

From this perspective Kolakowski seriously misunderstands the positions of the seventeenth-century Jesuits, to whom he attributes the view that our salvation depends ultimately on ourselves and not on God. In point of fact these theologians all rejected this semi-Pelagian position. They were convinced that the efficacy of grace is itself God's gift. Without documenting his statements from original sources, Kolakowski attributes to the Molinists the views that we can compel God to save us and that we can obtain salvation without loving God, by merely complying with God's external commandments.

The author's charges against the Jesuits are not restricted to the doctrine of grace. Influenced by French Jansenists, he portrays the Jesuits as supporting a theocratic despotism in which the Pope would hold sway over the entire domain of politics. In point of fact the leading Jesuits promoted popular sovereignty and constitutional government. They were sometimes in trouble for opposing the direct power of the papacy over temporal matters.

Kolakowski's assertions about the Jesuit attitude toward science seem to indicate a fixation on the condemnation of Galileo, which was by no means the work of Jesuits alone. He gives no indications regarding Galileo's close relationships with Clavius and the mathematicians of the Roman College, who displayed a keen interest in astronomy.

The critique in this book is not limited to Molinists or Jesuits. Having set up a strict dichotomy between Jansenism and semi-Pelagianism, the author finds himself driven to hold that the Catholic Church, in rejecting the former, embraced the latter heresy. Noting that the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rejects all five of the condemned propositions of Jansenius, he characterizes the book as semi-Pelagian.

Kolakowski's failure to distinguish between Catholic orthodoxy and semi-Pelagianism stems, in my judgment, from insufficient familiarity with the theology of actual grace. No one trained in that field would translate "*grâce prochainement suffisante*" as "grace sufficient in the future." It is a pity that a thinker of high philosophical competence, with a keen interest in the history of ideas, should have overextended himself in areas where he is clearly not at home.

The basic problem that I have with the book is the assumption that one

cannot simultaneously affirm the full dominion of God in conferring grace and the responsible freedom of the creature in accepting it. If this were the case, the only Christian alternatives would indeed be Jansenism (which sacrifices human freedom) and some form of Pelagianism (which curtails God's dominion). But at one point Mr. Kolakowski himself indicates a wiser course. He acknowledges that it is intellectually more fruitful to accept the mystery, affirming both providence and

free will, even though we cannot combine both in a consistent theory. That is exactly what the Catholic Church has done in refusing either to endorse or to condemn any of the several theories (including those of the Molinists) that respect both the full sovereignty of God and the freedom of human beings under grace. None of the orthodox theories successfully explains how human freedom can be reconciled with God's full dominion, but neither do they claim to dispel the mystery. □

Too Little, Too Late

MAYER SCHILLER

ONE OF the distinguishing characteristics of American conservatism after World War II was its apocalyptic rhetoric. It summoned the citizenry to a struggle which if not joined would result in the triumph of Communism and the end of Western civilization. But as the Right began to enter the political mainstream, it was deemed impolite to portray our times as the "suicidal" West's eleventh hour. Indeed, the victories of Nixon and later Reagan were taken as indications that the cause espoused by the 1950s NATIONAL REVIEW had triumphed.

Meanwhile the past three decades have witnessed the increasing eclipse of our civilization and its standards on every front. All mainstream

Values Matter Most, by Ben Wattenberg (Free Press, 426 pp., \$25)

Integrity, by Stephen L. Carter (Basic, 261 pp., \$22)

churches are now in the hands of the Left. The main building blocks of society—schools, courts, media, the military, family—embrace the latest trendy lunacy. All the dogmas of the late Sixties, ranging from slovenly dress and manners to an amoral sexual ethic, dominate the way people are educated and live. Pockets of counterrevolution as they approach respectability must accept the givens of the system in order to be granted a public voice—witness the consistent dulling of the Christian Coalition's message.

The collapse of authority and the self-

confidence necessary to wield it has left many people ill at ease. Lately on all sides faint stirrings are heard about a need to "restore values" to the nation. Politicians and theoreticians of all philosophical hues have joined the chorus. This demand presents a particular problem for those who no longer believe in the religions of Western man and have no love for the inherited wisdom of his culture. How are values to be derived and defined? The difficulty is highlighted in two new works by those traveling under the neo-conservative or moderate-liberal banner.

The fact that Bill Clinton was deeply touched by Ben Wattenberg's *Values Matter Most* is perhaps sufficient grounds to dismiss it. It is a work safely moderate and "with it," chock full of opinion polls and discussions of elections and candidates. The essential message seems to be that Left and Right should lower the volume of their public rhetoric and adopt vaguely conservative-sounding stances on "social issues" (i.e., "crime, welfare, education, and preference"). We are cautioned, however, to steer clear of "cultural issues" (i.e., "abortion, pornography, prayer in school, gun control, homosexuality and homophobia [*sic*]"). By limiting his discussion to the "issues" (as defined, of course, by the Left) Mr. Wattenberg shows an unwillingness to probe the deeper causes of our decline. He pro-



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poses merely that we “reinstate punishment for crime, restore disincentives in welfare, re-establish rigor in the schools through serious standards, [and] go back to the earlier form of affirmative action” (whatever that might be). Missing here is any attempt to understand why these things are not done. Why does a people lose the will to maintain order through punishment, to say no to free-loaders, or to make educational and behavioral demands on its children? The uncomfortable answer is that those who govern and educate us no longer possess a religious or other belief system that gives them the strength needed to struggle against decadence and maintain order.

