

mark of Former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that if people want to find purpose in their lives they should go to their bishops rather than to the Macmillans of this world. One also recalls the sardonic comment of Norman Podhoretz in *Commentary*. The problem, he said, is that

when they do go to their bishops nowadays, they are sent right back to the Macmillans with the bishops leading the way.

Reviewed by HAVEN GOW

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## *The Two Traditions*

**The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition**, by Willmoore Kendall and George W. Carey, *Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press*. 163 pp. \$6.00.

THIS BOOK has as its basis five lectures which Willmoore Kendall prepared for a summer institute held at Vanderbilt University in 1964. Kendall attempted to establish in these lectures (a) that the lived American tradition, the tradition that the people feel in their hips (to use one of his favorite phrases), was fundamentally different from, indeed, was diametrically opposed to the tradition that has been accepted by the majority of academicians, publicists, schoolteachers, etc., as *the American tradition*; and (b) that the structure of this lived tradition is at one certainly with that of Jerusalem but also with that of Athens and therefore opposed in a fundamental way to the modern tradition as established by Machiavelli and Hobbes, Descartes and Locke. He attempts to substantiate his arguments through a close

reading of key political documents of the American people, from the Mayflower Compact to the Bill of Rights, using tools of analysis borrowed from Eric Voegelin and adapted to new purposes.

Kendall did not live to complete the argument he had begun in the lectures at Vanderbilt. George Carey, his friend and colleague, has, however, continued and expanded the argument using Kendall's notes, lectures and other writings as a basis. He has done so faithful a job that one can safely say that the entire work is basically Kendall's in thought and style.

According to Kendall, the accepted interpretation of the American political tradition is a heresy established by Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, Kendall declares, seized upon one phrase in the Declaration of Independence—"all men are created equal"—and, without considering either the historical or rhetorical contexts of the phrase, erected it into an ideology that has ever since obscured the tradition that the people in fact continue to hold. Equality, says Kendall, is emphatically *not* the proposition to which this republic is dedicated.

We must, says Kendall, either begin at the very beginning, the Mayflower Compact, or begin when the tradition is fully articulated with the Philadelphia Constitution. And, as Kendall points out, neither in the Mayflower Compact nor in the Constitution, nor in the most famous of interpretations of the Constitution, *The Federalist*, is equality declared to be an end of the political order.

Instead of equality, the argument continues, we find that the key documents of the tradition seek to establish procedures through which the deliberate sense of the community is articulated. The *nation*, we may say, was dedicated to these procedures in 1789 and we, as a *people*, were dedicated to deliberation 169 years before that date. It took us that long to work out the proper procedures that made deliberation by the people possible.

We must turn to *The Federalist*, Kendall declares, to understand fully these proce-

dures. In brief, the procedures establish a means of fragmenting and delaying the formation of factious majorities. By forcing delay, they make for a politics based upon consensus. But, as Kendall and Carey see clearly, deliberation to consensus does not make sense unless it is assumed that the consensus the people reach will be just and good. According to them, therefore, and this we may say is the primary principle that forms their understanding of American political tradition, *The Federalist* must presume that the people are virtuous and that delay and compromise and deliberation permit this virtue to emerge.

The most controversial point that Kendall and Carey raise is surely their claim that nowhere in the key documents of the American political tradition, including the Declaration of Independence, is equality a central "symbol." All the more astonishing, then, in the light of their claim, is the fact that the authors do say that liberty is a principle to which the republic is dedicated. Now those who possess liberty must, in the decisive respect, be considered equal. Whatever distinctions are made in society between men, if they possess liberty then in the only respect that counts politically, the right to give or withhold their consent, they are equal.

It is strange, moreover, that the authors should attribute what is an anti-Federalist understanding of democracy to *The Federalist*. For it was the anti-Federalists who emphasized the need for the formation of a virtuous people and who, like Kendall, argued for a politics of consensus. It is John Taylor of Caroline who speaks of the primacy of moral principles in a political order, and it is John C. Calhoun who is the greatest theoretician of consensus politics.

The authors do not take sufficiently into account passages in *The Federalist* that contradict their major thesis. In *Federalist* No. 10, for example, Madison tells us that morality and religion are most efficacious precisely when their influence is most needed. For this reason, one finds almost nothing in *The Federalist*, as Kendall himself admits,

that is concerned with the preservation and, one may add, the formation of the manners and morals of the people (pp. 58-59).

*The Federalist* No. 22 raises questions also as to how far the politics of consensus can be said to be advocated by Publius. Indeed, according to Hamilton, the notion of "unanimity in public bodies" only serves to embarrass the administration and to destroy the energy of government. It is better, Hamilton states, for a respectable majority to be able to act and to act quickly than for "tedious delays; continual negotiations and intrigue; contemptible compromises of the public good" to occur. The crucial point that must be understood is that Hamilton is here speaking of decisions that must be made by the *administration* in times of crises. Now crises occur not only in such emergencies as that of external attack, but, and perhaps more importantly, when the people are divided in their counsels (one thinks of the period before the Civil War). It is precisely in such crises, according to Kendall and Carey (and, one may add, according to Calhoun) that delay, negotiation and compromise are necessary.

Many more questions could be raised regarding the Kendall-Carey interpretation of *The Federalist*. But it is perhaps enough to say that little or no confrontation with the alternative interpretations not only of *The Federalist* but also of the other documents is attempted. It was not possible of course for Kendall to do so in the brief scope of the five lectures he presented at Vanderbilt; and, moreover, what is proper to a book may not be proper to an informal lecture series where one tentatively works out one's understanding.

The contribution Kendall made, principally as a teacher, but also as a polemicist and a scholar, was to rescue and revive what may be called the older tradition of American republicanism. That older tradition came to be known as anti-Federalism. American history may, in a way, be understood as a continuous dialectical argument between the new teaching of *The Federalist* and the more traditional teaching of

such men as Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, John C. Calhoun and, more recently, the authors of *I'll Take My Stand*.

The difference between the two views may be simply illustrated. When Publius speaks of the kind of men that will govern the republic he has constructed, he speaks of them as "speculative men," men free from local prejudices who concern themselves with the general and remote interests of the nation and not the homogeneous and immediate interests of the localities (*Federalist* Nos. 17, 35 and 36). When the anti-Federalists speak of the kind of men that they wish to form, they speak of local influences—of the ties to the land and to the small communities that form the character of their citizens (Cf., Query XIX of the *Notes on the State of Virginia*).

Kendall, in sum, continues the debate that began at the Founding and he reminds us, in his own strange and contradictory way, that there are two American political traditions—two traditions that finally tested each other in civil war.

Reviewed by LEO PAUL S. DE ALVAREZ