

heighten the contradiction, nowhere does he explain the virtual absence of blacks or other minority races in the three movements on which he concentrates.)

Likewise, social identity is bypassed. At one point he says excursus followers "have a social identity like anyone else," but alongside a "dissonant non-social identity." In another he asserts the disintegration of mainstream social identity, but then confesses that "the ultimate cultural meaning" of this is hard to assess. If, however, humans desire consonance at most levels of experience (a fact he admits earlier, and one that some believe accounts for the connections between political and religious conservatism), then surely there is social, economic, and political dissonance underlying these movements as well. If not, an explanation is certainly in order.

Ellwood fails to differentiate between types of excursus (both movement and nonmovement forms), historical times and geographical settings, homogeneity or heterogeneity of participants, and political and economic climates and constituencies. Thus the book generalizes about faiths that are often dissimilar. For instance, the same motivations and social implications do not obtain in both Pentecostalism and Zen. Regional and racial differences between these two can hardly be ignored. Nor are the social and political climates in this country and the world during the 1800's, when Madame Blavatsky turned to India and Tibet, comparable to those of the 1950's, when the "beatnik" generation sought Eastern religion. Also, one suspects that the current popularity of Zen is due to reasons different from those operative in the Fifties; this is strengthened by Ellwood's assertion that the current excursus reflects a generational difference.

There are other problems. Ellwood fails to harmonize what he describes as the nonliterary character of excursus religion with the spate of literary sources and products he quotes and attributes to these faiths. He does not address the nonhistorical strain of excursus religion, with its claim to represent something older than establishment Western religion. He emphasizes the oppositional character of excursus religion, but does not explain why it is uninterested in doing ideological battle with normative religion. Seeming contradictions abound.

Toward the very end Ellwood raises two extremely important issues but fails to develop either. He dismisses out-of-hand the alleged "occult, theosophical and oriental" derivation of Nazism. One can't judge these as bedfellows, since Christianity also has its own anti-Semitic strain, Ellwood claims. (Surely, if the point is worth raising—and it has been raised by others—it is worth treating with some adequacy.) Second, the author's closing paragraphs assert that excursus religion is really "a return to folk religion," peasant culture, and non-literary, nonintellectual, and antiscientific emphases. (This may be a strain of

Peter Berger, or an acknowledgment of social conservatism among dissonant faiths, but whatever it is, as a closing generalization it does not mesh very convincingly with what has gone before.)

Ellwood offers a thorough and sympathetic history of Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Zen, and he demonstrates that excursus religion has been around since the beginning of this country and, indeed, of Western civilization. But he has not succeeded in illuminating the larger social questions inherent in the very existence of alternative religious movements. **WV**

Confessions of a Conservative by Garry Wills

(Doubleday; 231 pp.; \$10.00)

Samuel Hux

"Are you a conservative, then?" William Buckley asked Garry Wills, new contributor to the *National Review*, in 1957. "I answered that I did not know. Are distributists conservative?" Buckley said he had been told they weren't.

Consider this the reviewer's nod toward the autobiographical aspect of *Confessions of a Conservative*, the most entertaining, least sustained, and ultimately least consequential aspect of the book. Some readers have expressed disappointment that the narrative peters out after Wills's recollections of life at and around the *National Review*, for which he wrote for ten years after dropping out of a Midwestern Jesuit seminary. His evocations of that ideological, journalistic, and human milieu are masterful, but the book is a confession, a freer form than autobiography, and expectations of sustained narrative are beside the point. This is a confession of ideas and their development. Not many, if any, others who became critics of reflexive anticommunism, apologists for street politics used against segregation and the Vietnam war, began their careers sponsored by Buckley and tutored by Frank Meyer and Wilmoore Kendall—and that is the point of the recollections with which the book begins. A strange starting point for someone who considers Nixon an anachronis-

tic believer in nineteenth-century economics (*Nixon Agonistes*), defends social radicalism within the Catholic Church (*Bare Ruined Choirs*), and argues that Jefferson's *Declaration* was a communalist document (*Inventing America*).

