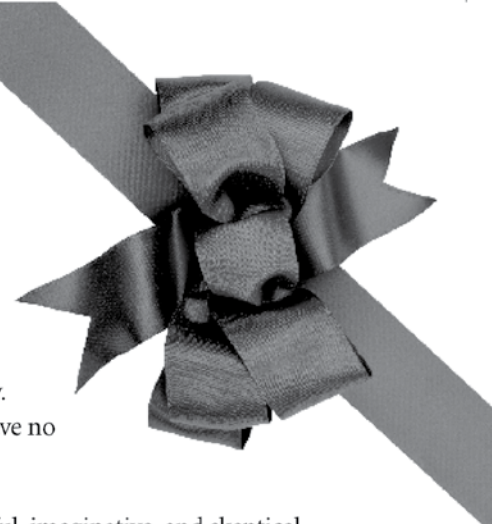
I can't think of a time when rural and small-town Americans were so disprized. That we have fed America, produced most of its enduring literature, and, politically, stood for peace and place—well, that was then. But rural America is still good for one thing.

Addressing Virginia farmers (including the great Joel Salatin) and agribusiness reps, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack noted that although the rural population of the U.S. has declined to just 16 percent, it makes up 40 percent of the nation's armed services. How can we occupy the world and destroy its traditionalist cultures, asked Vilsack, if the clodhoppers stop reproducing? (Okay, he didn't put it in quite those terms.)

During the First World War, the Kansas Socialist Kate Richards O'Hare was thrown into prison for sedition. Her crime? Telling a North Dakota audience that their rulers regarded farm mothers as "brood sows, having sons to be put into the army and made into fertilizer." A century later, Kansas Kate is confirmed.

From Western Maryland to the Southern Tier of New York to redwoods-and-weed Northern California, the brood sows are wondering if maybe they shouldn't have some say in the political arrangements under which they live. No man born with a living soul would deny them that right. ■

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Arts&Letters

Will Israel Go Fascist?

by SCOTT MCCONNELL

Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel, Max Blumenthal, Nation Books, 512 pages

Max Blumenthal's sprawling portrait of contemporary Israel is far more a work of journalism than political theory. It largely avoids sustained argument or analysis, allowing its main points to be inferred through the words of Israelis and Palestinians and short contemporary or historical descriptions, presented in several dozen vignette-like chapters. This is nonetheless a bold and shocking book, presenting persuasively a major theoretical and polemical argument about Israel almost completely at odds with the image most Americans have of it.

In *Goliath*, America's foremost partner in the Middle East is not the humanistic and ever resourceful "David"

using guile to vanquish surrounding brutes, but a militaristic and racist state whose electoral majorities have set it on a trajectory towards fascism, if it isn't there already. Even those generally well-informed about Israel and its occupation of the Palestinian territories will have their views challenged by Blumenthal's sharp eye and deadpan factual presentations.

Goliath eschews the standard liberal Zionist position that a relatively virtuous and democratic Israel was driven off course by some combination of the post-1967 occupation of territory won in the se-Day War, the burgeoning political power of the settlers, the authoritarian political culture of Russian immigrants, or the swelling political clout of Jews from North Africa and the Arab world. For Blumenthal, Israel's 1967 victory was not a turning point so much as a new opportunity to implement the ethnic-cleansing ideology present at the state's creation.

To a degree that has no clear equal among American journalists who cover the Mideast, Blumenthal is versed in

the history of the 1948 war that created Israel, with its multiple expulsions of Palestinians from their towns followed by wiping those towns off the map. His narrative makes regular connections between this past and the present. For instance, a section on security procedures in Ben Gurion Airport is introduced by a description of the massacre of civilians in the Arab town of Lydda in 1948 that was followed by a forced march of 55,000 survivors to Ramallah, the so-called Lydda Death March. Lydda was then Hebraicized to "Lod," site of the international airport where visitors to Israel and the occupied territories are now sorted by ethnicity before interrogation, their electronic devices often searched or seized.

Another episode: during the 1970s, the Jewish National Fund planted fir trees to cover the ruins of three Palestinian towns Israel had bulldozed in the aftermath of the 1967 war. The trees were nonindigenous to the region, though they reminded some Israelis of Switzerland. Three years ago, they burned in a huge forest fire Israel



Michael Hogue

could not control. Some who fled the conflagration came from nearby Ein Hod, which once was an Arab town built of stone houses. In the 1950s, an Israeli artist lobbied for Israel to preserve the houses as studios instead of bulldozing them as planned, and the town was turned into a tourist destination. When Blumenthal visited, a young woman acknowledged that the bar in which they were sitting was in fact a converted mosque. “Yeah, but that’s how all of Israel is ... built on top of Arab villages. Maybe it’s best to let bygones be bygones.”

Such a sentiment may have some practical utility and might be spoken

in good faith, but from a citizen of a country where so much national culture is derived from remembrance of wrongs done to Jews, its lack of self-awareness is remarkable.

Not all the past memories are bitter. Blumenthal tells the story of Benjamin Dunkelman, a Canadian officer who volunteered to lead troops in Israel’s War of Independence. After signing a local peace pact with the notables of Nazareth, a cultural and economic center of Palestinian Christians, Dunkelman received a general’s orders to expel the inhabitants. He refused. When the general sought a formal written order to override Dunkelman, David

Ben Gurion, who had given such orders before with a wave of the hand, balked at putting them in writing. So Palestinian Nazarenes, both Christian and Muslim, continue to live in Israel today.

A story of one of them, Hanin Zobi, is told in one of *Goliath’s* pivotal chapters. Blumenthal arrived in Israel shortly before the *Mavi Marmara* affair, when a flotilla of boats sailed from Turkey with provisions to alleviate the blockade Israel had imposed on Gaza, the strip of territory it had evacuated settlers from in 2005 and then pulverized three years later. Israeli officials joked that Gazans, a majority of whom

were suffering from what the United Nations called “food insecurity,” were having “an appointment with a dietician” and emailed to journalists sarcastic remarks about the menus of Gazan restaurants. As the flotilla approached, the Israeli military and Hebrew-language press ginned up a great panic about the boats, with their crews of aging European peace activists and a few Palestinian politicians. While the organizers assumed that Israel would relent and allow the provisions through, Israel sent commandos on helicopters and attack dinghies to storm the ship.

When some passengers resisted by throwing bottles and debris at the boarders, Israeli commandos replied with live ammunition. Nine passengers were killed, including a 19-year-old Turkish-American, shot in the face execution-style while lying wounded on the deck. Israel eventually apologized

An overwhelming majority of the Israeli public felt their country's brutal treatment of unarmed peace activists on the high seas was perfectly justified.

to Turkey for the incident and will probably pay compensation. But Blumenthal recounts with some astonishment that an overwhelming majority of the Israeli public felt their country's brutal treatment of unarmed peace activists on the high seas was perfectly justified.

In the aftermath, the IDF went into public-relations mode. Israeli soldiers gathered up knives from the boat's kitchen and laid them out in a photographic display with several Qurans, supposedly evidence the *Mavi Marmara* was leading an Islamist terror convoy. Israel jailed the surviving passengers and confiscated their laptops and electronic equipment. The IDF doctored a sound clip to make it appear that flotilla

organizers were crazed anti-Semites. Outside the Turkish embassy, Israeli demonstrators railed against Turkey. Blumenthal interviewed several of them, who ranged from self-described peaceniks to Meir Kahane supporters. “The longer I spoke with the demonstrators,” he relates, “the more likely they were to merge their nightmare visions of the flotilla activists as hardcore agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and al Qaeda with Holocaust demons. ‘Everything is against the Jews and we have the right to defend ourselves.’ ‘No matter what we do everything is against us—everybody. And we know we’re right.’”

This sentiment was echoed in the Knesset, when Hanin Zoabi, a 38-year-old Palestinian representative from Nazereth, elected by one of the Arab parties, instigated a virtual legislative riot by challenging Israel's right

to board the *Mavi Marmara* on the high seas. Zoabi holds a master's degree from Hebrew University and had been a

feminist activist prior to her election in 2009. She was on the boat, and after the assault began she grabbed a loudspeaker and used her Hebrew to try to get soldiers to stop killing unarmed passengers. Returning to the Knesset two weeks after the incident, she was interrupted by shouts of “terrorist” and “go back to Gaza” while the Likud speaker of the legislature tried in vain to restore order.

A member of Yisrael Beiteinu, one of Israel's governing right-wing parties, presented Zoabi with a mock Iranian passport. Michael Ben Ari, a follower of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane—whose party had been banned for racial incitement in the 1980s—initiated a measure to strip Zoabi of her parliamentary

privileges. It passed with minimal opposition. The next week Zoabi was deprived of her diplomatic passport. The Knesset then passed a bill, called the “anti-Incitement act,” promising to criminalize speech that could be characterized as disloyal.

These maneuvers reflected a broader popular spirit: an Israeli grocer offered free groceries for life to anyone who would assassinate the Nazarene legislator, while an “Execute Zoabi” Facebook page was created, attracting hundreds of supporters. No one in the Knesset and few in the media protested. Blumenthal sardonically concludes, “shouting down Arab lawmakers had become a form of electioneering.”

Sadly, the episode was in sync with Israel's broader political culture. Was the verbal violence against a Knesset member more troubling than the regular chants of “Death to the Arabs” shouted out at Israeli soccer stadiums? More menacing than legislation designed to impede marriages between Israeli citizens and West Bank Palestinians? More detestable than the Jerusalem celebrations of the life of Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish-American doctor who murdered 29 Muslim worshipers in Hebron in 1994? Or the provocation parades through Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, where hundreds of young Israelis and American Zionists join together to march the narrow streets of Jerusalem's Old City, booming the Hebrew slogans “Muhammed is Dead!” and “Slaughter the Arabs”? Or the mob violence young Israelis carried out against Arabs in the center of Jerusalem? Or the fact that followers of Kahane sitting in Parliament boast that the late rabbi's vision is now widespread in Israel's governing parties?

Since the 1920s there has been a word in Western discourse for this style of politics. The Israeli leftists and dissidents who became Blumenthal's friends have now taken it up. “Fascism’ was a word the leftists used almost invariably,” writes Blumenthal, “as they told me about having their

homes defaced with graffiti, death threats by right-wing thugs or about being summoned to interrogation.” Speaking with journalist Lia Tarachansky on a Tel Aviv bus, Blumenthal probed what Israelis meant by the word. How could she claim fascism was in the air when anti-Zionists like her were permitted to conduct their journalistic and political activities freely?

