

mon in their American equivalents. And if that is not enough, the story's adapter reassuringly provides Kline with a pretty but married French teacher to adore from afar. ■

Rated a mild PG-13 for language and the rebel's collection of *Oui* magazines.

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BOOKS

[*Revolt from the Heartland: The Struggle for an Authentic Conservatism*, Joseph Scotchie, Transaction Publishers, 135 pages]

The Paleo Persuasion

By Samuel Francis

JOSEPH SCOTCHIE'S *Revolt from the Heartland* is not, as some readers might guess from the title, about the terrorism of right-wing militias in the Midwestern United States, although some readers might also say that guess was close enough. In fact, *Revolt from the Heartland* deals with the emergence of "paleoconservatism," a species of conservative thought that despite its name ("paleo" is a Greek prefix meaning "old") is a fairly recent twist in the cunningly knotted mind of the American Right. While paleos sometimes like to characterize their beliefs as merely the continuation of the conservative thought of the 1950s and '60s, and while in fact many of them do have their personal and intellectual roots in the conservatism of that era, the truth is that what is now called paleoconservatism is at least as new as the neoconservatism at which many paleos like to sniff as a newcomer.

Paleoconservatism is largely the invention of a single magazine, the Rockford Institute's *Chronicles*, as it has

been edited since the mid-1980s by Thomas Fleming, and Scotchie's book is essentially an account of what Fleming and his major colleagues at *Chronicles* mainly, historian Paul Gottfried, book review editor Chilton Williamson Jr., professor Clyde Wilson, and I believe, and what the differences are between our brand of conservatism and others.

Scotchie's first three chapters are a survey of the history of American conservatism up until the advent of *Chronicles*, including an account of the "Old Right" of the pre-World-War-II, pre-Depression eras (for once, an account not confined to the libertarian "isolationists" but encompassing also the Southern Agrarians), as well as the emergence of the "Cold War conservatism" of *National Review* and the neoconservatism of the Reagan era and after. Scotchie's overview of these different shades of the Right is useful in itself and necessary to clarify the differences between these colorations and the paleos who constitute his main subject, though he may underestimate the differentiation between the current, paleo "Old Right" and earlier "Old Rights."

Although Scotchie does not put it quite this way, contemporary paleoconservatism developed as a reaction against three trends in the American Right during the Reagan administration. First, it reacted against the bid for dominance by the neoconservatives, former liberals who insisted not only that their version of conservative ideology and rhetoric prevail over those of older conservatives, but also that their team should get the rewards of office and patronage and that the other team of the older Right receive virtually nothing.

The politics of this conflict, as those involved in it will recall, was often vicious and personal, the most notorious case being the backstabbing treatment of the late M.E. Bradford by his neoconservative rivals over the appointment to the chairmanship of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1981. The bitterness of the NEH contro-

versy was due not to the neocons pushing their own nominee, the totally unknown and laughably under-qualified William Bennett but to their complete lack of hesitation in smearing, lying about, and undermining Bradford at every opportunity.

Scotchie deals briefly with the Bradford controversy, but I have to say, as one closely involved in supporting Bradford at the time, that he does not dwell sufficiently on the sheer evil and meanness of neoconservative conduct in it. But he also notes the firing, calculated vilification, or effective ostracism of several paleos or paleo fellow travelers by the neocon cabal in the following years as well as the deliberate campaign to strip the Rockford Institute of funding by neoconservative-controlled foundations.

As the neoconservatives emerged into prominence, most paleos more or less welcomed them, believing their contributions were largely positive and that if they could move no further to the right then, they might do so in time. Certainly that was Mel Bradford's view before he enjoyed the benefit of their malicious attentions. By the late 1980s, however, no informed paleo harbored any such illusions any longer. Critics of paleoconservatives who raise an eyebrow at the bitterness and sheer hatred that paleo polemics with neocons sometimes display will find in Scotchie's book a good deal of explanation for such passions.

The second reaction that elicited the emergence of paleoconservatism was what most paleos began to grasp as the intellectual, moral, and political collapse of the mainstream conservative movement itself. Not only did such stalwarts of the mainstream Right as *National Review* and various Washington think tanks begin to welcome neoconservatives as allies and allow them to displace older conservatives, but the older conservatives themselves (as well as the much vaunted "New Right") began to adopt the essentially liberal rhetoric and values to which neoconservatives appealed.

For example, paleos, neos, and the mainstream Right all opposed sanctions against South Africa, but the case against sanctions was less and less couched in terms of American national interest and anti-communism and more and more as simply an inefficient way to promote global democracy and end apartheid. Sanctions, the conservative mantra of the day held, "would only hurt South African blacks," a price the communist-dominated African National Congress and its allies in this country were entirely prepared to pay (or allow South African blacks to pay).

