

## R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

IF READERS OF MY ANNUAL book recommendations have detected a propensity in me to recommend books on economics and history, I plead guilty. This year I shall remain true to my weakness for factual narrative and an economic prescription for getting the country out of its economic mess.

Begin with our own Brian Wesbury's *It's Not as Bad as You Think: Why Capitalism Trumps Fear and the Economy Will Thrive* (Wiley). In this easily read book Wesbury explains how we (or they) got the country into this economic mess, how we can get out of it, and why there is no alternative to capitalism—assuming you want prosperity, freedom, and a new amenity from technology and science on a regular basis.

Now let us proceed to history. Again the great Paul Johnson has penned a little masterpiece, *Churchill* (Viking), a 180-page biography of my favorite American British prime minister—his mother was a Yank, you know. The sprawling gigantic biographies of this gigantic figure are often superb. Think of Sir Martin Gilbert's work. Yet to have Churchill's abundant feats compressed into so brief a biography as Paul has created is to be hit on the head with just how great a life Churchill led, and Paul's writing is masterful as is his judgment of Churchill's blood, toil, tears, and...laughter. After all, Churchill could be very amusing.

Books about Ronald Reagan are in season, and for my money one of the best is Craig Shirley's *Rendezvous with Destiny: Ronald Reagan and the Campaign That Changed America* (ISI), chronicling the Old Cowboy's 1980 campaign. In it you will discover how a delightful rogue, Paul Corbin, a longtime aide to Bob Kennedy, got President Jimmy Carter's briefing books to the Reagan campaign and much more. Another superb Reagan book is *Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of His Fight to Save the World from Nuclear Disaster* (Crown), by Martin and Annelise Anderson, two of the 40th president's most knowledgeable contemporary biographers. Relying on previously classified documents that only the Andersons have used, it tells a hitherto untold story of President Reagan's role in ending the Cold War. Inexplicably, though it has been out five months at this writing, the book has yet to be reviewed in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or even *National Review*—more evidence that the economic recession is not

the only recession afflicting us. There is an intellectual recession too.

I am running long, but I want to include *AmSpec's* illustrious friend Andrew Roberts's *The Storm of War* (Penguin), the best one-volume history of World War II, and David Reynolds's superb history of the United States, *America, Empire of Liberty* (Basic Books). In it this great British historian confirms an insight into American history that I dilate on at length in a book I hope to have out next summer on American conservatism. American intelligence knew perfectly well that Alger Hiss and other accused Communists in government were in fact communicating with Moscow. So did many New Dealers. "So the new Red Scare [of the late 1940s] had a foundation in fact...." writes Reynolds. As I hope to explain, this idiotic episode in American history poisoned our politics up to the present.

Finally, there is the brilliant little book that our friend Seth Lipsky has given us to accompany our journey through the Prophet Obama's assault on the Constitution, *The Citizen's Constitution: An Annotated Guide* (Basic Books). In it the founder and editor of the irreplaceable *New York Sun* presents the Constitution as written by the Founding Fathers with witty and sapient annotations from himself that inform the reader of what this colossal document has come to mean in every citizen's life. Bring this book to your next Tea Party and send copies to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, where our president is working on his hook shot. \*\*

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., is the founder and editor in chief of *The American Spectator*.

## GEORGE WILL

MY "To think that I might have died without reading this!" book of 2009 is the 1993 novel *Birdsong* (Hutchinson) by Sebastian Faulks.

It is part of the strange but welcome flourishing of novels about World War One. Those who think, as I do, that the war—breaker of nations and of empires; transformer of sensibilities—was perhaps the most important thing that ever happened might go on to Pat Barker's trilogy of World War One novels—*Regeneration*, *The Eye in the Door*, and *Ghost Road*. \*\*

George Will is a nationally syndicated columnist.



# Totalitarian Sentimentality

by Roger Scruton

**C**ONSERVATIVES RECOGNIZE THAT social order is hard to achieve and easy to destroy, that it is held in place by discipline and sacrifice, and that the indulgence of criminality and vice is not an act of kindness but an injustice for which all of us will pay. Conservatives therefore maintain severe and—to many people—unattractive attitudes. They favor retributive punishment in the criminal law; they uphold traditional marriage and the sacrifices that it requires; they believe in discipline in schools and the value of hard work and military service. They believe in the family and think that the father is an essential part in it. They see welfare provisions as necessary, but also as a potential threat to genuine charity, and a way both of rewarding antisocial conduct and creating a culture of dependency. They value the hard-won legal and constitutional inheritance of their country and believe that immigrants must also value it if they are to be allowed to settle here. Conservatives do not think that war is caused by military strength, but on the contrary by military weakness, of a kind that tempts adventurers and tyrants. And a properly ordered society must be prepared to fight wars—even wars in foreign parts—if it is to enjoy a lasting peace in its homeland. In short conservatives are a hard and unfriendly bunch who, in the world in which we live, must steel themselves to be reviled and despised by all people who make compassion into the cornerstone of the moral life.

Liberals are of course very different. They see criminals as victims of social hierarchy and unequal power, people who should be cured by kindness and not threatened with punishment. They wish all privileges to be shared by everyone, the privileges of

marriage included. And if marriage can be reformed so as to remove the cost of it, so much the better. Children should be allowed to play and express their love of life; the last thing they need is discipline. Learning comes—didn't Dewey prove as much?—from self-expression; and as for sex education, which gives the heebie-jeebies to social conservatives, no better way has ever been found of liberating children from the grip of the family and teaching them to enjoy their bodily rights. Immigrants are just migrants, victims of economic necessity, and if they are forced to come here illegally that only increases their claim on our compassion. Welfare provisions are not rewards to those who receive them, but costs to those who give—something that we owe to those less fortunate than ourselves. As for the legal and constitutional inheritance of the country, this is certainly to be respected—but it must “adapt” to new situations, so as to extend its protection to the new victim class. Wars are caused by military strength, by “boys with their toys,” who cannot resist the desire to flex their muscles, once they have acquired them. The way to peace is to get rid of the weapons, to reduce the army, and to educate children in the ways of soft power. In the world in which we live liberals are self-evidently lovable—emphasizing in all their words and gestures that, unlike the social conservatives, they are in every issue on the side of those who need protecting, and against the hierarchies that oppress them.

Those two portraits are familiar to everyone, and I have no doubt on which side the readers of this magazine will stand. What all conservatives know, however, is that it is they who are motivated by com-