The Israeli replied:

To explain fascism in Israel, it's not that easy ... it's so depressing I usually repress my thoughts about it. But if you really want me to define it, then I'd tell you it's not just the anti-democratic laws, it's not the consensus for occupation, it's not the massive right-wing coalition government, it's not watching the people who ask questions and think critically being interrogated by the Shabbak. What it really is, is a feeling that you have sitting on a bus being afraid to speak Arabic with your Palestinian friends.

A young woman who had overheard their conversation interrupted to ask Blumenthal, “You with Israel or Turkiya?”

Blumenthal and his Israeli friends were not the first to broach the subject of fascism; the word has some history in Israel as a term of denigration against the right by the Zionist left. But is there substance behind the charge today? Or is this simply another variant of the promiscuous use of “fascist” as an epithet, in the style of the American New Left of the 1960s?

One scholar who has at least tangentially addressed this is Robert Paxton, an eminent Columbia historian and one of the world's leading scholars of fascism, the author of a prize-winning work on Vichy France's murderous persecution of Jews. In his last book, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, published in 2003, Paxton speculated on fascism as a continuing menace beyond Europe

and the interwar era. “If religious fascisms are possible,” he wrote, “one must address the potential—supreme irony—for fascism in Israel.” He noted that Israeli national identity is associated with human rights, long denied to Jews in the Diaspora. But he also observes Israel's demographic shift away from European Jews to Jews from North Africa and the Middle East (and today Russia), where democratic traditions are far weaker.

“By 2002,” Paxton continued, “it was possible to hear language within the right wing of the Likud Party and some of the small religious parties that comes close to the functional equivalent of fascism. The chosen people begins to sound like a Master Race ... that demonizes an enemy that obstructs the realization of the people's destiny.”

Surveying the “mobilizing passions” of fascism, Paxton lists among others “the primacy of the group, toward which one has duties superior to every right, whether individual or universal, and the subordination of the individual to it” and “the belief that one's group is a victim, a sentiment that justifies any action, without legal or moral limits, against its enemies both internal and external.” A reader of *Goliath* will find a people thoroughly marinated in such sentiment.

Blumenthal closes his book with a short chapter on Israeli expatriates: fully 13 percent of Israelis now reside abroad. The United States and Germany are the most favored destinations. “The Exodus Party,” he calls them. In Brooklyn, Blumenthal encounters several Israeli expats, including Rafi Magnes—the grandson of Judah Magnes, a famous Reform rabbi who was a founder and former

president of Hebrew University in Jerusalem—along with his wife, Liz. The latter relates, “We could have stayed of course, but the fascism had gotten to be too overwhelming.”

Is the situation really so dire? Blumenthal arrived in Israel shortly after the election of Israel's most right-wing Knesset ever. Those inclined to optimism can assert that that this election represented a high tide; more recent election results were somewhat more centrist.

The *Israel Goliath* depicts would

“If religious fascisms are possible, one must address the potential—supreme irony—for fascism in Israel.”

probably not be denied by liberal Zionists like Peter Beinart or the leaders of J Street. But they would argue that the proto-fascism is neither as widely nor deeply entrenched, nor as truly representative of the essential Israel as Blumenthal maintains, and that a fair settlement with the Palestinians could break the fever of racism and allow more sensible leaders to re-emerge as Israel's dominant voices. They could point out, as well, that Israel remains a functioning democracy for its Jewish citizens and at least guarantees some rights to others, while true fascist regimes—if popular at the outset, as they always were—eventually dispense with competitive elections and legal norms.

It is by no means obvious to me, however, which interpretation of the Israeli reality will appear, 10 years hence, to have been closer to the truth. ■

Scott McConnell is a founding editor of The American Conservative.

How Not to Fix America

by JUSTIN LOGAN

Rebound: Getting America Back to Great, Kim R. Holmes, Rowman & Littlefield, 264 pages

Analyzing the gamut of America's problems and proposing solutions for them would be a daunting assignment for any author, particularly in a span of fewer than 300 pages. But in *Rebound*, longtime Heritage Foundation scholar Kim R. Holmes gives it a try.

In his introduction, Holmes apologizes "ahead of time to those who would have liked more scholarly language and documentation. Alas, that is not the book I set out to write. This is popular history and sociology and hopefully it will be judged by that standard."

The problem is that popular history and sociology are incapable of doing the hard work Holmes has set for himself. To pin down the sources of America's problems, to say nothing of describing how to fix them, requires the social science Holmes neglects.

This book's thesis appears to be that "America's success as a nation depended on its civic and social culture mixing with the political traditions of liberty." In Holmes's view, America is in decline because of the "subtle diminishment of expectations over time to where what was once abnormal is normal, and what was unacceptable is now tolerable." This thesis is notable by its absence from large chunks of *Rebound*, which at times reads more like a manifesto.

Holmes does not hold back in his condemnations of modern America. The upper classes are insulated in a culture that is "not attractive or healthy" and "reeks of division, elitism, and a lack of seriousness." It's even worse among *hoi polloi* since "the absorption

of countercultural values by the lower-income classes has caused an epidemic of social dysfunction in poor neighborhoods." The country "no longer has a constitutionally limited government" and "not only are Americans' historic freedoms at risk; so, too, is their democratic republican form of government." The nation, writes Holmes, is worse off than it was in 1956.

Each chapter here begins with a figure Holmes either celebrates or decries. The introduction celebrates "James," a fictitious 1956 man who exemplifies Holmes' vision of a good American. Harlow Curtice, the president of GM in the 1950s; Walt Rostow; Steve Jobs; and Noam Chomsky all make appearances, but perhaps the most illuminating vignette consists of two middle-aged women living on a barrier island who represent Holmes's view of good and bad Americans.

"Jennifer" is—no kidding—a divorced liberal tree-hugger who works to protect endangered sea turtles, while "Mary" is a God-fearing entrepreneur who owns hair salons. Where Jennifer deploys the government to back her turtle-protection efforts, Mary deploys civil society to address the epidemic of uncollected dog droppings on the island.

In the course of Mary's community organizing, however, she and Jennifer have it out: "Being an environmental expert Jennifer insisted that [dog waste] was good for the sand dunes. It gave them structure, she said. 'Besides, dog s---t is natural.' Mary disagreed, saying how it smelled bad and attracted flies."

What on Earth is this passage doing in a book about "getting America back to great"? Holmes places it atop a chapter discussing the death of the American dream, a dream that Mary embodies and Jennifer threatens. The chapter flashes through topics ranging from the decay of religion and civil society to economic stagnation and overregulation to constitutional depredations. What's telling here is that Holmes views his culture-war fable as an appropriate hook for discussing all

of these matters and their role in the death of the American dream.

This failure to connect dots is what makes the book itself a failure. While Holmes makes clear throughout the book what he likes and dislikes, he does not explain why the cultural and political forces he likes keep losing. The book offers neither a thorough explanation of America's problems nor a plausible path to solving them.

For example, Holmes discusses the enormous national debt and annual budget deficits and advocates cutting spending to deal with them. He also suggests that "every serious economist knows" that remedying U.S. fiscal imbalances is "the first step in restoring the economy." Except this isn't what every serious economist knows. Plenty of serious economists think otherwise, unless one redefines "serious economist" to mean "economist who agrees with me." As for the politics of cutting spending, Holmes recommends "admitting that the government must have a dramatically reduced role in solving our problems," but he offers no advice on how to make this admonition politically relevant, despite the considerable challenges facing it.

The U.S. government doles out roughly \$1 trillion per year in tax expenditures, subsidizing various endeavors like owning homes, buying health care, and saving for retirement. As political scientist Suzanne Mettler has pointed out, these subsidies create a "submerged state" in which the recipients of government benefits do not recognize that they have benefited from the government. These programs, combined with Social Security and Medicare, constitute well over half of federal expenditures. They also all benefit middle-aged and elderly whites, the most important constituency of the very Republican Party alleged by some to be the best hope for cutting government spending. One would hope that a book pressing for the sorts of reforms that Holmes advocates would grapple with these realities, but *Rebound* does

not.

Unfortunately, the foreign policy sections of the book are even less persuasive. Holmes, who has worked on U.S. foreign policy for decades, misses basic facts while skewing his interpretations in ways that benefit Republicans and lampoon Democrats.

Sometimes, however, his efforts to make the left look ugly compared to the right lead him seriously astray. For instance, Noam Chomsky is rhetorically burned in effigy, but the work Holmes uses to indict him features Chomsky attacking the Lyndon Johnson administration's policy in Vietnam for being rooted in "a will to power... not so much cloaked in idealism as it is drowned in fatuity." Is there a historical judgment of Chomsky's that stands up better?

For his part, Holmes cannot see that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution did not rely on "supposed trickery" but rather on actual trickery. Similarly, it isn't clear why he refers to Robert McNamara as having been "reeducated and forced to confess his sins" rather than changing his mind about the Vietnam War.

The nationalistic view of American history presented in the book is a romantic rhapsody, despite the obligatory "to be sure" clauses covering slavery, the abandonment of Saigon, and other U.S. shortcomings. Liberals are castigated for believing that "America has sinned," but is this such a great offense—or even in dispute? Was the slaughter of innocent civilians in Southeast Asia something other than a sin? What of our subjugation of the Philippines during our early dalliance with empire, when 200,000 Filipinos died under U.S. occupation? Has the American state not sinned regularly and grievously?

In his discussion of the foreign-policy debates on the left during the middle of the 20th century, Holmes sides with Truman (over Korea) and Johnson (over Vietnam) against their opponents, mostly on the grounds that

the antiwar side was antiwar. Holmes's liberal heroes are "Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy," and his villains are Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama.

Obama, in particular, is at heart a Chomskyite, but one who is "aggressively going after terrorists" by running a drone war that is "arguably more bloody minded than Bush's war on terrorism." Holmes squares this Chomsky-as-Cheney caricature of Obama by referring to his "complex" motivations, the most important of which, we learn, is "a desire to avoid getting bogged down in foreign commitments."

