

of God's revelation in Jesus, the Christ. From the beginnings of Christianity believers found the incarnation to be *sui generis* and not translatable into Greek philosophy. St. Paul wrote in I Corinthians, 22: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness. . . ."

Voegelin was well aware of the traditional conflict between Athens and Jerusalem. He attempted to resolve it by transforming revelation into noetic experience. One can only describe his exegesis of the Gospel of St. John in his essay, "The Gospel and Culture," as eccentric in the field of New Testament criticism in which eccentricity is a commonplace. Voegelin attempts to make John's Gospel a work of Greek philosophy exercising his hermeneutic on the Greek text of John's Gospel. In fact the Gospel of John is the most Semitic of the Gospels and behind the Greek text there was, in all likelihood, an Aramaic original. Voegelin's selective use of the Greek text is simply misleading.

Voegelin was never able to resolve the problem which became acute when he attempted to deal with the reconciliation of philosophy and theology, nature and grace, reason and revelation as it was undertaken by Thomas Aquinas. Voegelin's hostility to doctrinal Christianity, I am convinced, derives in part from this underlying uncertainty and failure.

I am reminded of Immanuel Kant whose eighteenth-century critical philosophy was a grand attempt to save the possibility of ethical action, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. As a professor at Königsberg, Kant marched annually in the academic procession to the baccalaureate service. He would not, however, enter the Church but remained at the Church door until the service was over. In the last days of his life Voegelin continued to struggle with the problem.

The struggle was an indication of the total dedication Voegelin brought to the philosophical quest. If Raphael's *School of Athens* is ever brought up to date Eric Voegelin will be depicted discoursing with Plato and Aristotle. The depiction will not be complete however unless it is confronted by Raphael's *Disputa del Santissimo Sacramento*.

An Appeal for Restoration

ROBERT CHAMP

Remembering Who We Are: Observations of a Southern Conservative, by M. E. Bradford, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985. xx + 178 pp. \$20.00

The Reactionary Imperative: Essays Literary & Political, by M. E. Bradford, Peru, Ill.: Sherwood Sugden & Company, 1990. v + 230 pp.

READERS OF M. E. Bradford are always certain of learning from his work something old and relevant. *Memoria* is for him the chief of the rhetorical arts, and he plies it in both these collections to the usual good end: recalling for us a history that we are not only in danger of forgetting but that, for reasons sectional and ideological, many of us never learned in the first place. Those acquainted with his work will find themselves on familiar terrain, e.g., the English and Continental sources of the American Revolution, America's georgic virtues and the bulwark they have provided against ideological encroachments, the Culture War battles Bradford has fought both in the press and in his association with "Washington City" during the Reagan years. Newcomers, who may well have expected

a wrong-minded, even dangerous, populist (for the controversies Bradford has aroused are seldom fairly reported) will find, instead, a reasonable and articulate voice belonging to a man of tempered passion rather than passionate temper.

The earlier collection, *Remembering Who We Are*, consists of eleven occasional essays originally delivered as speeches, and four which appeared first in print. In all of these, Bradford is chiefly concerned with “the misuse of ultimate terms in political philosophy as these affect the prudential exchange of public men who are expected to conduct the business of the world.” In particular, he is concerned with the often conflicting terms “liberty” and “equality” and the adverse consequences for our national polity that have resulted from the way advocates of natural rights have defined them. The reader finds no elaborate theorizing on these matters, however. Bradford’s book is informed by “the political realities of our place and time”—realities best understood, he believes, in the light of our national traditions and myths, and our government’s early, experience-based development.

Among the book’s initial essays, the most persuasive perhaps are “Thinking Within the Inheritance” and “Not So Democratic.” Here Bradford carefully delineates the philosophical differences among the men who made the American Revolution and who afterwards struggled at the Constitutional Convention to produce a lasting political document. There were the radicals, firebrands like Samuel Adams, motivated by a natural right’s theory of egalitarianism; the Federalists, Enlightenment reformers mostly, who pushed for a pliable but nonetheless centralized government; and the men of the “Country Party,” staunch defenders of states’ rights and inheritors of the old tradition of English Whiggism, who valued liberty above all things politic and held it to consist in “privacy, person,

choice—and thus property.” To this last group, Bradford rightly considers himself an heir. He argues that the prevailing voice in the Constitutional Convention belonged to the traditionalists and that the Constitution’s framers gave short shrift to “the political religion” of equality.

The book comes most vividly to life, however, in a brilliant polemic, “A Fire Bell in the Night” (the phrase is Thomas Jefferson’s). In this essay Bradford points to the first evidence that the egalitarian vision against which the framers battled had taken a dangerous new direction. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 amounted to a vigorous assault on property and states’ rights. By changing the way states were admitted to the union, Bradford argues, the Compromise infringed on liberty itself. According to the act’s provisions, a prospective state was forced to submit to a federally sanctioned test which limited the definition of property and how it could be disposed of. Worse still in Bradford’s view, this new restraint on a long-held freedom came as the result of a backdoor movement, the growing clamor among the egalitarians over black slavery. In other words, the Compromise was grounded in neither experience nor legal precedent but in the egalitarian’s last refuge, moral outrage.

