

birth years before, and the introspective poet has decided to remarry as he approaches the end of his career.

Gradwyn is murdered by strangulation following her operation, and Dalgliesh's Scotland Yard team, which is assigned to especially sensitive or difficult homicides, uses the conventions of detective fiction (examining the body, interrogating those living at the manor, theorizing with regard to the murder) to advance the story. In the manor, small dramas unfold as the cast of characters is confronted with "who we are and what we are capable of being." At stake are the fate of the manor and clinic, the relationships between the various characters, an inheritance, and the success of Dalgliesh and his team in their attempt to restore order against the disorderly background of the murder, which is soon followed by another.

James frequently transposes modern institutions and structures (Scotland Yard, a nuclear power station) with symbols of the past (an abbey, a church), stressing the continuity of human traits and contrasting the increasing uncertainty of the 21st century with earlier periods marked by tradition, custom, and religious faith and ceremony. In *The Private Patient*, she further expresses her distress and pessimism in the face of a world that no longer seems to make sense, in which the forces of disorder, so long held at bay by prophets, priests, and the likes of Adam Dalgliesh, seem to be winning out. Gradwyn, for instance, while attending the marriage of her long-widowed mother, makes the following observations:

She thought, *I don't belong here, I'm not happy with them, nor they with me. Their embarrassed mutual politeness can't bridge the gap between us. But this is where I came from, these are my people . . . that amorphous, unregarded group who fought the country's wars, paid their taxes, clung to what remained of their traditions. They had lived to see their simple patriotism derided, their morality despised, their savings devalued. They caused no trouble. Millions of pounds of*

public money wasn't regularly siphoned into their neighbourhoods in the hope of bribing, cajoling or coercing them into civic virtue. If they protested that their cities had become alien, their children taught in over-crowded schools where 90 per cent of the children spoke no English, they were lectured about the cardinal sin of racism by those more expensively and comfortably circumstanced.

This story does not end with all the loose ends tied up, in the tradition of the English mystery. Though the case is officially closed, Dalgliesh does not believe that the full truth has been uncovered, that he has truly restored order. In a world without set boundaries, he is confronted with people who must set their own, and who wonder whether the truth will set them free:

Dalgliesh said, "I accept that, given the confession, nothing more can reasonably be done. But I don't like unfinished business. I needed to know if I was right . . . Now I know the truth in so far as it can be known . . . Or is that too arrogant a claim?"

"To know the truth and to understand it? Yes, with respect, Commander, I think it is. An arrogance and, perhaps, an impertinence . . ."

The book includes a note of hope, however faint, for the character pondering a heinous crime amid the ruins:

She thought, *The world is a beautiful and terrible place. Deeds of horror are committed every minute and in the end those we love die. If the screams of all earth's living creatures were one scream of pain, surely it would shake the stars. But we have love. It may seem a frail defence against the horrors of the world, but we must hold fast and believe in it, for it is all we have.*

Corresponding editor Wayne Allensworth is the author of *The Russian Question*.

A Measured But Practical Hope

by Lloyd E. Gross

The Tyranny of Liberalism: Understanding and Overcoming Administered Freedom, Inquisitorial Tolerance, and Equality by Command

by James Kalb

Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;
330 pp., \$28.00



If man is the measure, it cannot be right to tell him what to do. We cannot be forced to be free or ordered to be equal. Neither theoretical refinements nor practical compromises can resolve such basic contradictions or keep them from leading to unprincipled and irrational conduct that eventually proves self-destructive.

Savor that felicitous prose. It is a sample of what awaits those who read James Kalb's *The Tyranny of Liberalism*, 289 pages of text followed by ample documentation and references. Kalb says what many of us have not been quite able to articulate. He identifies the cracks in the foundation on which modern liberal sensibilities rest, cracks which all of us knew had to be there, but found difficult to spot.

Kalb loves language. There is a poignancy to his lamentation of its pre-empting by the Newspeak of the New World Order. His description of how liberals use the terms *toleration*, *inclusion*, and *rationality* can liberate even one educated in post-1960's public schools, unless those institutions were successful in destroying his ability to think critically.

Kalb also loves tradition. He correctly assesses liberalism as a rejection of tradition, and with it the unwritten principles, many of which are based on religion, that allow people to live in the real world. Kalb accepts the Christian doctrine of Original Sin,

which alone explains the limitations one must expect of human behavior. He also accepts the concept of natural law. He does not say that his understanding of natural law is Thomistic, but he definitely rejects the “nature” spoken of by philosophical materialists. The Declaration of Independence speaks of “nature and nature’s God.” Kalb uses similar language. I see little difference between Kalb’s concept of natural law and the Scholastic one.