Holmes is at pains to point out that he does not endorse "policing the world" or "launching military interventions willy-nilly"—it's just that there are no actual U.S. wars he opposes, and the "guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy" should be that "America stands for liberty for all." He seems to hope that the reader will not recognize the echo of George W. Bush's second inaugural address in that phrasing.

Holmes has gone through several ideological incarnations in his career, coauthoring an insightful critique of Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol's 1996 *Foreign Affairs* essay "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy" that denounced it as a "strategy of slaying the world's monsters," unconservative, and "pure escapism." Holmes then worked for the George W. Bush administration in its first term. He returned to Heritage in 2005 and muzzled analyst John Hulsman, who had quarreled with neoconservative Michael Ledeen on Iran policy, eventually purging Hulsman from Heritage altogether. In 2007, Holmes praised Bush for making the view that "America should actively support the spread of freedom and democracy around the world" a central component of the war on terror. He has opposed the Obama administration's foreign policy root and branch, from

the war in Libya and the proposed war in Syria to trimming the defense budget.

Holmes endorses the "apology tour" narrative beloved by the talk-radio set, asserts that the Benghazi attack makes clear that "the threat of terrorism is getting worse, not better," and claims that an Iranian nuclear weapon would "effectively [make] Iran the dominant power" in the Middle East. None of these claims pass basic scrutiny. As *TAC's* Daniel Larison has made clear, there was no apology tour. Every recent survey of the terrorist threat shows that it is lower than it has ever been. Even a

While Holmes makes clear throughout the book what he likes and dislikes, he does not explain why the cultural and political forces he likes keep losing.

nuclear Iran would still possess a very weak military, and nuclear weapons are not useful for compellence, making it very difficult for those weapons to enable Iranian regional supremacy.

That a senior scholar at one of Washington's most prestigious think tanks throws out these assertions without any supporting evidence speaks volumes about the evolution of the think tank. Think tanks used to fancy themselves "universities without students," but the sort of fanciful story that Kim Holmes offers in *Rebound* could not pass muster at America's worst university, and the reason would have nothing to do with liberal bias.

It is easy for those of us trading in ideas to oversell their role in political outcomes, but over a long enough time, bad ideas do bring bad consequences to the political actors who hold them. That time may have come for movement conservatism in the United States. ■

Justin Logan is director of foreign-policy studies at the Cato Institute.

Neoconservatism Rebaptized

by MICHAEL C. DESCH

Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy Under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan, Henry Nau, Princeton, 344 pages

George Washington University political science professor Henry Nau has impeccable timing. He has written a book aiming to, in his words, “fill a gaping hole in the foreign policy literature” with a conservative manifesto that “emphasizes the spread of freedom, armed diplomacy, and a world republic without big government.” This is his pithy definition of “conservative internationalism,” the American foreign policy tradition he wants us to rediscover.

A number of developments make his timing propitious: the Republican Party in particular and the conservative movement in general are in crisis.

That the muscular policy Nau describes as conservative internationalism has been the conservative policy since Reagan seems indisputable.

Eight years of the Bush 43 administration left both in tatters.

Internationally, failed wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have discredited efforts to use America’s unrivaled military capability to construct a balance of power that favors freedom. Domestically, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression has done more to discredit capitalism than all the Marxists in the world achieved since the *Communist Manifesto* rolled off the printing press in 1848.

Indeed, last year a Republican presidential challenger with impeccable business credentials could not unseat

a Democratic incumbent saddled with a nearly 8 percent unemployment rate and whom a significant fraction of the Republican base suspected of harboring crypto-socialist views (when he was not praying five times a day in the direction of Mecca).

If we define success as stimulating a fruitful debate about what should be the outlines of a central plank in the conservative agenda going forward, Nau’s book will undoubtedly be a smashing success. If we expect the book to settle this debate, however, or even clearly define its terms, we are likely to be disappointed: Nau offers us old wine (neoconservatism) in a new bottle (conservative internationalism). There are four problems with Nau’s vintage, two that I think are not worth arguing about and two that ought to be the heart of the debate his book helps start.

One issue ultimately not worth arguing about (though I do think it is important) is who is the “real” conservative. This is a definitional matter, and as with all definitions, what counts is whether it’s useful and is used consistently. That the muscular policy Nau describes as conservative internationalism has been the conservative policy since Reagan seems indisputable. And Nau is consistent in how he uses it.

Were I of a disputatious bent, however, I might point out that Nau’s own definition of conservatism—the belief “that if man cannot govern himself, he has no business governing others”—could be presented as *prima facie* evidence that his neoconservative or conservative internationalist foreign policy is hardly conservative at all. How can a philosophy that eschews social work at home be committed to engaging in it around the world?

The second issue not worth debating is who the real victim is in

foreign-policy circles. Nau himself opens the door to this question, and it is only by dint of Herculean willpower that I resist stepping through it. But Nau’s personal vignettes recounting his travails among the tenured radicals sorely tempt me.

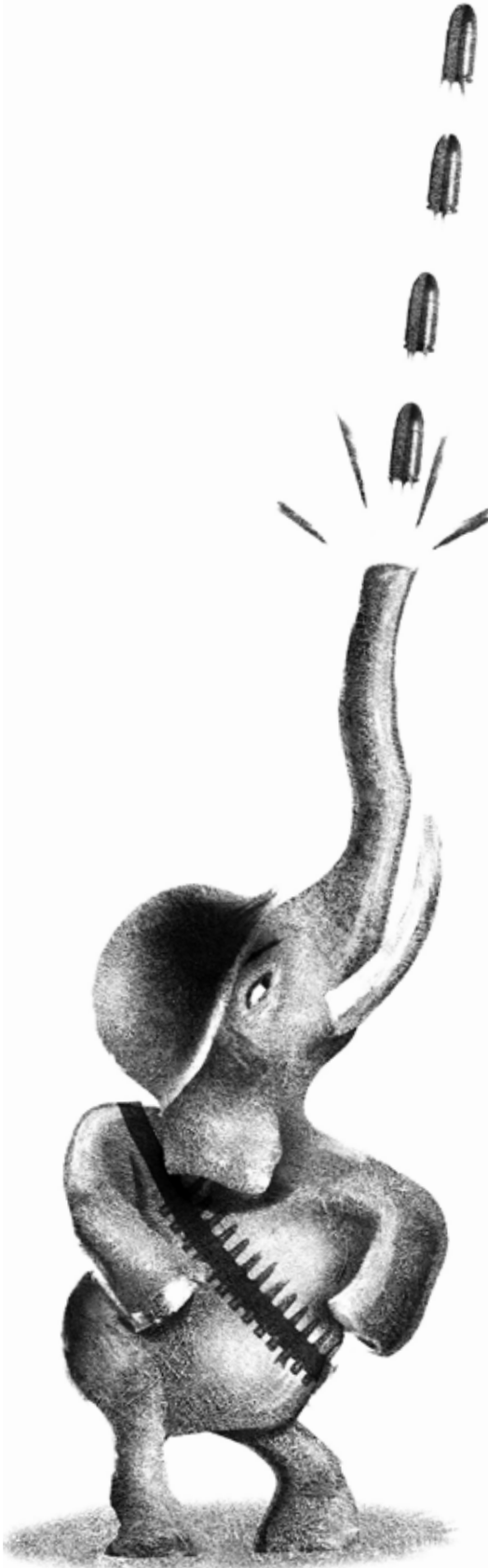
To be sure, Nau hardly exaggerates the leftward political skew of the professoriate. But he fails to leaven his story of conservative woe with the fact that there has been a rightward skew of a similar sort inside the Beltway over the last 30 years—particularly among the foreign-policy and national-security communities—that ought to have heartened a right-of-center academic, especially one like himself who was willing to spend time in government service.

Finally, the most serious provocation I resist is that Nau counts among the oppressors of conservatives in the Ivory Tower my tribe, realists. And it is true that there are a few bastions within it where realism’s writ seems to hold sway. But they are so few and far between that we realists have our own counter-narrative of victimhood. The late Princeton professor Robert Gilpin famously reminded us that “No one loves a political realist.” And the reason we are not loved by our colleagues is simple: we’re regarded as too conservative!

But rather than nigger about definitions or wallow in my own sense of victimhood, I want to focus instead upon two more consequential problems with *Conservative Internationalism’s* argument.

Nau, in my view, misdiagnoses the problem: the lack of serious engagement with a conservative foreign policy is largely an academic pathology. If I had a nickel for every real-world development my fellow denizens of the Ivory Tower overlooked, I could move out of it and into my own McMansion.

But fortunately, in most cases the real world moves on despite the efforts of those of us in the groves of academe to pretend it doesn’t exist. And in this



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real world, the “conservative” approach that Nau longs for has characterized American foreign policy with few exceptions since Ronald Reagan. (The brief realist interregnum of George H.W. Bush and his Metternich, Brent Scowcroft, is the exception that proves the rule.) In important respects—particularly the hyper-militarization of the War on Terror—it has continued under the putatively liberal auspices of the Obama administration and would no doubt do so as well if the Clintons took up residence again at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Having misdiagnosed the problem, Nau prescribes the wrong remedy. Rather than needing to return to the foreign policies of the last 30 years, we need not only to recognize the continuity over this period on what looks strikingly like a bipartisan consensus for conservative internationalism but also to consider the results of having pursued the policies that Nau commends.

To be sure, there were important differences between Reagan and Bush on the one side of the aisle and Clinton and Obama on the other—mostly over the means we should employ to implement American foreign policy. Republicans have been far more willing to go it alone than Democrats, who crave a fig leaf of multilateralism when they use military force to spread democracy and preserve America’s position as “the indispensable nation.” But these differences in tactics should not obscure the larger consensus on strategic ends during this period. Their shared dream has been of a world led by the United States toward ever more political and economic liberalism, a vision that inspired some people to engage in Hegelian flights of fancy about the world having reached “the end of history.”

All of this brings us to the elephant in the room that Nau hardly talks about. I don’t mean *that* elephant—the GOP—I mean the neoconservatives, about whom Nau says little; what he does say, in his effort to separate himself from

them, seems so unconvincing that it leads the reader to look for some deep psychopathology at work here.

Ronald Reagan is one of Nau’s heroes, and George W. Bush was an abject conservative failure. I can’t help but see in Nau’s treatment of them a deep unresolved tension that he can only paper over by, first, arguing that Reagan and Bush 43 were very different politically—and engaging in some rhetorical jiu-jitsu by associating realism with the latter and his vice president, Dick Cheney—and, second, ignoring the connections between the two administrations: the neoconservatives who served in them both.