It is this pattern which Bradford sees repeated continually in our history, to the point where it finally passed into the Constitution itself in the form of the Fourteenth Amendment. It is also evident from this essay just what modern liberals and leftists find so intolerable in Bradford. He denies them the right to their highhanded moral position. Instead, he shows, slavery and the whole race issue (coalescing in the Civil Rights Movement) have been only a pretext for the introduction of generally unacceptable, but to the egalitarians more grandiose, schemes: “As the South has always recognized, patronizing, ‘for the-Negro’

millennialism has had its primary meaning and ultimate promise in those other species of utopian hope for which it broke trail. From the first, it has been a stalking horse for objectives never able to command general national assent—never *except* as they hid behind or within the (for the last three decades) one ‘sacred’ cause” [*i.e.*, segregation].

Millennial egalitarianism, Bradford perceives, works incrementally, so that no particular goal is ever enough. Thus, twenty years after the publication of this prescient essay, we find that integration has been replaced as an issue in the national consciousness by the doctrine of fairness and by affirmative action programs. Almost imperceptibly for most Americans, yet another portion of our birthright has come under fire from the same, tireless redoubt.

The question of the effect of racial politics, however, comprises only a small part of *Remembering Who We Are*. Bradford aims chiefly to recall to us the benefits we are surrendering and to picture the dross we are accepting in their stead. Thus, “The Lasting Lessons of Southern Politics” enumerates the virtues growing from the Southern freehold, draws an important distinction between “democracy” and “community,” and confronts our tendency to confuse the two. “The Agrarian Tradition” is not only a reaffirmation of Agrarian principles but also an opportunity for Bradford to broach the question of the rise of industrialism, a force for atomistic equality he does not much consider elsewhere.

In the latter third of the book, he views from within the Southern tradition several persistent national concerns—*e.g.*, government support for the arts and illegal immigration—that have grown out of the chaos inflicted upon us by egalitarian legislation. His warning in “Culture and Anarchy” that “the National Endowments should . . . serve *the arts and humanities*, not their audience or their

custodians” has particular topical relevance, considering the continuing crisis at NEH. The title of the essay is intentionally ironic, reflecting the sad but predictable end of the Arnoldian hope that culture *per se* might provide a stay against disorder. “Sentiment or Survival” warns against the catastrophe that awaits us if we do not regain control of our borders and traces the changes in immigration laws back to the “rhetoric of natural rights,” which assures us, incorrectly, that all borders are artificial since we all belong to a “global community.”

In his final section, Bradford develops his ideas at the level of myth. “More Freedom Than We Want” presents a particularly insightful analysis of two classic films, *Shane* and *Red River*, on the way to discussing a lesson particularly germane to the Western myth, “the frailty of corporate freedom.” And “Faulkner’s Last Words and the American Dilemma,” a rhetorical analysis of the novelist’s 1962 Gold Medal speech before the American Academy of Arts, evokes the ancient myth of the restoration of all things, at the same time suggesting the elegiac note at the heart of Faulkner’s work *and* much of Bradford’s: “For all remembrance is, by indirection (and in a manner most difficult to resist) an appeal for restoration.”

The second collection, *The Reactionary Imperative*, a title echoing Allen Tate’s *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas*, has a somewhat different emphasis. The essays presented here “stand in some reactive relation to the modern spirit of private judgment, solipsism and assertive alienation,” and they explicitly proclaim Bradford’s conservative activism. As he writes in the preface, “[m]erely to conserve is sometimes to perpetuate what is outrageous,” so that the imperative, *i.e.*, obligation, of the conservative becomes “to build his life out of the risks involved in perilous acts of private judgment made in order to recover a context

of authority inside which such acts are unusual." The paradox of fighting private judgment by moving into that alien territory weighs on him, then; but the necessity for shifting the locus of battle seems to be peculiarly the lot of the Southern conservative. One remembers Lee moving into Pennsylvania.

The Reactionary Imperative reprints nineteen articles ranging from book reviews and literary criticism to political and cultural analysis. Although an appreciable number of these pieces were written during the same time period as those in *Remembering Who We are*, the heart of this book reveals a disillusionment largely absent in the earlier collection. In the first work Bradford upholds the South as the repository of true conservatism; and his optimism that conservatism was about to make significant and permanent inroads in the political landscape is unflagging. In the other he braves the bitterness conservatives felt during the Reagan years as important appointments went to "pragmatic" politicians, and as the administration generally grew lazy and comfortable in what its members had correctly seen, from the outside, as the Washington fever-swamp.

