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on one, nor how he knows one doesn't exist.

After McCloskey devotes so much fuss and feathers to denying his own relativism, the reader is startled to find this: "Rules of argument, even something as fundamental as the law of excluded middle (which is rationally set aside in some forms of logic and mathematics) are instituted by rhetorical agreement. That a statement must be either true or false and not both or neither is something we accept because it is agreed to be useful in certain classes of disputes between people. . . . It is not written in the stars" (p. 241).

McCloskey is on perfectly solid ground in asserting that some forms of logic and mathematics set aside the law of excluded middle; intuitionist logic is a leading example. But how does it follow that whether we accept the law is conventional? And why does he jumble together the law of excluded middle with the law of non-contradiction? Is the adoption of the law of non-contradiction supposed to be conventional, too? (Perhaps McCloskey will reply by citing the work of Routley and Priest on para-inconsistent logical systems.) Whatever McCloskey is doing, it isn't philosophy. ❖

## *Up From Buckleyism*

CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS  
AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICS  
IN AMERICA, 1950–1985

Patrick Allitt

Cornell University Press, 1993,  
xiii + 315 pp.

Patrick Allitt's excellent book may be approached at two levels. On the one hand, Allitt has produced an old-fashioned narrative history, and his book is none the worse for that. He offers a detailed account of most of the leading American Catholic conservatives of the past forty years, and his extensive research has uncovered much valuable material about them. On the other hand, he has a thesis to advance.

I propose to concentrate on the former of these levels, "where the bodies are buried," if you will. I do so not because his central argument is false or uninteresting—quite the contrary. Allitt's thesis is that during the 1950s American Catholic conservatives generally held a cohesive position, based on natural law. In politics, Catholic rightists favored a

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strongly anti-Communist foreign policy and defended capitalism, although not in the pure form professed by libertarians. This group succeeded during the 1950s and early 1960s in securing for itself a distinct place in American politics.

But then disaster struck. The Second Vatican Council, with its attendant upheavals, fragmented American Catholicism. Accordingly, in the 1960s and 1970s the united front among Catholic conservatives broke apart. Allitt's contention strikes me as well argued and important, but at one point he seems to me mistaken. He criticizes natural law ethics on the ground that "natural law principles can in fact be made to yield multiple solutions to each problem, depending on which of the many available principles is granted salience for the particular issue under scrutiny" (p. 8).

But all this says is that there are competing arguments. This is a situation true in innumerable areas, historical interpretation not least among them. Allitt probably would not wish to argue

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that because, others differ with his views of Catholic intellectuals, all he says is thrown into doubt. Likewise various natural law "solutions" do not invalidate natural law. Allitt might reply that not only do interpretations of natural law differ, there is also no means of rationally deciding among them. But to show

that requires much more argument than Allitt attempts.

But Allitt's brief surrender to relativism is at worst a minor blemish that does not much affect his discussion, which offers illuminating accounts of central figures. No doubt the most famous Catholic conservative during Allitt's period was William F. Buckley, Jr.; after reading Allitt, one can only marvel at how little of substance underlay his reputation. The two main planks of Buckley's political outlook, his opposition to Communism and support of capitalism, were well in place on the Catholic right long before Buckley arrived on the scene.

Allitt places particular emphasis on the historian Ross J.S. Hoffman and the political scientist Francis

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Graham Wilson, both converts to Catholicism, who in the 1940s and 1950s articulated the vision that Buckley later propagandized. "Ross Hoffman had by 1950 expressed many of the convictions that were to guide the Catholic new conservatives in the coming decades" (p. 57). Hoffman and Wilson maintained that behind Communism lay a spirit of revolutionary utopianism, sharply at variance with the Christian doctrine of original sin. Politics guided by prudence, in the spirit of Edmund Burke, was the order of the day, and an economy based on private property was an indispensable adjunct in the struggle. (I think, however, that Allitt overstates Wilson's commitment to capitalism in *The Case for Conservatism* [pp. 58–59].)

If Buckley contributed nothing of intellectual substance to Catholic conservatism, he effectively popularized its principal tenets. In his defense of the Right, Buckley sometimes adopted positions with which he would today hardly be associated. He published several articles in *National Review* defending segregation, and in 1959, "Buckley himself opined that the disfranchisement of blacks in the South could be justified on grounds of their lack of education and civilization" (p. 114).

Allitt's discussion of Buckley helps clear up a mystery. In Buckley's venomous obituary notice of Murray Rothbard, many readers will have found puzzling Buckley's stress on Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959. Why did Buckley dredge up this minor event of thirty-five years ago? As Allitt makes clear, the struggle against Khrushchev's visit had the status of a crusade for Buckley and his *National Review* associates: to them Western Civilization was at stake (pp. 67–70). That Buckley became at the time overwrought is perhaps understandable; what is harder to fathom is that this "venture in triviality" remains for him a major incident in his life so many years later. Allitt also points out that Buckley's opposition to Rothbard was of long standing: Buckley never supported free-market capitalism in Rothbard's resolute fashion.

Allitt devotes much of his book to writers who, if less well known than Buckley, have much more intrinsic significance. Among these is Buckley's brother-in-law, L. Brent Bozell. Bozell felt himself to be in Buckley's shadow during his years as a *National Review* editor (p. 142), but he was in fact the more substantial figure. His *The Warren Revolution* holds up

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after nearly thirty years as a major, though neglected, contribution to constitutional scholarship.

Allitt presents Bozell's book as if it were simply a protest against the usurpations of the Warren Court.