The laundry list of their names is too extensive and well known to burden the reader with it here. And really, one name suffices to make my point: Paul Wolfowitz, who served in increasingly important national-security policy-making positions under each Republican president of the last 30 years, is widely regarded as the architect of the Iraq War. Indeed, one could go further and show that the neoconservatives were the bipartisan glue—remember, they emerged from the Democratic Party and served also in Democratic administrations—that held together the “conservative internationalist” coalition during this period.

Finally, could one imagine Nau making his conservative internationalist pitch at such hotbeds of neoconservatism as the American Enterprise Institute or the Heritage Foundation and receiving anything other than enthusiastic applause? Do we anticipate anything other than glowing reviews from neoconservative organs such as the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *Commentary*, or the *Wall Street Journal*? And if we can’t, how can we believe that conservative internationalism is really much different from neoconservatism?

Let me be clear, I do not begrudge Nau those and all of the other accolades his book will receive. What I do object to is his running away from his

neoconservative roots. In doing so, he obscures the fact that his formula has been tried before, not only by the good presidents he likes and thinks did well with it—Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan—but also those other presidents in whose hands conservative internationalism led to wrack and ruin. This is the central weakness of Nau’s argument: it advances a form of conservatism that has been tried and failed already. No wonder neoconservatism is the conservatism that dare not speak its name in his book. ■

Michael C. Desch is co-director of the Notre Dame International Security Program.

2012’s Lessons for Republicans

by LLOYD GREEN

Collision 2012: Obama vs. Romney and the Future of Elections in America, Dan Balz, Viking, 400 pages

The 2012 election was another chapter in America’s decades-old semi-civil war, and Dan Balz’s *Collision 2012* gives the ongoing rift between Red and Blue Americas the attention it deserves. In Balz’s telling, last year’s contest was not an ennobling exercise in democracy—both candidates were definitely found wanting. Balz repeats a senior Democrat’s observation that the teleprompter was the perfect metaphor for Barack Obama’s aloof persona, while the *Washington Post* veteran lets Mitt Romney’s own words repeatedly demonstrate the challenger’s disconnect from the nation he sought to govern. Balz shows the reader what went right and wrong with both campaigns.

Obama’s greatest problem was his stewardship of the Great Recession. He faced a stiff challenge as the election year approached: in December 2011, unemployment stood at 8.6 percent. To top it off, Obama had “left the country even more deeply polarized than it was under George W. Bush,” according to Balz.

Obama’s 2008 rhetoric—that America was “not a collection of red states and blue states” but that “we are the United States of America”—was by then as convincing as Bush 43 declaring himself “a uniter, not a divider.” The aspirational tropes of 2008 had yielded to the scars and scums of Obamacare’s enactment, the backlash in 2010’s congressional elections, and the ensuing debt-ceiling fight of 2011.

Romney’s problems were different. He was architect and author of Romneycare, the template for Obamacare

writ small. He was also a reluctant candidate who never captured the heart or imagination of the party whose nomination he sought. The former Massachusetts governor—by way of Stanford, Harvard, and Bain Capital—was constitutionally incapable of internalizing the fact that the Republican Party had become the home of the white working- and middle-classes, as opposed to a preserve for America’s wealthy. Romney meant what he said about the 47 percent and never understood what all the resulting fuss was about. That was his downfall.

In a post-election interview with Balz, Romney could only acknowledge that “well, clearly that was a very damaging quote and hurt my campaign effort.” But he continued to channel his inner Mitt, telling Balz that Americans remain most concerned about borrowing and spending—when in fact jobs were and are the top priority for an overwhelming majority of Americans.

As Balz points out, “Obama won re-election despite winning just 39 percent of the white vote and recording the worst margin among whites of any successful Democrat.” Thus, in a sense, Mitt met a target and still lost. Even that number is deceptive, though, as it masks Romney’s problem with white voters on the lower rungs of the social ladder.

In the Ohio and Michigan primaries, Romney narrowly defeated former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, assembling a bare coalition of wealthier voters and college graduates. In the general election, Romney managed only to eke out a five-point plurality among the Great Lakes’ white working class and did worse among that bloc in make-or-break Ohio than he did nationally.

Given an opportunity to reevaluate its candidate’s support for race-based affirmative action during the Midwest primaries, Romney’s campaign demurred. Likewise, Romney never wavered in his opposition to the

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automobile industry rescue favored by George W. Bush and Obama. America's workers got Mitt's message.

Oddly, for all of Romney's smarts and wealth, his campaign appeared removed from the technological advances that had been driving presidential campaigns for nearly a decade. The failure of Team Romney's ORCA data operation on Election Day was symptomatic of the technology deficit that plagued the Republicans from the start.

Balz focuses on the technical edge that Obama 2012 carried over from the 2008 campaign and how the president's team honed that advantage into an ever more potent weapon as Election Day approached. While Romney was telling his family that he really didn't want to run for president, and later when he was engaged in mortal combat with the Republican field, the Obama campaign was continuously testing and perfecting new ways to identify, woo, and nudge prospective supporters.

Balz rightfully gives kudos to the Bush 2004 campaign for its get-out-the-vote operation, and in a sense the sophistication shown by Bush 43 and Obama's respective campaigns reflects the perks of incumbency. Still, Obama's campaign manager and former deputy chief of staff, Jim Messina, threw himself into melding the latest in technological innovation with the needs of the re-election effort.

Messina tapped "Silicon Valley tech giants" for their expertise and sidled up to Google's Eric Schmidt for across-the-board advice. With Obama back in the White House, the relationship between Schmidt and Messina has developed into Civis Analytics, a consulting firm that stands ready to crunch big data for the highest bidder.

If the working class had doubts about Romney, the tech world had no such uncertainty—it was flat-out hostile. What might be called the modernity gap is a steadily growing problem for Republicans.

Election Day numbers and campaign-donor records reinforce the

point. In Santa Clara County, California—the heart of Silicon Valley—Obama bested Romney by more than 40 points, as statistics blogger Nate Silver recounts. Obama received approximately \$720,000 in contributions from Google employees, while Romney collected a paltry \$25,000. At Apple, the story was almost the same: its employees gave more than nine out of every ten campaign dollars they contributed to Obama. And once again, as in every election since 1992, graduate degree holders voted Democratic.

Romney's donors appear to have harmed his campaign almost as they helped it. The GOP donor base helped skew the campaign toward relying upon media buys, as opposed to seeking votes block-by-block, door-to-door. Whereas the Obama campaign successfully updated its 2008 playbook and made local field operations a focal point, the Romney campaign shuttered its local primary operations the day after a Republican contest had come and gone.

As a result, Romney was essentially dormant in Ohio from the late winter until the summer. Balz frames the facts on the ground like this, "Obama had at least 130 offices around the state, plus five hundred staging areas for volunteers working the final days." Romney had "about forty offices and 157 paid staff."

Balz recounts the rampant belief in Republican circles that pre-election polling was biased in favor of Obama and writes that Romney came to believe he would emerge victorious based upon perceived "voter intensity." Balz makes no mention of a poll circulated on the Saturday night before the election by Alex Gage, which showed Obama with at least 300 electoral votes. That pre-election poll was significant, as Gage was a veteran of the Bush 2004 re-election effort and Romney 2008 primary quest. His wife, Katie Packer Gage, was Romney's deputy campaign manager.

While interviewing Romney's in-house pollster, Neil Newhouse, for

the book, Balz failed to raise the issue of how these two contradictory polling narratives emerged. Likewise, Balz does not appear to have pressed Newhouse or Packer Gage as to what either did with the knowledge of Romney's likely defeat.

Collision 2012 is not just another campaign chronicle. It is also Balz's attempt to chart where American politics is and where it may be heading. What he sees is not reassuring. In his words, "campaign 2012 settled little." Indeed, the gap between "ideologically red and blue America" was "as wide as ever."

Balz notes the country's changing cultural and demographic landscape and acknowledges its role in Obama's win. For better or worse, yesteryears' outliers have matured into today's political dominants. George McGovern's coalition has finally prevailed.

History says that a Republican win in 2016 is doable because Americans generally tire of the incumbent party after two terms. Yet that trend may yield to the fact that the Democrats will be starting with a built-in advantage in the Electoral College. Republican must-win states such as Florida, Ohio, Virginia, and New Hampshire have gone Democratic in the last two elections.

Meanwhile, it remains to be seen whether Republicans can reach working- and middle-class voters in large numbers outside of the South. Paul Ryan's demands for entitlement reform may sound soothing to high-end contributors, but as the GOP becomes ever grayer, that message gets tougher to sell even to the party's core membership.

Doing better with less affluent voters while keeping wealthier Americans happy enough to vote Republican is no easy task. Understandably, Balz does not offer his own predictions. ■

Lloyd Green was opposition research counsel to the George H. W. Bush campaign in 1988 and served in the Department of Justice between 1990 and 1992.

Pulp Paranoia

by JESSE WALKER

The Man From Mars: Ray Palmer's Amazing Pulp Journey, Fred Nadis, Tarcher, 289 pages

One winter day in 1943 an odd letter arrived at the offices of the sci-fi pulp magazine *Amazing Stories*. The author, a steelworker named Richard Shaver who had spent some time in mental institutions, claimed to have uncovered “an immensely important find”: the ancient alphabet of a “wiser race” that preceded humanity on Earth. An amused staffer read some entertainingly weird bits of the correspondence out loud, and dropped the document into the trash.

His boss immediately retrieved it. “You call yourself an editor?” he asked.

The man who salvaged and then

Replacing his political dream with a science-fiction fantasy allowed Palmer to gloss over the political conflicts that creating a world government would require.

published the papers was Ray Palmer, the Milwaukee-bred subject of Fred Nadis’s new biography *The Man From Mars*. Palmer’s editorial instincts turned out to be sound: Shaver’s letter may have been ludicrous, but it inspired a lot of reader interest. And it made Shaver a part of the *Amazing Stories* stable, an association that proved very profitable for Palmer’s magazine.