In what sense, then, are the early chapters of memoir the least consequential aspect of the book? First, "consequence" can imply causality ("in consequence of"), which in this context might imply that because of Wills's early experience, in rebellion against it, he moved ideologically somewhere else; but Wills insists that, attitudes toward cold war polemics and political demonstrations aside, he hasn't. It is not a matter of "I haven't changed, they have"; rather, his point is that the *National Review* was never a congenial atmosphere for coherent conservatism in the first place. Second, Wills is not a high historical figure whose life binds us in interest—his life is not as significant or consequential as his ideas, which should command our interest.

Wills sees the principal characteristic of the American political system, and its principle genius, to be that it does not work as it is advertised to work. Our electoral democracy amounts to a retroactive sanctioning of policies and reforms after the fact: Elections do not

change things so much as they merely endorse or register disapproval of alterations already made, as the 1936 election approved the New Deal measures that were not even mentioned (as balancing the budget was) during the 1932 campaign. And during the years between public judgments through the franchise it is rarely the elected who are really running things or introducing new things to be run; a number of countervailing élites do that. Chief among these are the business élite (*the élite to some, but not to Wills*); the bureaucratic élite, with its technical expertise; and the moral élite, call it, from William Lloyd Garrison to Martin Luther King—all those who work outside the system and harangue and embarrass. Politicians are an élite, of course, but their function is...to be mediocre. "They are an elite that *accomplishes* mediocrity for the public good." With so much to drive us asunder, they are the soporific that helps to keep us together—with a good word for everyone, conflicting commitments, and ideological muddle. It is sloppy and inelegant, but the whole ad hoc arrangement works more often than not.

This is not satire, Wills assures us. In fact, although he does not necessarily approve of every particular consequence of it, Wills approves of the arrangement in general. Which should raise a problem and several hackles for readers of a journal devoted to the ethical consideration of public affairs: Is *Confessions of a Conservative* merely a confession of political cynicism? The answer is No; how the answer is No, and the consequences of that, form the most important aspect of the book.

How. Wills has his heroes and pays them tribute, as a good conservative should; he makes no pretense that his thoughts are not informed by tradition. Cardinal Newman is one, he who wrote that "satisfaction, peace, liberty, conservative interests [are] the supreme end of the law, not mere raw justice as such." "Conservative interests" does not mean to Wills what it normally means to us—modest wages, high profits, and such—but those traditional values which keep a society, in all its imperfections, in one piece. Wills has a perfect abhorrence of the individualist capitalist ethic, preferring instead the distributist ethic of another hero, Chesterton (subject of his first book), although he knows that the distribution of

landed property to insure a free and decentralized political life cannot make as much sense today as other forms of distribution of "property," such as the "property right to a job," which Chesterton with his championing of labor guilds approved, and the "property right to services," including medical service. Buckley should have listened to Wills when they first met; then Buckley would not have grown disapproving of Wills when he had only remained distributist, Chestertonian. Chesterton wrote a wonderfully cranky and entertaining book on Aquinas, portraying Aquinas as a kind of common sense thinker full of Aristotelian earthiness and free of Platonic nonsense; Chesterton had little use for Augustine. Wills's principal hero, however, is Augustine, who, his Neoplatonism accepted on the one hand and in one realm, is on the other not unlike the Newman who had his doubts about "raw justice" on earth.

That Augustine saw little hope of justice on earth is an old story, and a scandal to those who consider his doubts the reflexive Manicheanism of the ex-Manichean. Wills's reading of Augustine, extraordinarily affectionate (I know no other word to use), has a subtlety hard to capture in summary. The City of God (heaven, Jerusalem, etc.) and the Earthly City (hell, Babylon, etc.) imply yet a *third* city (Wills is focusing primarily on the last books of *The City of God*, especially 19). The Earthly City is not coterminous and coterminous with the political order of this earth. The Satanic Earthly City and the Heavenly City of God are ultimate revelations toward which history moves, but the "earthly with a small 'e' is that place where the two final cities mingle on pilgrimage." Since the earthly order is neither the one nor the other, but the scene where the two destinations imperfectly reveal themselves, it cannot be the order of perfect justice...nor yet that of perfect injustice.