Anti-communism itself was transmuted into a neo-Wilsonian crusade for spreading democracy, and the cultural and institutional preconditions that make stable democratic government feasible were ignored. A "big government conservatism" that virtually abandoned the constitutionalist and anti-statist convictions of the Old Right was espoused by Newt Gingrich, Jack Kemp, Irving Kristol, and George Bush (not to mention his son).

"In addition," Scotchie writes, "neo-conservatives had convinced their battle-weary brethren that such statist as Franklin Roosevelt, Harry S Truman, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr.,

and especially Senator Henry ("Scoop") Jackson were acceptable conservative icons." By the end of the 1980s, it was often difficult to tell the difference between conservatives and liberals, at least inside the Beltway zoo that contained both species.

Third, paleoconservatism emerged also as a reaction against what was taking place in American culture itself in the 1980s and '90s, trends that the mainstream Right warmly embraced. Not only the increasing secularism, hedonism, and carnal and material self-indulgence of the dominant culture but also its shallowness and artificiality, its proclivity to being manipulated by media and political elites, its passivity in the face of more and more usurpation of social and civic functions by big government, big business, and big media, and the happy chatter from the contemporary political Right that celebrated this transformation and identified public morality almost exclusively with flag-waving, prayer in schools, invoking saccharine and platitude about "family values," and constant ranting about any and all movies that contained sex.

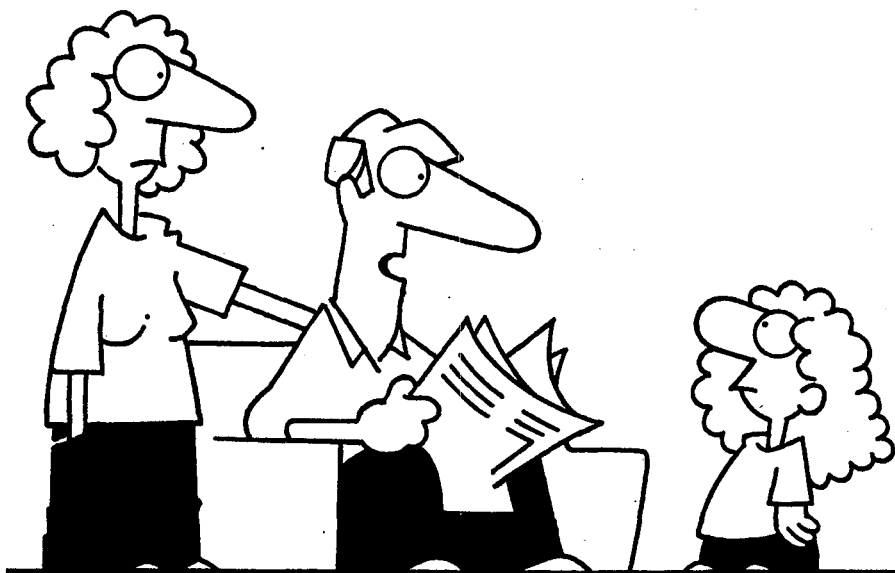
Politically, the leadership of the Right evolved from Robert Taft in the 1940s and '50s, who, as Scotchie writes, "cared

more ... about the survival of the shoe-making industry in America than whether American consumers could someday buy \$125 sneakers made by twenty-five cents an hour labor in Indonesia," to Newt Gingrich, who babbled about a laptop computer for every school child and doted credulously on the most bizarre New Age banalities. Culturally and intellectually, the Right moved from the radical conservative cultural criticism of men like Donald Davidson, Richard Weaver, Russell Kirk, and Bernard I. Bell to the post-Reagan triumphalism that chortled over the "end of history" and the arrival of the world democratic imperium.

Behind the degeneration of the leadership of the Right, paleos suspected, lay the dreadful secret that American culture simply could no longer produce first rate leaders of any persuasion, while behind the transformation of the culture lay the long-term erosion of the social, economic, and political independence and localism that characterized and made possible what paleos identified as the "Old Republic."

The greatest virtue of Scotchie's book is that it makes perfectly clear (and even logically coherent) what the paleos believe and how their beliefs are related to their reactions to the conservatism of the 1980s and '90s and the trends in American culture and politics they discuss. Paleoconservatives mainly reject the whole concept of the "leviathan state" that they see lurching out of the American Civil War and later the first two World Wars. Hence, their sympathies tend to be with the South against the state-building North and with the America First opponents of intervention in the 1930s.