Shaver followed up with a 10,000-word manuscript he called “A Warning to Future Man,” a purportedly true account of the ancient beings who lived beneath the ground. Palmer rewrote

this into a 30,000-word story called “I Remember Lemuria,” and started promoting it heavily. “For the first time in its history,” he wrote in the May 1944 issue, “*Amazing Stories* is preparing to present a true story. But it is a story you will not find in the newspapers.” The piece finally appeared at the end of the year: a wild account of aliens who had come to Earth long ago, then retreated to a subterranean world when they learned that the Sun’s rays could kill them. Eventually most returned to the skies, but the remnants they left behind became two grand forces, the evil “deros” and the good “teros,” who between them were responsible for virtually everything that happened in our world.

Palmer arranged for an expanded print run of that edition of the magazine. It sold out and prompted about 50 times as many letters as an ordinary issue. The episode known as the Shaver Mystery had begun. Shaver kept sending his visions to Palmer, and Palmer kept polishing them into pulp fables and publishing the results as true. In Palmer’s hands, Shaver’s worldview became a sprawling, immersive tale that deliberately blurred the boundary separating fact from fiction. (Even within the stories themselves, it wasn’t always clear what was supposed to be revealed truth and what was just a pulp flourish.)

“While the Shaver stories amused some as good yarns and infuriated others as outrageous nonsense,” Nadis recounts, “Shaver’s paranoid vision beckoned to many as genuine.” Some readers started searching caverns for the dero and tero technology they read about in Shaver’s tales.

You can see three streams flowing together in the Shaver/Palmer mythos.

One is simple madness. Shaver had suffered a rupture with reality after his brother died in 1934, a death he blamed on a demon called Max. From there a larger worldview grew, with its ancient extraterrestrials and subterranean cities. The writer later claimed to have been kidnapped and imprisoned underground for eight years, where he witnessed the deros’ tortures firsthand. In fact, he spent this time in mental hospitals and living as a homeless tramp. His first wife died during one of his stays in a psychiatric ward, and he lost custody of his daughter, who was told that her dad was dead. He spent a little time in a regular jail, too. It’s not hard to see how those experiences might be reimagined as captivity among the deros.

The second stream is mysticism—the cultural strains that today are widely known as the New Age. There is a long tradition of allegedly true tales of lost continents, pre-human intelligences, and benevolent and malevolent conspiracies based beneath the soil. (Mount Shasta in California is a particularly popular location for the manipulators’ supposed headquarters.) And the third stream, of course, is science fiction.

Occultists and sci-fi writers already had a history of borrowing ideas from each other. The Theosophists of the 19th century were influenced heavily by the science-fiction novels of Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, for example. Pulp writers, in turn, had drawn on the Theosophists’ ideas about the lost lands of Atlantis and Lemuria for ages before “I Remember Lemuria” came along. In 1941, several years before Shaver’s stories started to appear, Robert Heinlein’s novella “Lost Legacy” imagined a secret order beneath Mount Shasta working to expand human potential; it was opposed by a Long Island-based psychic cabal that controlled “the racketeers, the crooked political figures, the shysters, the dealers in phony religions, the sweat-shoppers, the petty

authoritarians.” If he had claimed his tale to be true, we might have had a Heinlein Mystery instead of the Shaver one.

The Shaver mythos was also a conspiracy theory, one that fell into two broad paranoid narratives that have been present in America since the colonial era. The deros were an enemy within: an evil force that permeates ordinary society and hides in familiar places. In an enemy-within story, anyone—your coworkers, your neighbors, even your spouse or kids—might be or become one of Them. (At one point, Palmer claimed that the conspiracy was plotting to kidnap him, Shaver, and their families. “To cover up the kidnapping,” he wrote, “trained doubles for all of us would be substituted.”)

Shaver’s enemy-within story was all-encompassing: absolutely anything that went wrong could be attributed to the deros’ machinations—as Shaver called it, their “tamper.” “No act was too petty for the deros to tamper with,” Nadis explains. “If you were in a car crash this was a result of tamper. If you could not find your keys in the morning, this was an act of tamper.”

The teros, meanwhile, were a version of another old narrative, the benevolent conspiracy: a shadowy force working behind the scenes to improve people’s lives. During World War II, before he started publishing Shaver, Palmer had embraced the idea of a global government, calling on “everyone with any idea of freedom in their heads, to begin planning what kind of world state we are going to vote in when this is all over.” It’s not hard to see Shaver’s benevolent teros as a displaced version of that utopian dream: an angelic race of supermen keeping an eye out for humanity.

I doubt it was deliberate, but replacing his political dream with a science-fiction fantasy allowed Palmer to gloss over the political conflicts that creating a world government would require. It is worth noting that Palmer’s

political roots were on the right: as a sheet-metal worker in the ’30s he had spent time, he later recalled, “battling the then-CIO union to maintain an open shop.” Shaver, meanwhile, came out of the left: before his breakdown, he had given pro-union speeches and joined the radical John Reed Club. But they were able to unite behind the banner of the teros.

To an extent, of course, that unity was just a way for Palmer to pursue some bucks. The editor was cagey about how much he believed the lore he was publishing, sometimes describing it with the fervor of a believer and sometimes adopting a more neutral we-report-you-decide stance. Privately he is said to have assured some skeptics that the whole thing was a publicity gimmick. But while other writers often assume that Palmer was just an unscrupulous entrepreneur exploiting a madman, Nadis offers some good reasons to think Palmer sincerely believed at least some of these ideas at least some of the time. The two men became bona fide friends, after all, with Shaver eventually settling his family on a farm near Palmer’s acreage in Wisconsin. And Palmer continued to promote his neighbor’s work long after the Shaver fad of the ’40s faded.

Nadis also argues, convincingly I think, that Palmer’s “exploitation” of Shaver helped the latter get back on his feet, and not just in the prosaic sense that Palmer paid him fairly well for his stories. Palmer, Nadis writes, “helped Shaver reengage with the world, bringing out the artistic products of his own vibrant imagination.” What once were just delusions were transformed into art, and Shaver evolved from a tramp whose visions got him committed to hospitals into a farmer whose visions were read across

America.

As public interest in Shaver’s stories declined, Palmer moved on to new mysteries, mythologies, or participatory fictions (take your pick). As editor of *Fate* he played a leading role in forging the legend of the flying saucers, most notably by publishing Kenneth Arnold, the man who made the first major UFO sighting of the era. Palmer would edit many more publications over the course of the 1950s,

Nadis offers some good reasons to think Palmer sincerely believed at least some of these ideas at least some of the time.

’60s, and ’70s, from the paranormal magazine *Mystic* to the science-fiction outlet *Universe* to a personal newsletter called *Forum*.

Near the end of his life, he was increasingly attracted to right-wing conspiracy theories about creeping socialism and the threat of one-world government. (Palmer no longer found the idea of a world government attractive.) At this point Nadis throws up his hands. In those final conspiratorial essays, he writes, Palmer “seems unhinged—a veteran baseball player having trouble with his vision and swinging wildly at the plate.”

It’s a strange turn for the book to take. Bizarre as Birchite conspiracy theories can sometimes be, they’re Brookings Institution white papers compared to that stuff about deros and teros. But Nadis, who is capable of giving Palmer and Shaver’s strangest texts a nuanced and sensitive reading, here just seems puzzled and offended. How, he wonders, could Ray Palmer, a man who defended the rights of blacks and Indians, opposed the Vietnam War, wrote sympathetically about the hippies, and suggested as

early as 1967 that he doubted “there is anything either wrong or harmful in homosexuality,” also be an extreme individualist who despised the Great Society, fretted that environmental regulations were a plot to eliminate private property, and voted for Barry Goldwater and George Wallace?

Now, there certainly are some unusual combinations here—most notably when Palmer, replying to a black reader, tried to make a case for simultaneously supporting the Wallace campaign and opposing racism. But Nadis seems unduly puzzled that someone could combine Palmer’s socially tolerant leanings with John Birch-style conspiracy theories. There are at least two groups where that mixture isn’t all that uncommon. One is libertarians, and Nadis frequently stresses the libertarian strain in Palmer’s political views, to the point perhaps of exaggerating it. The other is New Agers, and Palmer’s role in forging the modern New Age is one of Nadis’s central themes.

My only other substantial complaint about the book is its occasional tendency to present Palmer’s accounts of his adventures as though they’re true, chiming in only later to concede that this notorious promoter of dubious tales may have exaggerated or invented a detail or two. Notably, the book opens with a dramatic visit to Palmer’s office by a pair of FBI men investigating his interest in flying saucers. Four pages pass before Nadis acknowledges that it is “possible” that Palmer “made up the episode,” adding, “there’s no note of it in his FBI file.”

But these are minor defects in a deeply interesting book. *The Man From Mars* is smart and engrossing, and it expands our understanding of the nuts and carnival barkers who have done so much to cultivate America’s homegrown mythology. ■

Jesse Walker is books editor of *Reason* and author of *The United States of Paranoia*.

Adam Smith, Communitarian

by DAVID J. DAVIS

.....
Adam Smith’s Pluralism, Jack Russell Weinstein, Yale University Press, 341 pages

Legend has it that at the age of four, Adam Smith was kidnapped from his Scottish home by a travelling band of gypsies. A gentleman passing the gypsies on the road noticed the crying baby and alerted town officials, who rescued young Adam hours later. Of this near tragedy, Smith’s 19th-century biographer John Rae sardonically commented that it was very fortunate because Smith “would have made ... a poor gypsy.”

This story is where Jack Russell Weinstein begins a fascinating examination of Smith’s moral philosophy. He is convinced that in a way Smith’s philosophy continues to be held hostage by political pundits and intellectuals on the right and the left. In his academically rich study, Weinstein argues that the significance of Smith’s sweeping exploration of human virtue has been eclipsed by countless oversimplified readings of his economics. Weinstein believes, however, that in the modern world of diversity and multiculturalism it is Smith’s moral philosophy that we need more than his economics.

Ever since 1776, the first year of its publication, *The Wealth of Nations* has proved more popular than Smith’s first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith’s emphasis on free markets, his colorful metaphors like the invisible hand, and his farsighted expectations for the industrial revolution have made *Wealth of Nations* essential reading in our market-based, technologically-driven world.