There is no warrant for thinking that Augustine equates the earthly order with the Earthly City, for while the latter must be the reign of self-love and other-hatred, the former should be and often is, according to Augustine's definition of "a people," "a gathering of many rational individuals *united by accord on loved things held in common*" (emphasis added). Wills notes that Augustine objected to Cicero's definition of a people: "a gathering of those *united*

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Jane Rockman, Editor

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by agreement on the right and by shared interests" (emphasis added). The virtue of the earthly order is peace, according to Augustine, which often of course compromises the justice implied by Cicero's "the right." Absolute justice can mean nothing to Augustine if not the will of God, but who is fit to impose it in the earthly order, since one cannot know with certainty that he is blessed with grace or, if so blessed, that he will retain it? This is what Wills means by "Augustine's agnosticism about the souls of other men." "Peaceful union is the nutriment, as it were," Wills interprets Augustine, "for both wheat and weeds. By ordaining that both should need the same things, God ordained a unity of goal and co-operation between them. His fields nurture both the wheat *and* the weeds, till harvest." The argument, it is important to note, is essentially a restatement of a 1961 essay, "The Convenient State," in which Wills contrasted the potentially totalitarian "Order of Justice" with the "Order of Convenience," convenience meaning not mere expedience but a coming together, as in convention, which implies both a gathering and tradition. "Accord on loved things held in common."

Consequences. Some will prefer to call Wills liberal or radical, and read his title ironically. Consider, after all, his championing of civil rights activists, antiwar protestors, Lillian Hellman (his revisionist essay on the McCarthy period, the preface to *Scoundrel Time*), etc. But Wills would argue that McCarthyism, nondefensive war, and racial inequity are not objects fit for conservative veneration. Nor is the capitalistic ethic, unless one's conservatism is merely right-wing libertarianism or Manchester liberalism given another name.

"Conservatism looks to possession—but to the *common possession* (Augustine's *concordi communitate*) of a language, a history, a concrete set of loyalties; to possession in the large sense as what links countryman to countryman; not to property in the narrow sense of individual possession, that which one holds apart from one's fellows.... We do not agree on everything with everybody, but *we agree to agree to as much as we can* without doing positive violation to

our soul's higher density."

But...yes: The communalist rhetoric, the distributism; there is something here which, given the prevailing American understanding of "conservative," suggests that although Wills is not being merely verbally ironic, he is trying to force upon his readers certain ideological ironies. One such is the common ground traditionalist conservatives often share with some varieties of the democratic Left and not with their own nominal co-ideologists.

But the ground is not thoroughly common, and there is further irony here. Wills plays loose with anticommunism, is a little too contemptuous of it, while conservatives of other stripes and the social democratic Left have for different reasons been almost obsessively consistent in their contempt for Communist pretensions. Still, a moderate socialist might applaud three-quarters of what Wills has to say in his confession of conservatism. And that's a confession. **WV**

Briefly Noted

The French Stake in Algeria, 1945-1962

by *Tony Smith*

(Cornell University Press; 199 pp.; \$15.00)

Smith refutes the argument widely propagated in France that the French failed to solve the Algerian problem before 1958 because of governmental instability and impotence under the Fourth Republic. Smith shows that instead of being divided on Algeria, all French parties except for the Communists were completely united on the goal of maintaining French sovereignty in the face of a rising tide of Algerian nationalism. The Algerian war did not happen independently of any human agency—a generation of French politicians worked relentlessly to keep Algeria French. All shared what Smith calls the "colonial consensus"—the belief that the loss of Algeria would be fatal to France's pretensions as a great power (its loss would reduce France to a "pitiful, helpless giant") and the conviction that "honest" reforms, not independence, would suffice to reconcile the

"good, childlike" Muslim population to its French heritage—a view espoused by so humanist a thinker as Camus. Overlooked in this consensus were the economic and social impoverishment and the racism which a century of French rule had worked upon the Algerian people; overlooked too was the fact that the Algerians were no longer willing to settle for reforms (which in any case never materialized). Repugnance against turning Algeria over to a movement that employed terror completed the justification of the colonial consensus. The pernicious paradox that France could retain its national identity only by suppressing that of the Algerians was never examined. "The passions, the hypocrisy, the game of self-deception with which French policy treated Algeria have now been forgotten by blaming it on the defects of the Parliamentary system."

