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**IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES**

by Richard N. Weaver

(University of Chicago Press,

5801 S. Ellis Ave.,

Chicago, Ill. 60637)

190 pages ■ \$6.95 paperback

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*Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers*

THIS renowned volume stirred up a vigorous controversy when it first appeared in 1948; its title contributed a pregnant phrase to contemporary discourse and since the author's death his name heads a program to encourage young scholars. *Ideas Have Consequences* is one of a handful of books to appear in the middle and late forties which breached the ranks of liberal orthodoxy and opened a way for the resurgence of the freedom philosophy which is so marked a phenomenon of the past several decades.

The "consequences" Weaver condemns are many, but they come into focus in our time in the armed camps, otherwise known as modern nations. The State now depersonalizes man, mechanizes life, collectivizes property, and defers only to power. In his quest of the ideas which laid the groundwork for the present situation Weaver goes back as far as William of Occam who, declaring that only particular things are real, discredited general truths. With sus-

tained argument and lofty eloquence Weaver traces the history of a malign set of ideas from the break-up of the Middle Ages down to the modern period.

Weaver taught English at the University of Chicago, but came out of a Southern agrarian background which remained so much a part of him that he could never be comfortable with those aspects of modernity which grate harshly against what Burke referred to as "the basic inns and nesting places of human nature."

Weaver believed that liberty is most secure in a society characterized by the distributive ownership of small properties in the form of independent farms, local businesses, homes owned by their occupants. Widespread private ownership linked ineluctably to responsibility, provides the context in which one could become a complete person. Private property makes a person independent; it makes existence physically possible for the protester; livelihood independent of the State provides a metaphysical base, so to speak, for opponents of Leviathan. "To combat swirling forces of social collapse," he writes, "we must have some form of retrenchment, and especially do we need sanctuary from pagan statism . . . The attack on private property is but a further expression of the distrust of reason . . . For liberty and right reason go hand in

hand, and it is impossible to impugn one without casting reflection on the other."

Because ideas do have consequences, people who live according to a distorted or incomplete or falsified picture of reality (The Great Stereopticon, Weaver called it), sooner or later meet up with such disasters as have been visited upon the twentieth century. People who walk the road to serfdom are eventually victims of omnipotent government. Because of the validity of its premise and the substantive insights of its argument, Weaver's book has an enduring message. (E)



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