But to suggest that a clear faith or civilizational identity is necessary in order to return us, at the very least, to the relative utopia of the 1950s might lead to a discussion of those annoying cultural issues that Mr. Wattenberg fears. It might call into question the cardinal dogma of those who advocate values-in-a-cultural-vacuum and see America’s greatness in its being the world’s “first universal nation,” where religion, culture, and race must be spoken about softly, if at all.

The inability of neo-conservatives and moderate liberals to advocate public policies that would significantly break with those of past decades is rooted in their desire to embrace the root philosophical dogmas of liberalism (pluralism, democracy, universal human rights, egalitarianism, etc.) while bemoaning the effects of those doctrines in history.

Stephen Carter (also much beloved by the Clintonistas) is another advocate of faceless “values” cut loose from an authority structure or particular cultural context capable of defending them. His *The Culture of Disbelief* (which called upon liberals imbued by “faith” to withstand the “sinister” efforts of the Christian Right in the name of “liberty” and “diversity”) has now been followed by *Integrity*. The book issues a vague call for personal integrity in schools, business, government, and private life and is filled with ominous warnings against actually enforcing any standards of behavior or, more significantly, educating (without diversity and pluralism) the young for them.

Quite frankly, does anyone seriously believe that an America educated in the religionless, valueless, cultureless public schools, imbibing the popular media of television, movies, and music with no

alternative institutional models of sanity available, can be pleasantly persuaded by intellectuals to abandon its present course? Further, is there any evidence that the authority structures of society—ranging from parents to police—their confidence sapped by decades of liberal-imposed self-doubt, will magically reassert themselves because a Wattenberg or Carter calls for our return to the bourgeois morality of the Fifties?

One cannot undo the effects of liberalism while still pledged to its world view. For years I have wrestled with the question of why the Fifties’ schools and media produced a generation that embraced the Sixties’ revolution. Why didn’t Dick and Jane, the Cleavers and Nelsons, and a cartload of John Wayne movies preserve the world of those nurtured by them? One is reminded of the description Flannery O’Connor gave her mother of New York literati: “They’re nice folks, Mama, but they ain’t from

nowhere.” Truth be told, the “values” of the Fifties weren’t from anywhere. The families and heroes rarely, if ever, went to church. Their suburban homes were in no clear way part of a European cultural continuum. Authority figures, fathers in particular, were no longer respected in the traditional sense. Institutional as opposed to individual heroism was rarely glorified. Fiftiesism—which is a somewhat stronger version of the neo-conservative/moderate-liberal soft assent to “values”—was doomed to fail.

As individuals, the “values” advocates are doubtless the better for having discovered (however tentatively) the absoluteness of morality and a hint of transcendence. However, for a restoration of the social order (if it is still possible at this late date) we must await the arrival of those with a clearer, more rooted vision and a willingness to play for keeps. □

PAGANISM REVISITED, PART I

Halloween Forever

RICHARD BROOKHISER

I HAVE been to India twice. The second time, this summer, I went to the temple of Meenakshi in Madurai. Madurai is one of the “temple towns” of the south—places that coalesced around a few popular holy sites. At 1.1 million people it is a big town, but the temple is a big temple.

It has the plan of many Indian temples: a square, walled enclosure, with four gates; a courtyard; then the temple itself, with a reinforced pool, or tank, somewhere in the midst. Over each gate stands a huge tower, closed to the public since a woman threw herself off one a few years ago. Every foot of each tower is covered with sculptures, all painted. And not centuries ago, for they are as bright as billboards.

But what is this, in the courtyard? A statue of a Nandi, or bull, the mount of Shiva, Meenakshi’s husband. It kneels, gazing at a lingam, a pillar which represents an erect penis. A highly stylized one—you could show it in a movie

without getting an NC-17 rating, or even an R. But that is what it is nonetheless. Inside, there is another Nandi. A young mother with a baby touches its nose, then touches her head and her baby’s head.

But what is this? A row of stalls in a dark hall (the inside of the temple is low-ceilinged and rather oppressive). A lot of the stuff looks like ritual items—flowers, candles. But much of it is trinkets—cheap plastic toys, electric clocks. Nearby is a statue of Ganesh, the god of luck, a jovial figure with an elephant’s head and Jackie Gleason’s body. He is Shiva’s son, and Dad cut his head off by mistake once, and could only find an elephant’s head to repair the mishap. A man is prostrating himself in front of the statue.

But what is this? A pair of dancing statues. The dance they are engaged in became warm—whether from eros or anger, I forget—so worshippers cool them off by throwing balls of butter at them. The statues are stuck all over with little yellow lumps. Nearby, you come out into the open briefly, where there is a real elephant. You hand him a few ru-

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