

bility," but the liberal main line, for the most part, chose to interpret Hartford as an assault upon the interests of institutionalized liberalism. Similarly, he notes that efforts such as the Institute on Religion and Democracy, which seek to nurture the connections between faith and free society, have been uncritically assailed by an increasingly defensive and indeed beleaguered main-line Protestantism.

*Religion in American Public Life* is not an optimistic book. It is clear-headed and sobering. It might have

been, it should have been, considerably more sobering. It would have been an even stronger book had Reichley taken into account Nietzsche's more relentless critique. That critique suggests that it is not only democratic society but civilization itself that becomes impossible when the elites of a culture agree on the abandonment of transcendent truth. And Reichley might have developed more fully the irony that religion that is primarily concerned about civilization or democracy is of little use to either. As

one of its authors, I believe that was the deeper argument in the Hartford Appeal. And, of course, Reichley might have and maybe should have done a lot of other things. But what he has done in this book is so very good that I will not dwell on its omissions. Nor will I—although, as mentioned at the outset, it is undoubtedly possible—praise the book too highly. To say that it is a superb treatment of an increasingly important subject is, it seems to me, to say it just right. cc

## REVISIONS

### *Bookman of the Right*

Publishing serious conservative books is no way to get rich and famous in modern America. Just ask Henry Regnery. In 1947 Regnery founded a tiny new publishing company over a drugstore in Hinsdale, Illinois, hoping "to challenge the governmental and intellectual establishment." At the outset his father warned him: "If you ever begin to make any money in that business . . . you can be pretty sure that you are publishing the wrong kind of books." Sure enough, over the next 25 years the Henry Regnery Company struggled to stay in the black. Yet, improbably, the fledgling firm did manage to rattle the powers that be, forcing upon Ivory Tower professors, *New York Times* reviewers, and leading politicians issues they preferred to ignore. As much as anyone, Mr. Regnery helped to launch a new conservative movement in America.

With the clarity and grace of a man at home with serious literature, Henry Regnery recounts the remarkable story of his life with books in *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher* (Regnery; Chicago). It is the story of an eager student of mathematics and physics at MIT who served as a zealous New Deal administrator and eventually became an articulate critic of technological scientism and arrogant social planning. Henry Regnery grew from the boy who spent his newsstand earnings to buy the works of

Tom Paine into the man who mortgaged a secure future in textiles for the chance to publish books like *God and Man at Yale* by an unknown undergraduate (William F. Buckley) and *The Conservative Mind* by an obscure history teacher (Russell Kirk). If ever there were a refutation of the stereotype of the conservative as a hidebound and calculating personality, it is Henry Regnery, whose intellectual evolution testifies to a rare openness and flexibility of mind and whose publishing record is one long list of daring gambles thought too risky by staid East Coast publishers.

After two years of study in Germany in the 1930's, Regnery began his career as a book publisher shortly after World War II, with controversial works by Victor Gollancz, Hans Rothfels, and Freda Utley opposing the vindictive Morgenthau Plan imposed upon Germany by the Allies and exposing its disastrous human consequences. In the years that followed, Regnery kept the political fires burning with revisionist histories of World War II, with exposés of corruption in the Truman Administration, and with attacks upon Zionism and the United Nations. After helping the post-war conservative movement find its feet, Regnery allowed William Buckley, Brent Bozell, Jameson Campaigne, Frank Meyer, and others to thrash out the conservative political and economic agenda on his presses.

Regnery deserves praise for his

contribution to a healthy political ferment. He deserves even more praise for refusing to dedicate his life to political passions—a fate that has befallen more than one conservative. One of Regnery's first books was a philosophical examination of the medieval conception of space and spirit by Edmund Whittaker. Later came important religious works by Louis Bouyer, Paul Claudel, and Romano Guardini and works of philosophy by Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Karl Jaspers. Regnery's contribution to literature included important books by Roy Campbell, Wyndham Lewis, and Ezra Pound, published at a time when the right-wing politics of these writers scared off many other publishers. Regnery also brought out a landmark study by Russell Kirk on the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Eliot took a personal interest in the Chicago-based publisher and advised him on a number of his undertakings.

If there can be any irony in such a life or such a book, it may lie in the preface by Ronald Reagan, a man once thought unelectable. But in the middle of the conservative triumph, it is not at all clear that it is the high moral purpose of Gabriel Marcel and T.S. Eliot which reigns triumphant. Sometimes it almost seems as if Irving Babbitt is being replaced by George (no relation) in the conservative pantheon. If that does not happen, part of the credit will be due to the efforts of a dissident publisher. (BC) cc

"The Chesterton Review is keeping alive what has become a fugitive tradition of social criticism."  
— Joseph Sobran, *The National Review* (New York).

## A Special Issue of The Chesterton Review



**Charles Dickens.** November 1985 issue deals with Chesterton's work as a Dickens critic. Contributors include Sylvère Monod, President of Dickens Fellowship, and Merja M. Makinen, Dickens House Scholar in 1983.

---

### Other Special Issues

---

**FATHER BROWN** includes an uncollected Chesterton detective story.

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY.** Noel O'Donoghue writes on Chesterton in Ireland.

**CHRISTOPHER DAWSON.** Edited by Dawson's daughter, the author of the new Dawson biography.

**GEORGE GRANT** special issue. Critics discuss George Grant, Canada's leading social philosopher.

---

### SPECIAL BONUS

With each new subscription you receive  
a free copy of one of the special issues.