Smith concedes that behind the "colonial consensus" lurked the forces of economic self-interest—especially that of the *colons*—but he argues that a narrowly Marxian explanation would be incomplete if it ignored "The blind spots, the misrepresentations, and rigidity of outlook that characterized the French reaction to the Algerian uprising." No rational self-interest could ex-

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plain the extent to which French political leaders, including De Gaulle, deceived themselves about Algerian realities until it was too late. Smith's analysis is a penetrating case study of the mentality of Western governments vis-à-vis Third World nationalism. It is also a significant contribution to understanding the roles of prejudice and misperception in the behavior of political élites.

—David McLellan

Principles For a Catholic Morality

by *Timothy E. O'Connell*

(Seabury Press; xv + 233 pp.; \$11.95)

O'Connell's goal was to produce a basic comprehensive text on Catholic morality for classroom use that would eliminate the need to rely on multiple sources. He has only partially achieved his announced objective. The section dealing with the formation of values is very well done, as is the summary of the development of Catholic morality, in particular the history of the natural law tradition. O'Connell's emphasis on the moral person rather than simply on rules and principles is also very welcome.

But there are some serious weaknesses and omissions that would have to be supplemented, in a formal theology course, with other materials. The early section on scriptural ethics is quite weak. A later chapter dealing specifically with law in the Jewish tradition shows some penetrating sensitivity to the Torah tradition that is rare among Christian theologians. O'Connell's transition from the Jewish to the Christian notions of law remains somewhat inadequate, but he is on the right track.

There is also an overconcentration on the natural law tradition that still lacks any real critical posture and fails to discuss in any depth some of the current questions about this tradition. For example, O'Connell never deals with the kind of perceptive criticism of the "status quo" effects of the natural law that Professor Charles Curran has raised. And, while aware of the important discussion on the relationship between culture and the natural law outlook, he does not really enter into the discussion. The student introduced to the Catholic natural law tradition through this volume alone would hardly be aware of the intense debate that has gone on in Cath-

olic circles about the continued viability of this tradition.

It is also surprising, given the announced goal of the book, to find no discussion whatever of the basic notions of sin and justice. These concepts are absolutely essential to a fundamental course. While O'Connell acknowledges the need for a communal orientation in Catholic morality, he does not develop this theme. The book altogether fails to incorporate the spirit of global social concern that has become prominent for so many Catholics outside the limited North American context. In short, a comprehensive course in fundamental Catholic ethics will still require readings in addition to O'Connell, especially in the areas mentioned above.

—John T. Pawlikowski

**Dreams of Adventure,
Deeds of Empire**
by *Martin Green*

(Basic Books; xv + 429 pp.; \$15.00)

This is the second in a series to be called *The Lust for Power* by Martin Green, professor of English at Tufts and fre-

quent *Worldview* contributor. Although relentlessly critical of the foolishness and even the wickedness of empire, Green imaginatively works his way through the writings of Defoe, Scott, Cooper, Conrad, Kipling, and others in order to lift up the perduring importance of adventure and conquest in human existence. Addressing himself specifically to the English educational and literary situation, Green contends it is past time to rediscover and celebrate the adventure stories of a great, if brutally marred, tradition. He protests an intellectual life that is still obsessed by protest against an imperialism that is no longer there. The almost exclusive preoccupation of the schools with "domestic literature" (Eliot, Jane Austen, et al.) only accentuates the "national shrinkage and crumbling" that Green sees all around him. Although written for the general reader, Green obviously has his eye on the specialists' reaction to his argument. The appendices engage fellow experts in debate about the nuances, adding academic value to a book that will for the nonexpert be a powerful invitation to explore or re-explore a monumental body of literature reflect-

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Personal Values in Public Policy

ed. by *John C. Haughey*
(Paulist Press; vi + 275 pp.; \$5.95 [paper])

The subtitle is "conversations on government decision-making," and the speakers are drawn from branches of government and policy-oriented private institutions. The enterprise is coordinated by the Jesuits' Woodstock Center in Washington, D.C., and the result is a series of thoughtful exchanges that should be of general interest. The book includes nine essays relating religious ethics to aspects of public policy, followed by tightly edited versions of the discussion of the essays.