In "Undone By Victory" he diagnoses the problem as a desire, on the part of many in the administration, to manage rather than to govern; in effect, to gain Beltway respectability: "The greatest impediment to performance behind the failure of the Reagan regime to change the government delivered into its keeping for a root-and-branch reformation is that its constituent members have come to think of the status which they enjoy as theirs *by nature* and not by dint of political labor and popular delegation."

At the time, Bradford hoped this problem might still be resolved. And yet, as "Conservative in a Post-Liberal Era" shows, he suspects that conservative ignorance of the art of rhetoric would

leave the true Reagan constituency permanently disarmed. Despite Mr. Reagan's reputation as The Great Communicator, conservatives as a whole never fully grasped a central lesson of politics: that the power to define the terms of discourse determines political direction and social change. He adverts here to a problem raised in *Remembering Who We Are*, the matter of definition. Definition as a mode of thought does not come naturally to most conservatives, who find in it the stuff of sophistry. And yet, by neglecting it, conservatives have allowed "political propriety to be defined for us by the Left" and "by opportunists who have no principle apart from a preference for being in power." The fight over words, Bradford knows, is a fight over destiny; without victory there, the names of the man and party in office mean nothing. "From six years under Ronald Reagan what we have learned," he sadly concludes, ". . . is how little is accomplished by winning elections."

Sometimes Bradford seems as surprised as he is hurt over these developments. His tone is not only that of the frustrated man but of the man who senses betrayal and is genuinely shocked by it. His "how-could-you?" remonstrances reveal the realization that the Reagan Revolution was not after all going to be different from many other revolutions and would end by savaging some of its best representatives. Still, in "Is the American Experience Conservative?", written around the same time and first delivered as an address at the Heritage Foundation, he can answer the titular question in the affirmative. This essay is a concise and moving assessment of what Bradford learned from his Washington experience set against the larger historical background. In it there is the same challenging rhetoric of the previous essays, and a reminder to conservatives that Mr. Reagan's optimism represents the true conservative course, true be-

cause grounded in a common faith that enjoins us against despair.

Bradford is careful to illustrate the close parallels between political and cultural climates. Elsewhere in the volume, he devotes considerable space to defending William Faulkner against the depredations of modern literary criticism, especially where that criticism has misinterpreted the novelist by ignoring the complexities of Southern attitudes. In a fine analysis of the story "There Was a Queen," he points to two particularly disqualifying critical stances: "Most Faulkner critics as part of these 'enlightened' times find the idea of place repugnant and that of role foreign to the ethos of an 'open society.'" His concentration on Faulkner as a great moral writer rather than as a technically dazzling literary innovator results in a rich explication of both place and role in traditional community. In its discussion of status, function, and obligation, this essay is an especially interesting riposte to the feminist position which, like most left-wing views, sees interpersonal relations in Faulkner, and all writers in fact, as evolving almost entirely in terms of power.

The book's final section, entitled "The Modern Spirit and its Adversaries," consists largely of book reviews. Most of the books are biographies—works, for example, on the Duke of Wellington and Sir Walter Scott. What interests Bradford about these men is that each carried within him a strong sense of social and cultural identity and each was confronted with the problem of how to preserve that identity in the face of inevitable change. By juxtaposition with other reviews, he measures their careers against those of Lyndon Johnson and Oliver Cromwell, representatives of "the modern spirit": a spirit revealed, in Johnson's case, in the portrait of a politically astute but inwardly empty man who promised, paradoxically enough, to give the public everything; in Cromwell's, in the gnostic

"passion for destroying and making over things given" that marked the Cromwellian and most revolutions thereafter.

The contrast between the two types of men is drawn most succinctly, however, in the essay "A Virginia Cato: John Taylor of Caroline." Deeply involved in the political life of Virginia following the Revolutionary War, Taylor emerges as a prescient but sadly neglected American sage. Bradford discusses his ideal of stewardship in both private and public affairs, an admirable antithesis to Johnson's hog-trough federalism. Further, Taylor's understanding of "law and government as protecting what is, not as creating what is yet to be," compels us to recognize in what the American Revolution really consisted, and why it succeeded where Cromwell's failed. The Taylor essay illustrates aptly Bradford's conviction that history is made by men, not impersonal laws, and that therefore only the experience of men can sanction historical inevitability. It reminds us, too, that law itself is a fire needing careful tending.

Both *Remembering Who We Are* and *The Reactionary Imperative* end with essays on Lincoln. Bradford is never more controversial than when he lights into the sixteenth president, a figure of such mythic stature that one wonders at the author's daring in attacking with penknives like these rather than with the broadsword of a book. Myths of course do occasionally get killed off, at least in part, as the Kennedy myth proves; but in the case of a Lincoln one might do well to start with the myth itself instead of the particular policies and proclamations of Lincoln the politician. Lincoln's claim on the American imagination, after all, is personal far more than it is political. What people love about him are the stories: his reading by the light of the fireplace, walking miles in his clerking days to return a few pennies to a short-