---

---

Please send this order form with payment to  
**THE CHESTERTON REVIEW**, 1437 College Drive,  
Saskatoon, Sask., Canada S7N 0W6

Subscription cost \$16.00 per year  
or \$8.00 per special issue.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Bonus Special Issues  
(Check one)

- ☐ Christopher Dawson
- ☐ Father Brown
- ☐ George Grant
- ☐ Charles Dickens
- ☐ 10th Anniversary

# The Rights of Tradition *by Jay Mechling*

"Ah, kurnel, you see, Injun man ain't strong like white man!"

—William Gilmore Simms

*A Poison Stronger Than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community* by Anastasia M. Shkilnyk, New Haven: Yale University Press.

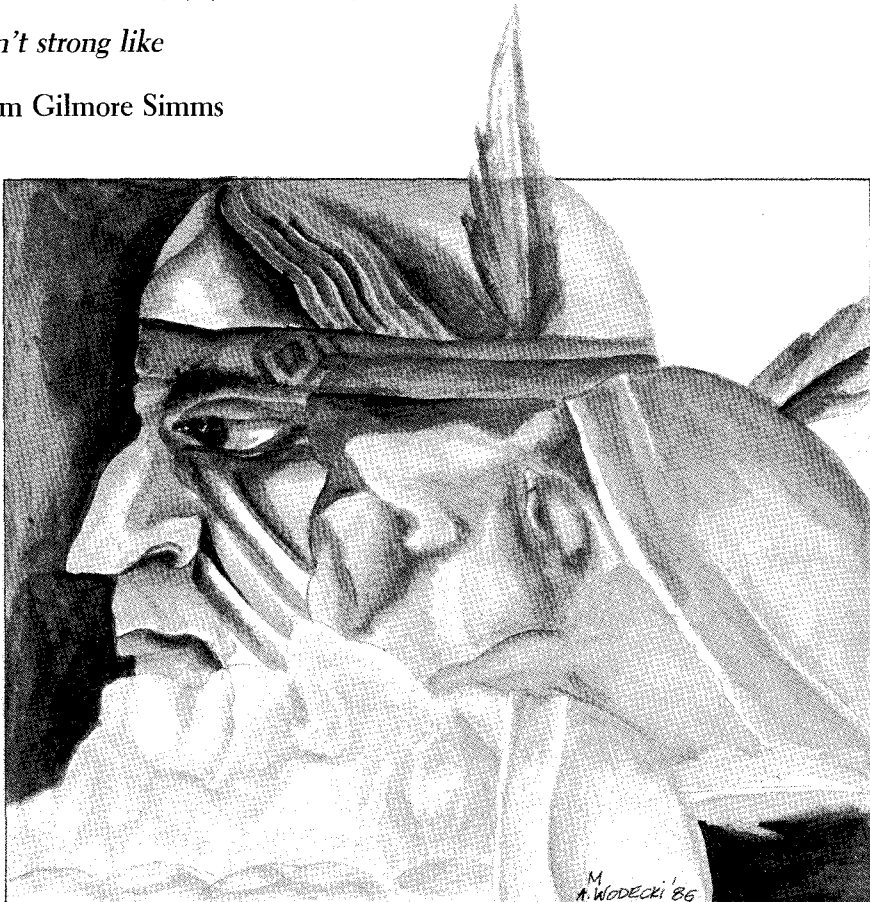
*The Reservation Blackfeet, 1882-1945 A Photographic History of Cultural Survival* by William E. Farr, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

We are approaching an important centenary, though there probably will be little public notice amid the hoopla over the bicentennial of the Constitution. In 1888 Franz Boas joined the newly formed faculty at Clark University to become the first professor of anthropology in the United States, and in that same year he and a handful of others founded the American Folklore Society. The list of important anthropologists trained by Boas reads like a "who's who" of American anthropology: Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Edward Sapir, Melville Herskovits, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead. So it makes great sense to mark 1888 as the founding date of anthropology and folklore studies as academic disciplines in the United States.

That first generation of Boasian anthropologists and folklorists saw as their duty a sort of "salvage operation" consisting of the collecting, recording, and preserving (where possible) of the cultures of native American people. Since it was clear by 1888 that modernization was an irresistible force in the evolution of society, these anthropologists and folklorists rushed into the field to preserve what they could of the premodern cultures close at hand,

---

*Jay Mechling is professor and director of American Studies at the University of California, Davis. He is editor of Western Folklore, the quarterly journal of the California Folklore Society.*



much as a biologist might rush in to save a remaining few members of an endangered species. The turn of the century saw the creation of the great collections of American Indian artifacts in museums, the publication of hundreds of monographs on American Indian beliefs and customs, and even the use of "Indian Lore" as a pedagogical tool in the programs of youth organizations like the Boy Scouts and the Campfire Girls. Still, it is one thing to save the American bison, and quite another to "save" the American Indian.

Two recent books remind us how much those disciplines have changed. William Farr's depiction of the Blackfeet belongs in the earlier period, admittedly a "salvage operation" aimed at preserving the photographic record of the reservation experience from 1882 to the end of World War II. Farr assumes that the culture of the Blackfeet of the 1880's is gone, that what we have to learn from these photographs is something of a lost world. Anastasia

Shkilnyk's study of an Ojibwa community, on the other hand, shares with a few others a radically new goal for the study of native Americans. We ought to understand the story of the destruction of a Canadian Ojibwa community, says the author, not for what it teaches us about the past or even about the Ojibwa, but for what it teaches us about *our* future.

This announced goal raises somewhat dramatically the stakes of Shkilnyk's inquiry and permits us to read her book not as a narrow study of a tiny community, but as a critical test case of the collision of tradition and modernity. The story of the Ojibwa of the Grassy Narrows Indian Reserve raises timely and difficult questions about tradition, meaning, and human rights. These were questions raised in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, so the confluence in 1987-88 of an obscure centennial and a famous bicentennial may not be so inappropriate, after all.

Moreover, juxtaposing the two stor-