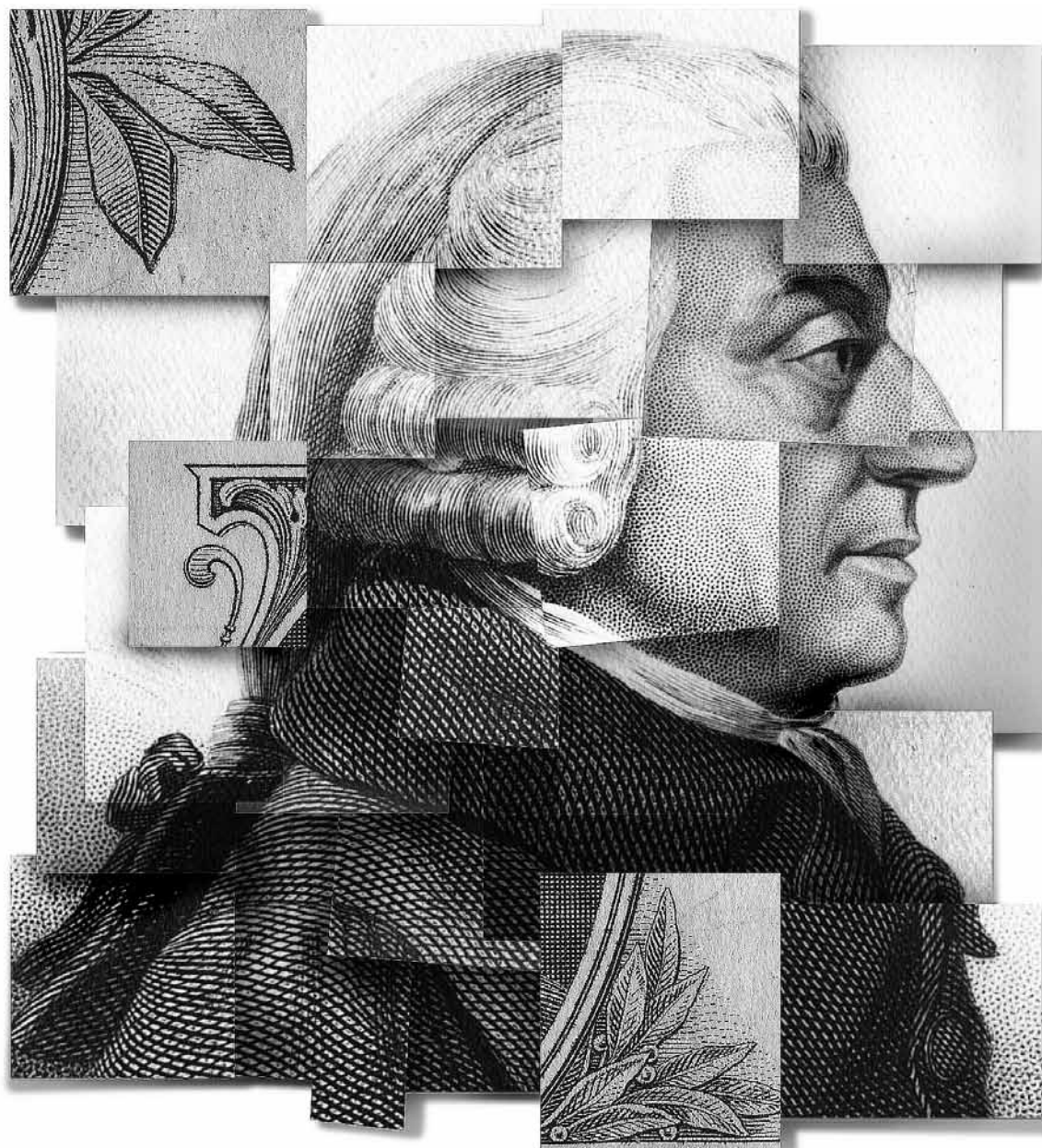
This favoritism for *Wealth of Nations* has made Smith a “widely misunderstood” thinker, according to Weinstein. Smith is too often positioned as

the godfather of “unfettered markets, libertarian governments, interactions solely for the purpose of satisfaction, and atomistic cosmopolitanism.” What has been lost is Smith’s “clarion call for personal relationships” as the basis for human society and his advocacy for a functioning pluralism—though Smith did not use the term—that is at the heart of *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Adam Smith’s Pluralism is the first volume in a trilogy Weinstein intends to write on Smith. Here he proposes a “Smithian shift” in contemporary liberal theory, emphasizing Smith’s key principle of sympathy and his efforts to find a method of achieving harmony in the disparate motives and passions of individuals. The book pays particular attention to the roots of Smith’s moral philosophy found in the works of Thomas Hobbes, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Bernard Mandeville, and David Hume. With this context and his own mastery of Smith’s writings, Weinstein hopes to rescue Smith’s moral philosophy from a host of abductors and put it to work for the 21st century.

After briefly bemoaning the deformation of Smith’s philosophy at the hands of political pundits, Weinstein offers a critical assessment of previous literature on Smith. Many scholars have investigated what is known now as the Adam Smith Problem, which pits the altruism of *Theory of Moral Sentiments* against the self-interest of *Wealth of Nations*, demanding from Smith’s thought a singular, overarching cause to explain human action. This oversimplified perspective, Weinstein contends, fails to see Smith’s promotion of “multiple motives,” which Smith believed were not only “essential” for society but also consistent with human nature.

Weinstein also takes issue with philosophers like John Rawls and Alasdair MacIntyre who, in their different ways, “badly misrepresent Smith.” For Weinstein, however, the greatest impediment to a thorough appreciation of Smith’s moral philosophy is the specter



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of Immanuel Kant. Weinstein points to Kant as an unfortunate addition to liberalism's intellectual framework:

many of liberalism's shortcomings are the product of its Kantian foundation. The conceptions of autonomy and universal reason that Rawls and others build on do not allow for complex notions of identity, political consideration of affection for individual persons, the importance of subjectivity, the emotions in moral and political commitments, and variations in human reason.

Assertions like this alone make the book worthwhile. To appreciate Smith fully, Weinstein rightly suggests, we must dispose of Kant's quest for singularity and uniformity and, following thinkers like MacIntyre, acknowledge the permanent reality of differing moral traditions.

Much of the book is spent illustrating Smith's appreciation for the kind of variety and depth in human nature and reason that is absent from the Kantian tradition. Smith, Weinstein argues, did not bifurcate the human faculties of reason and emotion, which is why any attempt to develop a single Smithian motivation for human action is

erroneous. Reason and emotion are too interlinked in the human condition to be separated. This is why Smith distrusted any logical or analytical approach to human society that demoted emotion and intuition to a second or third tier of experience. Weinstein explains that for Smith, far from emotions being the antithesis of reason, they regularly "initiate, are the consequence of, and are often indistinguishable from reason."

The complexity that Smith sees in human reason flows over into his study of human society. Smith refused to accept the cynical view of human nature propounded by Hobbes and

Mandeville. Yet he was also a moral realist who acknowledged human vice and vanity, which were at odds with an equally evident inclination toward virtue. Following from this, in a particularly insightful portion of the book Weinstein completely discredits any purely economic reading of Smith. He contends that “life is not a marketplace” for Smith. Instead, “it is often familial, pedagogical, spiritual, and natural; it is only sometimes commercial.” Competition and self-interest were means to an end, not ends in themselves. Rather, Weinstein sees the healthy notion of harmony as the most dominant ideal running through Smith’s philosophy.

Weinstein builds upon Smithian harmony, explaining that while life is not always commercial, it is always

The state of nature for Smith is one of community, and the ultimate questions related to human society are questions of morality and virtue, not economics and politics.

communal. Community, in turn, derives its lifeblood from “imagination,” because imagination creates the capacity for sympathy. Unlike Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers, Smith “presumes human difference” as a necessary and inherent aspect of civilization, rejecting the Kantian ideal of “noncontextual normativity.” Smith recognized that cultural, temporal, and social differences shaped norms and values, making it impossible to create a single, all-inclusive norm of human behavior. This is why sympathy is so important. It offers a means that is natural to the human condition—our desire to commiserate with our fellow man—to bridge the gap between our differences.

Smith believed that “political society is not derived from a social contract,” according to Weinstein. Instead, society is a natural expression of what it means to be human. The state of nature for Smith is one of community,

and the ultimate questions related to human society are questions of morality and virtue, not economics and politics. Thus, a broad, morally robust education rooted in a particular community is essential to forming sympathetic individuals. While Smith did not idealize the role of education—it could not completely eliminate human selfishness and vanity—he believed it had the power to “direct vanity to proper objects” and to “convert competing passions into a harmonious character.”

The role of language is an essential component of Smith’s moral philosophy because it is the fundamental connection between the individual and the community. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Smith expounded on the virtue of both poetry and prose,

which “provide the capacity for exchange and agreement” in different contexts of human relations. It is in the sections of *Adam Smith’s*

Pluralism on the importance of language that Shaftesbury’s influence on Smith shines through the strongest, particularly with Shaftesbury’s stress on language as a vehicle for unifying “the good and the beautiful.”

Language is so basic to Smith’s moral philosophy that toward the end of the book Weinstein feels compelled to contend with Michel Foucault and the postmodern critique of the discontinuity between language and reality. Though interesting, this chapter is something of a belabored effort, as Weinstein’s examination finishes with the same stalemate as everyone else who contends with the postmodernists. In Weinstein’s words, “Smith may have nothing to say” to them, “but they, in turn, have no means of refutation.”

Adam Smith’s Pluralism is a refreshing study of Smith, but it is not without its problems. Weinstein neglects the relevance of Smith’s metaphysics,

dismissively referring to “whatever the metaphysics that underlie Smith’s system.” Further on, in an attempt to assure the reader that Smith’s pluralism can transcend its Judeo-Christian heritage, he asserts, “there appears to be no divine revelation for Smith.” If this is true, it is neither self-evident in Smith nor evident in Weinstein’s analysis. Nor does Weinstein address such obvious influences on Smith’s metaphysics as Isaac Newton’s natural theology, which is essential to Smith’s baseline understanding of a created order in both the moral and physical universe.

If this were another exposition of Smith as the grand economist, then the neglect would be acceptable. But Smith’s principle of sympathy is rooted in metaphysical assumptions about human nature and society and their purpose in absolute reality. Without this foundation, the argument for sympathy as a compass for morality, as well as a mediator of competing motivations, loses much of its potency. The liberal who embraces Smith’s sympathy but refuses to deal with his metaphysics must do so either arbitrarily—sympathy being as good a guiding principle as any other—or, as Steven D. Smith has argued in *The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse*, surreptitiously, smuggling in certain beliefs about human nature without explanation or defense. Either way, the options are quite pale and shallow.