While some (Scotchie mentions Pat Buchanan and me) were anti-communist interventionists during the Cold War, all have come to reject the reckless military interventionism and globalism of its aftermath. A critical point of development was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the U.S. and conservative response to it. Paleos and those who soon identified with them almost sponta-



"Never mind what Susie's mother said. Two parent families are *not* a cult!"

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neously rejected U.S. military intervention against Iraq. It was a moment, falling only a year after the neoconservative onslaught on the Rockford Institute, that solidified the paleoconservative identity.

"The U.S., as paleos have claimed for decades, was only meant to be a constitutional republic, not an empire—as Buchanan's 1999 foreign policy tome *A Republic, Not an Empire* nostalgically states," Scotchie explains. "Republics mind their own business. Their governments have very limited powers, and their people are too busy practicing self-government to worry about problems in other countries. Empires not only bully smaller, defenseless nations, they also can't leave their own, hapless subjects alone.... Empires and the tenth amendment aren't friends.... Empires and small government aren't compatible, either."

If anti-interventionism and a commitment to the Old Republic defined by strict-construction constitutionalism and highly localized and independent social and political institutions defined one major dimension of paleoconservatism, its antipathy to the mass immigration that began to flood the country in the 1980s defined another. Indeed, it was ostensibly and mainly *Chronicles'* declaration of opposition to immigration that incited the neoconservative attack on Rockford and its subsequent defunding. Scotchie devotes a special but short chapter to paleoconservative thought on immigration and makes clear that to paleos, America was an extension of Western civilization. It was intended by the Founding Fathers to be an Anglo-Saxon-Celtic nation also influenced by Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem. Large-scale immigration from non-Western nations would, as Fleming (and most other paleos) maintained, forever spoil a distinct American civilization.

The implication of this passage is that paleoconservatives, unlike libertarians, most neoconservatives, and many contemporary mainstream conservatives, do not consider America to be an "idea," a "proposition," or a "creed." It is instead

a concrete and particular culture, rooted in a particular historical experience, a set of particular institutions as well as particular beliefs and values, and a particular ethnic-racial identity, and, cut off from those roots, it cannot survive. Indeed, it is not surviving now, for all the glint and glitter of empire.

While Scotchie is quite clear and well-informed about the paleos' thought on immigration and its meaning, he fails to discuss at all their views on race. This is unfortunate, as not a few of them have been accused of simple-minded "racism," "white supremacy," and other ill-defined bugaboos. I, for one, like to think that what they believe about race, while definitely not in the liberal-neocon mainstream, is rather more nuanced and considerably more sophisticated than their enemies (and not a few of their friends) want to think.

If Scotchie's book has any great flaw, it is that it is simply too short. Paleoconservatism is worth a much longer and deeper look than his volume can give, though Scotchie himself is both so thoroughly familiar with his subject and so sympathetic to it that he could have produced a much more extended treatment. He might also have revealed more of the personalities of the leading paleoconservative writers, interviewed them, and discussed several writers he omits, for example, Claes Ryn of Catholic University or E. Christian Kopff of the University of Colorado at Boulder, and he might have explored why the *Chronicles* school has not been more successful at defining the American Right.

Have the paleos indeed failed, and if they have, is the neocon stab-in-the-back theory the only reason? Are there perhaps either large historical trends or even mere personality differences among the paleos that made their own crack-up eventually inevitable, and can such trends or conflicts be overcome? Or are the paleos really only dinosaurs, whining nostalgically for a world they have lost and unable or cantankerously unwilling to adapt to the Shining Imperial City on the Hill the neoconservatives

claim to be constructing? Scotchie might have explored these questions and problems more extensively than he did, and one hopes he will do so in a bigger book in the future, but what he has given us in the meantime is an essential and valuable contribution to American intellectual history in the last decade of the last century. ■

Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist based in Washington and writes a monthly column for Chronicles.

[*The Lovely Bones*, Alice Sebold, Little, Brown, 328 pages; and *The Crimson Petal and the White*, Michael Faber, Harcourt, 838 pages]

What Women (Apparently) Want

By Cynthia Grenier

ALICE SEBOLD TITLED her first book, a memoir about her own vicious rape, *Lucky*. She surely never dreamed how wildly prescient that word would be applied to what has happened with her second work, a novel, *The Lovely Bones*. That book has become the biggest seller of the year, leaving the likes of Tom Clancy, Nicolas Sparks, and Stephen King trailing behind for months.

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* within days of each other consecrated nearly full pages to her commercial glory—21 weeks on the top or very close to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list—and to her literary merit. Little, Brown, her publisher, has more than two million copies in print, sending it back for reprint 17 times. Foreign rights have been sold in 18 countries. First serial rights went with weirdly singular appropriateness to *Seventeen* magazine.