Quite the contrary, much of the book is a full-scale historical investigation of judicial review, with radically revisionist findings. (Unfortunately, he published only one volume of what was intended as a longer study.) Allitt gives a valuable account of Bozell's founding of *Triumph*, his split with Buckley, and his journal's collapse.

Allitt has astutely seen that Frederick Wilhelmsen, Bozell's collaborator at *Triumph*, had "a brilliantly acute intellect and [an] internally consistent vision" (p. 145). Wilhelmsen, like Bozell, reflected the breakup in the solid front of 1950s Catholicism. Unlike Buckley, who moved ever closer to the American Establishment, Wilhelmsen doubted the ultimate stability of the secular American state. Instead, he looked to Spain, becoming a supporter of the Carlists, a dissident monarchist group.

**Buckley never supported free-market capitalism in Rothbard's resolute fashion.**

Allitt rightly emphasizes the importance for Wilhelmsen of his work in philosophy; but when he says that Wilhelmsen denied "the legitimacy of the idea of objective knowledge" (p. 147), he conveys a misleading impres-

sion. Wilhelmsen did indeed deny that we can have knowledge without personal involvement; and Allitt, taken strictly, says no more than this. But I fear that his wording may convey to the unwary reader the suggestion that Wilhelmsen doubted that human beings can obtain knowledge of the world as it really is. This is the very reverse of the truth: Wilhelmsen ardently defended realism and wrote a laudatory preface to the English translation of Gilson's classic attack on idealist epistemology.

Allitt's sure touch for those outside the mainstream emerges clearly in his chapter on those two remarkable Hungarians, John Lukacs and Thomas Molnar. Molnar especially seems to me a writer of great intellectual power. He found most American intellectuals far inferior to their European counterparts. But the latter

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also were not all they should be; and in *The Decline of the Intellectual* (1961), he traced the decadence of the Western mind to the overthrow of the scholastic synthesis by the nominalists. As Allitt points out (p. 226, n. 84), Richard Weaver took the same line [in *Ideas Have Consequences*, 1945].

Molnar rejected received political wisdom in similarly radical fashion; he admired European counter-revolutionaries such as Franco and Salazar and spurned the American political system. Allitt might have pointed out, however, that *Decline of the Intellectual* includes a highly critical chapter on reactionary intellectuals. Allitt I suspect finds the historian John Lukacs more congenial; he presents a brilliant description of Lukacs's historical writing (pp. 211ff).

Although neither Garry Wills nor Michael Novak compares in intellectual power with Wilhelmsen, Lukacs, and Molnar, the former duo have received much more public attention; and in a very useful chapter, Allitt compares and contrasts them. Most commentators on Wills see him as breaking sharply with his one-time conservatism. The former critic of Martin Luther King became the defender not only of King but of the Berrigan brothers as well.

But Allitt, with the insight of a good intellectual historian, sees continuity between early and late Wills. In all phases of his intellectual career, Wills has opposed individualism. In *Nixon Agonistes*, for example, "Wills's main target was the idea of 'markets,' central to liberalism since the days of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham" (p. 267). Wills instead advocated a "convenient state" whose governing virtue was not justice but prudence.

I think that Allitt, clearly an admirer of Wills, overrates the plausibility of his position. Does Wills's convenient state really comport well with the "prophetic figures," such as King and Arthur Waskow, whom he admires (p. 281)? And Allitt's praise for the "vast analytical range and power" of *Inventing America* seems hard to maintain in the face of Ronald Hamowy's devastating assessment in the *William and Mary Quarterly* (October 1979).

Although Michael Novak has also made a big splash, he comes off in Allitt's portrayal as very much inferior to Wills. After abandoning his study for the priesthood, he enrolled in the Harvard Philosophy Department. Unfortunately, he twice failed his PhD general exams, a fact that did not prevent his securing

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prestigious teaching positions at Stanford and elsewhere (p. 255). Novak's prolific output, in both theology and politics, was often marred by wildly overstated and implausible claims. In his early theological works, "he criticized traditional Catholic exclusivist claims with the abrupt assertion that in the 'secular city' of the 1960s the differences between the believer and the unbeliever, let alone Protestant and Catholic, were negligible" (p. 256).

In his 1978 *Guns of Lattimer*, Novak argued that a "sacrament of blood" had been necessary to produce reconciliation between immigrant Pennsylvania coal miners and their WASP neighbors. Novak now champions "democratic capitalism," a peculiar amalgam that he has endeavored unsuccessfully to explain in numerous books. Though Allitt never criticizes Novak directly, he brings out the slapdash quality of Novak's thought to devastating effect. I do think, though, that he should have given Novak credit for an interesting early piece on substance in Aristotle.

I wish that Allitt had said more about Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, Willmoore Kendall, and Joseph Sobran; but on the whole he has written a comprehensive, balanced, and satisfying book. ❖

## *The Conscience of a Canadian*

DEAD RIGHT

David Frum

Basic Books, 1994, x + 230 pp.

David Frum has identified a central problem affecting much of the American Right. But because he himself supports the Leviathan State to a greater extent than some of those he so readily condemns, he can offer nothing in the way of a solution. For the one group that does offer a way out, Frum, a Canadian commentator for National Public Radio, has nothing but contempt and calumny.

The difficulty with the Right which Frum has identified is this: during the Reagan administration, conservatives reneged on their commitment to scaling-down, if not eliminating altogether, the welfare state. "About morality and nationality, conservatives have a lot to say. But their fervor for eliminating the progressive income tax and the redistribution of wealth via Washington has cooled when it has not disappeared altogether" (p. 2).