Nevertheless, even without Smith’s metaphysics, this is an invigorating reorientation of liberal theory. There are striking similarities to Burke’s moral imagination, which is particularly evident in Weinstein’s analysis of the intersections of beauty, language, and moral choice. Weinstein rescues Smith’s moral philosophy from its economically obsessed captors will prove an extraordinary blessing for conservative and liberal alike. ■

David J. Davis is assistant professor in history at Houston Baptist University and author of *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation*.

The Political Form of Freedom

by DANIEL J. MAHONEY

Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic, Pierre Manent, Harvard University Press, 376 pages

The French political philosopher Pierre Manent has produced an unusually rich and varied corpus. He is the author of one of the most discerning books on the political thought of Alexis de Tocqueville and has written numerous works of scholarship and commentary highlighting the strengths and limits of the liberal tradition, as well as the intersection of religion and politics in modern times. Politically, he is a man of the right, or at least not a man of the left. He is an incisive critic of the European project in its present form, lambasting its inattention to the “political form”—the nation—that has provided the body or framework for democratic self-government in the modern world.

His works are written with rare lucidity and grace. Yet they are challenging to even the most learned reader, not least because of the seemingly effortless erudition that informs them. *Metamorphoses of the City* is no different in this regard. At the same time, it is perhaps the most ambitious of Manent’s work. It sets out to “propose an interpretation, or at least the elements for an interpretation, of the political development of the West.” That is high ambition indeed, and one Manent delivers on with great success.

Much of Manent’s previous work centered on making sense of modernity as a self-conscious “project” for liberating humankind from the West’s dual classical and Christian heritages. This theme finds elegant expression in *Metamorphoses of the City*. As Manent puts it in a particularly notable passage,

the modern State ... rests on the repression, in any case the frustration, of the two most powerful human affects: on the one hand the passionate interest in this world as expressed in active participation in the common thing, and on the other the passionate interest in the eternal and the infinite as expressed in the postulation of another world and participation in a community of faith.

Modernity represses or frustrates “two fundamental movements of the soul” and creates a human order that is both post-civic and post-Christian. Manent is one of the rare thinkers to appreciate that the de-Christianization of the West is part and parcel of the same process as its de-politicization. As he writes near the beginning of his book, “In Europe today, the civic operation is feeble and the religious Word almost inaudible. The two poles between which the Western arc was bent for so long have lost their force.” Manent’s work as a whole is in large part an explanation of how Europeans arrived at this remarkable depletion of civic and religious energies.

Yet paradoxically, the modern project first came to light as a political project, a great endeavor of human thought and human action. One of the tasks of Manent’s book is to locate the project of collective action that is modernity “in the history of European and Western political development.” To understand our late modern condition with its “dearth of political forms,” its utopian quest to leave politics behind altogether, one must return to the pre-modern period, when a great variety of political forms—the city, the empire, and the Church—competed for the

loyalties of men.

Manent’s account begins with the city, the *polis*, which is the first political form. With the help of Homer, he treats the “poetic birth of the city,” the world of gods and heroes at the heart of Greek political theology. And in very suggestive readings of Aristotle’s political writings, he shows how democracy was the pinnacle and final stage of self-government in the city. The classical science of politics is rooted in a searching engagement with the free political life that is characteristic of life in the city. Classical political science is less abstract than modern political science: in it, science and experience came to light together “in a proximity and intimacy that were never to be found again.” Manent aims to remain faithful to this “classical” fidelity to lived experience.

Greek political science is a science of regimes, “the science of the different ways of self-government in the city.” Greek—Aristotelian—political science was aware of life outside the city but did not believe that empire was compatible with the “ruling and being ruled in turn” that characterized free political life. Even at the height of its empire, Athens remained first and foremost a city. Under wise and capa-

Christianity and the Christian church offer much needed mediation between God and man, nature and grace, the universal and the particular.

ble rulers from Solon to Pericles—the “axis of good” in the history of Athens, as Manent calls it—eminent men put their prudence at the service of “the growing power of the people.”

Athens invented politics, the “strange activity” that exemplified the *polis*, the political form of self-government *par excellence*. The empire of Alexander

the Great did not rise out of the city but rather out of what Aristotle would call the “tribal monarchy” of Macedonia. With these considerations in mind, Manent establishes a general rule, “a law of physics of political forms,” which states that political forms “do not directly transform themselves one into the other.”

That general rule is true except for one remarkably revealing case that is at the heart of Manent’s exploration.

Freedom depends on a vivifying framework, and in the modern world the framework for combining civilization and liberty is the nation-state.

The city and empire are indeed two polar opposites. The city “is the narrow framework of a restless life in liberty; the empire is the immense domain of a peaceful life under a master.” In Rome, however, one saw the impossible or near impossible, the transformation of a city into an empire.

Of course, the distension of the Roman republic long preceded the formal establishment of the Augustan principate. Rome had lost its republican luster long before Caesar tried to formalize that fact by making himself emperor. As the political and philosophical writings of the great Cicero richly illustrate, Rome was caught between a dying republic and empire yet to be formally established.

In a brilliant reading of Cicero’s *De Officiis* (*On Duties*), a work written near the end of that Roman’s life, Manent shows how his political thought already reflected the “blurred” or “indeterminate” character of the Roman political and moral order. The “citizen” is “practically absent” in *On Duties*. The new duality of politics is between the “magistrate” and the “private person.” The magistrate is elevated even as “the citizen is reduced to the condition

of a private individual.” The magistrate bears the “person” of the city and pledges himself to uphold the laws and to protect the rights and property of individuals.

As Manent suggests, this is a proto-modern vision, an anticipatory sketch of the modern state that “elevated above society and separated from it, returns to it to assign each member of society to his or her rights.” In Cicero’s writings, one also finds a new understanding of

the individual nature of human beings, not simply the individual application of a universal human nature

characteristic of Greek philosophy. The great republican hero Cato, whose suicide reflected a commitment to the republic and abhorrence of tyranny, is said to have followed his individual character, his proper nature. The individual thus plays a strikingly new role in the Ciceronian moral universe.

The “indeterminate” character of Rome would survive the fall of the Roman Empire itself. Contrary to a widely held belief that the Middle Ages were a time of unparalleled order and community, Manent finds them characterized by a wrenching incapacity to establish a settled or concrete political form. The conflict between city, empire, and Church would persist for one thousand years—Europe’s “Ciceronian moment,” as Manent calls it—and would be overcome only when Europe found its specific political form, the nation-state.

Manent is deeply sympathetic to what he calls the Christian proposition. Christianity and the Christian church offer much needed mediation between God and man, nature and grace, the universal and the particular. Christianity made the invisible—conscience—visible to men in a truthful

and salutary way. But Manent also emphasizes that Christian discourse “is not politically operational.” Neither by reason nor revealed Word can it provide a ground for preferring one regime to another or for guiding collective life.

Christian theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas had to turn to political philosophy, law, and political history to find the political guidance lacking in the essentially trans-political New Testament. The fact that Christian discourse is not politically operational makes it much harder to find a “Christian” alternative to modernity, since modernity is in no small part a response to Christianity’s incapacity to govern the body politic in anything like a stable and satisfying manner. Christians are obliged to acknowledge this fact.

This is not to say that Christianity has nothing to offer in a searching examination of political regimes or a history of Western political development. *Metamorphoses of the City* culminates in a hundred-page engagement with St. Augustine’s *City of God*. This is as rich an encounter with Augustine’s famous text as I have come across. Manent shows that Augustine’s critique of paganism is in no way exaggerated or overwrought. Vulgar paganism still had considerable staying power at the time of the fall of Rome in 410 AD, and Augustine was obliged to forcefully take on these essentially man-made and fraudulent religions.

But Manent argues convincingly that Augustine did not simply set out to demolish pagan heroism. It is Hobbes and modernity that see in pagan glory only vainglory. Christianity, and Augustine, in contrast have a “certain sympathy” for pagan glory, since there is a genuine nobility in “the movement of the soul that aspires to glory.” Where Hobbes sees ridiculous vanity, Christianity sees “noble error.”

If Augustine could not countenance the suicides of Lucretia and Cato—suicides rooted in pride or jealousy for

glory—he saw only nobility in the sacrifices of Regulus, another Roman hero who “preferred to suffer the slavery and torture of his enemies rather than avoid them through death.” In defending the separation of the two cities, the city of God and the city of man, Augustine still tries to do justice to whatever nobility is inherent in the pagan dispensation.

Moreover, Augustine does not attack social or political inequality *per se*, but rather the “pertinence of the distinction between the few and the many, the philosopher and nonphilosopher, which is so central to Greek philosophy.” Without succumbing to egalitarianism or humanitarianism, Christianity offers the same salutary truth to all men, siding neither with the egalitarianism of the moderns nor with the “elitism” of the ancients. The contemporary relevance of these discussions ought to be apparent enough.

What is so impressive about Manent’s book is his ability to articulate the dignity and seriousness of the great spiritual and moral contents of the Western tradition. He is a Christian who does not insist dogmatically that Christianity has the final word on the human condition. What he does insist on is that Jewish law “that separates the chosen people from the ‘nations,’ Greek philosophy that separates the ‘philosopher’s nature’ from the rest of humanity,” and “the Christian Church that separates the city of God and the earthly city,” each have “more substance and coherence” than the abstract modern idea of “human generality or universality.”

As Manent makes clear in the last section of his book, modernity culminates in a religion of humanity that erodes civic life even as it rejects the “mediation” that allowed Christianity to bring together the divine and human, the universal and particular. Manent reminds his readers that Christianity is not humanitarianism, that it refuses the reduction of the moral life to a vague affirmation of “fellow

feeling” and indiscriminate egalitarianism. The religion of humanity—and the global cosmopolitanism that accompanies it—is “devoid of political significance.” It is a cheap substitute for the genuine transcendence to be found in the City of God.

Manent offers a rich, dialectical political science and political history that do justice to classical and Christian wisdom without eschewing the decencies of liberal democracy. In providing the richest history of political forms yet available, he shows that freedom depends on a vivifying framework, and in the modern world the framework for combining civilization and liberty is the nation-state. There is no other political form available for the taking. There can be no democracy without a self-confident nation. It is a mistake to think that the future belongs to a “global process of civilization” and that human beings can live without a political form.

