



CONSERVATISM AND RELIGION

At a time when faithful believers of various confessions in the Judeo-Christian tradition are experiencing varying degrees of alienation in a society that seems to grow increasingly and more militantly secular with every week that passes, this issue of *Modern Age* features essays that highlight the relationship between conservatism and religion. In addition, two more essays examine the southern conservative tradition from a literary perspective—another vision very much at odds with the mutable materialistic culture of modernity. Also prominently featured in this issue is an account of one of the momentous events of the earlier twentieth century.

In “Two Dialogues of Abraham with God,” Moshe Roshwald provocatively suggests that the first Patriarch of the three great monotheistic faiths engages in exchanges with God that are incompatible in their theological implications, if not diametrically opposed. Professor Roshwald finds in this scriptural discrepancy a contradiction in how Jews—and by implication Christians, their “younger brothers”—perceive both the human condition and the divine nature. Analogously, Daniel and Claire Hammond

recount the unease and eventual failure of the Mont Pelerin Society to accommodate religion in its program of resistance to political and economic collectivism. Nathan Schlueter handles much the same problem in his discussion of Leo Strauss and Pope Benedict XVI on “the Crisis of the West.” At first glance this seems an improbable pairing, but Professor Schlueter, while acknowledging the tension between the views of the two men, finds significant parallels as well. Jack Kerwick, who also adverts to Leo Strauss, is less sanguine about the reconciliation of neoconservatism and the older conservative tradition in his account of “The Neoconservative Conundrum.”

In “The Georgic Vision of Andrew Lytle,” Mark Malvasi offers an apologia for the stance of one of the most important—although now lesser-known—figures of the Southern Agrarian movement of the first half of the twentieth century. The “Fugitive” tradition that sought to nurture dignified repose is no more at home in the rather frenetic world of digital sensationalism that dominates the early twenty-first century than are orthodox Christianity and Judaism. Professor Malvasi shows the value of Lytle’s vision and deplors

the way it is misrepresented, when not simply ignored. Jeffrey Folks provides a careful account of the fiction of Robert Drake, who published frequently in *Modern Age* in previous decades. Professor Folks explains the personal context from which Drake's stories emerged and calls attention to the differences between Drake and the "Fugitives," thus demonstrating the variety of the southern literary tradition. In a Commentary piece, David Middleton pays tribute to the late Wilmer Mills, who also published in *Modern Age* and whose untimely death at the age of forty-one deprived southern letters of a poet of substantial achievement and even greater promise.

Dmitry Shlapentokh offers "Documentation" of his return to Russia and a visit to Babi Yar, the site of one of the many gruesome Nazi atrocities during World War II. He finds a disturbing indifference to the memory of this horrific event, on the part of the current Russian authorities and on the part of many ordinary citizens. It is our hope that pieces such as Professor Shlapentokh's will remind us that both freedom and fundamental decency are under perpetual threat from forces that have not vanished but only changed their shape in our new century.

James Matthew Wilson provides us within an insightful review-essay on two fascinating new volumes of verse by Catherine Savage Brosman (another *Modern Age* contributor) as well as a thoughtful poetic meditation of

his own. We also welcome two distinguished poets, David Craig and Paul Ruffin, to the pages of *Modern Age*. Finally, this issue offers reviews of books on a diverse array of political, historical, and literary topics. The sometimes convoluted relationship between politics and religion receives particular notice in Virgil Nemoianu's review of a new book by the eminent and fascinating French philosopher Chantal Delsol, as well as in D. G. Hart's account of a new study of the role of religion in the Cold War.

I close on two notes, one regrettable, the other cause for satisfaction. In our previous issue quotation marks were omitted from a passage taken from Condorcet on page 24 of Alexander Rosenthal y Pubúl's essay, "What Went Wrong in Europe": ". . . the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master. . . ." Two more errata occur in Thomas B. Fowler's essay, "The Global Warming Conundrum," on page 45 in the first paragraph of the second column where 2.0 degrees centigrade becomes 20 degrees, and again in the second paragraph of the second column, where 1.0 is incorrectly given as 10 degrees. We regret these oversights but are pleased to observe that with this double issue, *Modern Age* is back on schedule and will resume its usual quarterly publication, with the summer 2013 issue appearing in July and the fall 2013 issue in October.

—RVY