Catholicism and Modernity: Confrontation or Capitulation?

by *James Hitchcock*
(Seabury Press; 250 pp.; \$12.95)

A scathing and occasionally brilliant critique of the "decadence" of contemporary Catholicism. Hitchcock's examples of fatuities and betrayals are usually dated, drawn chiefly from the sillinesses of the Sixties. His appreciation of the perduring vitalities of the Roman Catholic Church, now so powerfully exemplified in John Paul II, is, to say the least, underdeveloped. But the book is much more than another cantankerous conservative assault on change. At its best, it inquires searchingly into the meaning of religious integrity in a modern world that persists in its principled denial of the religious possibility.

Pat: A Biography of Daniel Patrick Moynihan

by *Douglas Schoen*
(Harper & Row; xiii + 322 pp.; \$12.95)

The man is not perfect. Sometimes he seems too cocksure, impatient, even arrogant. But every putative vice is only the price to be paid for his soaring virtues; arrogance pales in the blaze of his brilliance; if he is caustic, it is worth it

for the wit; if inconsistent, it is but a part of being provocative. In short, Mr. Schoen set out to write a campaign biography when some people were talking semi-seriously about Moynihan for president.

**Halbritter's Arms Through
the Ages**
by Kurt Halbritter
(Viking Press; 158 pp.; \$9.95)

Subtitled "an introduction to the secret weapons of history," this delightful parody reveals new dimensions of man's ingenuity in maiming himself and others. Halbritter begins with "design failures" in weapons of war from ancient times, works up to this century's more lethal technologies, and illustrates his "findings" with frequently hilarious pen and ink drawings that expose the arts of Mars in all their folly.

**The Library of Christian
Classics: Ichthus Edition**
(Westminster Press)

The publisher is rendering a real service in making available, in relatively inexpensive (\$7.95 each) paperback, a multivolume series that is a standard resource for understanding the history of Christian thought. Volumes appearing this fall include *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, *Zwingli and Bullinger: Western Asceticism*, and *Calvin: Commentaries*. Volumes run from three to four hundred pages, and we warmly recommend the series for any library that would reflect seriousness about religion.

Democratic Political Theory
by J. Roland Pennock
(Princeton University Press; xxii + 573 pp.; \$32.50/6.95)

Pennock, emeritus professor of political science at Swarthmore, is very thorough in covering ground that is distressingly limited. Whatever one might mean by "democratic political theory," a comparative study would require that attention be paid the classical Greek, biblical, and other sources that have shaped our thinking about man and his communi-

ties. Pennock, however, has an aversion to what he terms "the metaphysical," and therefore his putatively exhaustive survey almost totally excludes the more comprehensive theories of philosophy and theology and dwells upon the secularly respectable and empirically verifiable. This is particularly regrettable in a time when democratic political theory sorely needs renewal by relating it to the experience and belief systems of the Western world.



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Correspondence [from p. 2]

framework are so different as to make any such comparison both ill informed and dangerous.

To Mr. Breiner's second point. He states that my use of the Thermidor scenario to indicate one general direction of the future possibilities is invalid. No reason is given as to why he feels this is so, and we are asked to accept opinion as fact without any supporting statement. Even a rudimentary perusal of history must surely suggest some background for this pronouncement. Something must have provoked it, and Mr. Breiner should feel free to share the source of these insights with *Worldview* readers. It is also strange that while he fiercely rejects my broad references to a Thermidor, he appears to accept some of the elliptical analogies to the Meiji restoration (e.g., duplication of Japan Inc.).

Third, Mr. Breiner addresses the question of urban vs. rural development and my concern that a focus on industry and the cities may result in some decline in rural priorities. The implications of this go far beyond the economic factors involved. They reach to a concern that the technological class that may be created by the recent policies of the Chinese Government could become an exclusive city-bound elite, possibly alienated from the rural masses, and provide the tinder for anti-élitist convulsions in the future. This is a view shared by many thoughtful observers of China (including Professor John Fairbank of Harvard University in articles in the *New York Times* and *New York Review of Books* earlier this year). In such a minority I am content to find myself.

Overall, while raising important issues, the tenor and theme of Mr. Breiner's letter suggest that, as so often in the past, a discussion of the People's Republic generates more heat than light. All of us who are concerned with China must constantly recall their old warning that "only from understanding comes wisdom."

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