But the nation-state forgets its

Christian “mark” at its own peril. As Manent shows, the liberal state is the descendant of Christian monarchy and was long compatible with confessional religions, whether Catholic or Protestant. “One of the most important political questions facing us is whether this origin has kept a part of its power, that is, whether the original determination still remains determinant to some degree today.”

In this profoundly learned meditation bridging many disciplines, Manent helps to make civic life more comprehensible and the religious word more “audible.” This book is a powerful intellectual antidote to the de-Christianization and de-politicization of modern European life, as well as a major contribution to understanding the political development of the Western world. ■

Daniel J. Mahoney holds the Augustine Chair in Distinguished Scholarship at Assumption College. He is the author of The Conservative Foundations of the Liberal Order.

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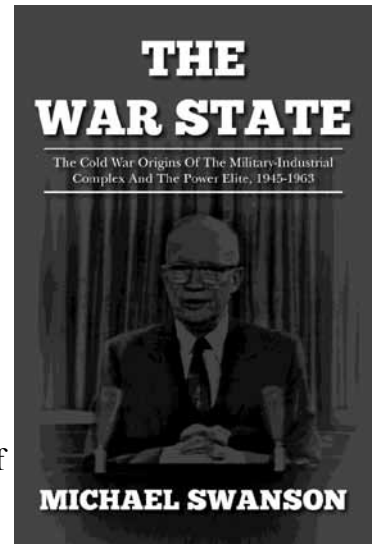
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Taki

Last Tango in Cannes

James Toback is a very intelligent screenwriter and director who actually discovered Harvey Keitel and turned Mike Tyson into an actor of sorts, mostly playing Tyson. Toback relishes pushing people's buttons and has a devilish radar for psychodrama, all of which comes into play in his latest movie, the riotous "Seduced & Abandoned," a fly-on-the-wall depiction of how to get—or not get—a movie financed during the Cannes film festival. It's also a backhanded homage to Orson Welles, a man Jimmy Toback is starting to resemble in girth, who famously declared that 95 percent of his time making movies was spent trying to get financing for them.

Oh, I almost forgot, yours truly is also in the picture, playing myself on my boat being visited by Toback and Alec Baldwin, also playing themselves, and being solicited for funds during a very liquid lunch on board Bushido. Pitching their project, which they present as a remake of "Last Tango in Paris" but this time based in Iraq and renamed "Last Tango in Baghdad," Toback and Baldwin make the Cannes rounds visiting the rich and famous looking for financial backing while offering prospective stardom for those willing to pay and play. The pros, the men and women who do this type of lending for a living, are not impressed. One horrible type asks rather incredulously, "Last Tango in Baghdad? Who's the jerk who thought that one up?" Others, like the financier Arkie

Busson—a childhood friend of mine—remain unimpressed while lounging in their hundred million dollar seaside villas.

This is where the fun is. Jimmy and Alec show clips of Marlon Brando in one of the filthiest scenes with Maria Schneider in the Paris tango movie. "Just think of this with bombs falling and Alec buttering up Neve Campbell while she has her fingers you-know-where" is one of the main pitches to investors. Some cringe, others look at their shoes—bare feet rather, this is the Riviera—but the pros simply say, "It's not worth 20 million, I'll give you five."

Then comes the serious part, which in fact has gotten the movie-within-a-movie rave reviews from every newspaper and magazine that has reviewed it—more than 35 as of this writing, even the grey old bag of the *New York Times* called it splendid and a Toback triumph. This is the part when the intrepid pair interview Roman Polanski, Martin Scorsese, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Francis Coppola. These serious artists are marvelous because they speak about the movies in general, and their own in particular, in unheard of fashion. There are no public relations creeps around, nor journalists, so the four geniuses let it rip. I attended the premiere in Cannes, saw the movie, and did not blink while I was on the screen. I heard the cheers after it was all over, most of them coming from pros in the business of moviemaking.

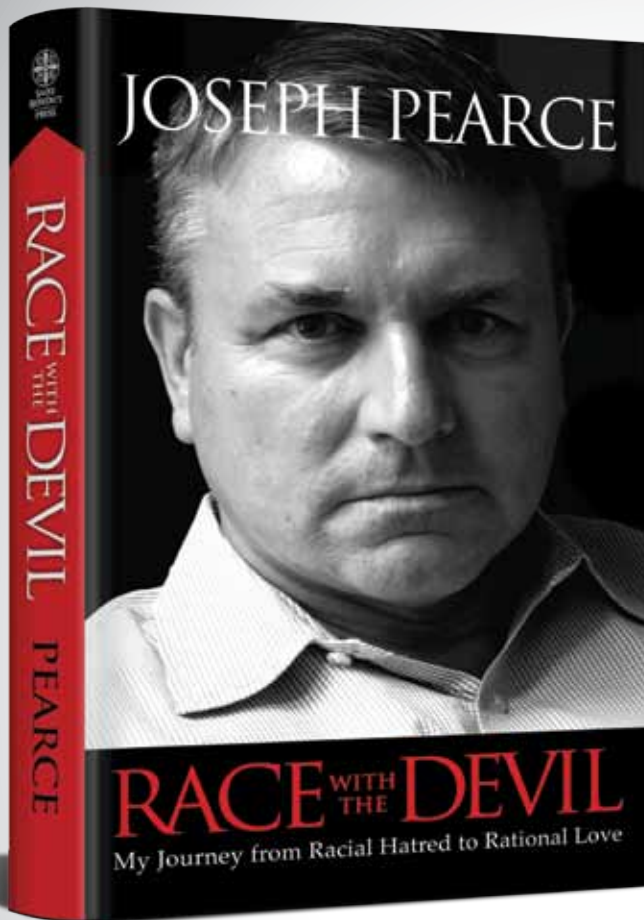
One of my closest friends in the world, Michael Mailer, the producer,

has stuck my name on the opening credits; that is the only embarrassing thing about the film. He even had me walk the red carpet like a star—no, I did not use a wheelchair but made the steps up into the Festival Hall on my own, so there—and at the party following the premiere two famous agents approached and asked me if I was starting a new career at 77. (Mikey had put them up to it.)

So, there you have it. A movie-within-a-movie, with the professionals in the know, others taking Jimmy and Alec seriously and offering serious money for "Last Tango in Baghdad." It is also a tribute to the Cannes film festival, which has launched countless hits and which I used to regularly attend when I was a very horny young man making my way around the Riviera fleshpots armed only with a Jaguar convertible, a tennis racket, and absolutely not a penny in my pocket. Returning after all those years was bittersweet. I had the yacht and the connections, but what was missing is the most important thing in the world: Youth.

"Seduced & Abandoned"—which is what always happens when trying to put a movie together—is opening for one week in certain art theatres, then will regularly show on HBO, which bought it with alacrity and has big plans for it. Watch it and you will get an A-to-Z look at how a film is made. And make sure you don't go out for popcorn and miss yours truly. Don't even look down at the bag, in fact. ■

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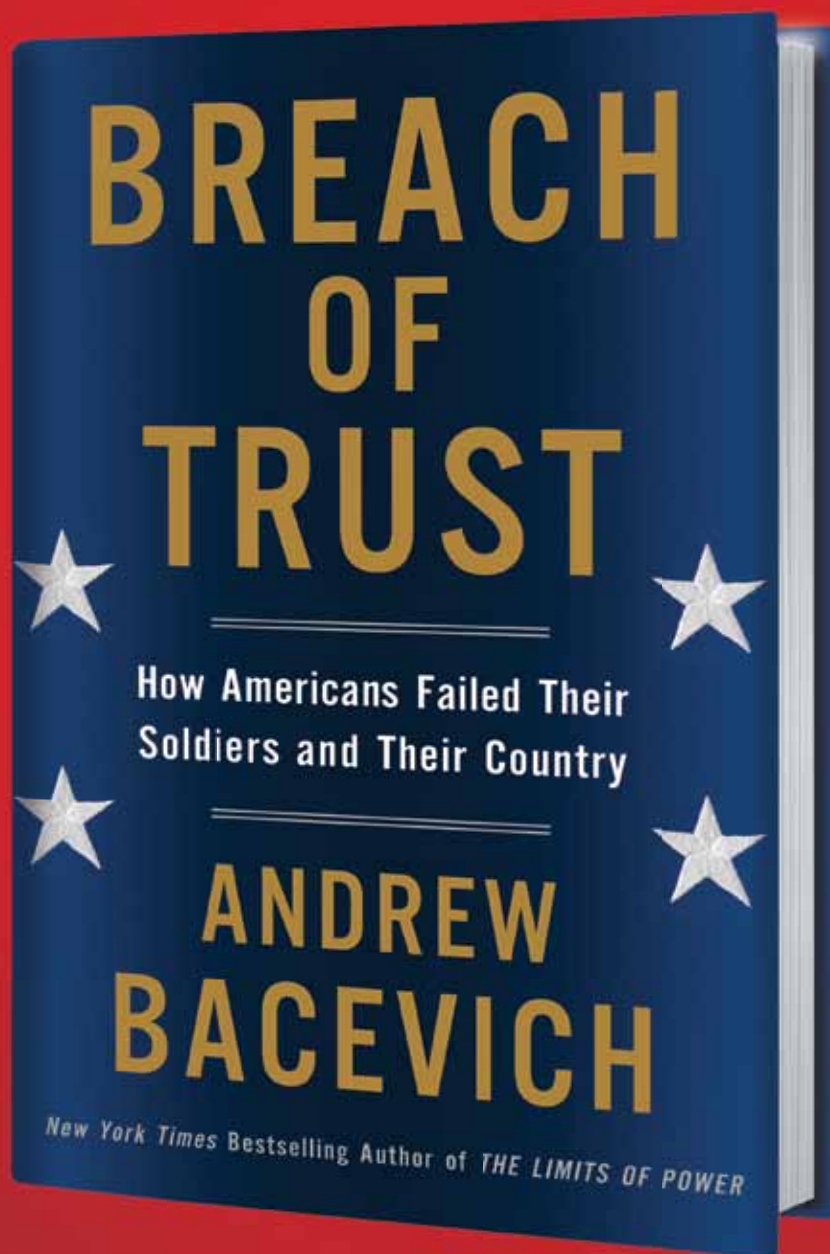
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