The book is divided into two parts, which come down to problem and solution. Kalb summarizes the history of Western civilization, tracing the rejection of real knowledge and the rise of technocracy, bureaucracy, and the herd mentality that prevails among us now. He offers a very pessimistic analysis of our current situation, showing the difficulties in any attempt to resurrect real freedom and genuine intellectual endeavor. In the second half of his book, he offers some hope. Kalb understands that liberalism has no choice but to permit its own destruction if it remains true to its principles. And he offers us some practical advice for now, concerning homeschooling, using the internet, and generally staying below the radar of the bureaucracy.

Kalb is a Christian. He concludes that faith is the necessary item that will maintain tradition until it can reclaim its rightful place. “Our acts can make sense and be fruitful only as part of an order for good founded in the nature of things.” If those last four words remind you of a book by Marion Montgomery, be assured that Kalb has the same intellectual independence and would assert that objective knowledge is real and attainable, even as Montgomery would. Rejoice that another voice has been added to the movement to reclaim civilization.

The Rev. Lloyd E. Gross is pastor emeritus of Christ Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Cleveland, Ohio.



FROM CHRONICLES PRESS

Immigration and the American Future

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“Can immigration be expected to change America for better, or for worse? If we accept at face value President George W. Bush’s claim that terrorism represents the gravest threat to America, as indeed it may, then we must ask ourselves whether terrorism, by itself, is capable either of obliterating the United States as—say—Rome eradicated Carthage from the map of North Africa, or of destroying it by effectively replacing the existing nation on what historically has been American soil with another and different nation. If the answer is “No,” then we must agree that the terrorist threat is in fact a subset of the immigration one—and that **mass immigration is a greater threat to the survival of our country than any terrorist campaign possibly could be.** Which, it seems to me, is saying a very great deal about the dangers posed to the United States by mass immigration.”

—From the Foreword, by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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Looking Backward

Hard cases make bad law, and since 2002 the exposure of some ugly criminal cases has stirred legislators in several states to contemplate dreadful legal innovations. However far removed these crimes may appear from regular mainstream American life, the legal principles involved threaten to wreak havoc in the coming decades.

As all the world knows, the Roman Catholic Church has for some years faced a problem from clergy sexual abuse. In some cases, adult priests had sex with teenage boys and young adults, while others—true pedophiles—focused their attention on small children. For the sake of argument, let us concede that perhaps three or four percent of priests over the past 60 years were involved in some such misconduct. How should we as a society respond to this? In most cases, the statute of limitations has long expired on such acts of molestation, and that restriction has infuriated media and legislators. In 2002, the state of California passed what is known as a lookback law in an effort to remedy the perceived wrong. For a period of one year, a so-called civil window, victims could launch civil lawsuits in cases that would otherwise have expired, however long ago the abuse occurred. Delaware followed with a two-year window, and, as in California, the new opportunity provoked a torrent of suits.

From one perspective, such windows are a wonderful idea. Imagine, for instance, a hypothetical pedophile priest who was ordained in 1955 and who spent the next 25 years molesting literally hundreds of children, before retiring comfortably. Is it not simple justice that he, finally, should face the consequences of his acts? And, by the same token, so should those Church authorities who winked at his acts, subjecting him to trivial or inconsequential forms of discipline, while ignoring the needs of victims.

But the reality is not nearly that simple. Yes, I can point to cases of monstrous serial pedophiles, but they are wildly atypical in the records of clerical sexual misconduct. In the vast majority of cases, sexual misbehavior was nothing so flagrant, and the evidence for it is often slim to nonexistent. How on earth can anyone defend a case concerning an alleged incident of sexual impropriety that occurred in 1970? Over time, memories fade, witnesses die or become hard to trace, evidence become scarcer, and the odds of conducting a fair trial decline precipitously. The dangers of exhuming ancient allegations in a civil case are all the greater because plaintiffs have such an overwhelming financial interest in establishing their claims.

Also, we may today know that sexual abuse is an extraordinarily dangerous form of victimization, but earlier generations did not share that opinion. Professional and expert opinions about the severity and frequency of sexual abuse have fluctuated dramatically over time, and concern reached an historic low between 1955 and 1975, the exact time that many of the alleged acts of abuse occurred. Of course, diocesan authorities reacted to such cases then with much less urgency than they would in 2009. Lookback laws thus demand that institutions be judged according to the standards and attitudes prevailing today, but for actions that occurred 30 or 50 years in the past. Apples are to be judged as to how far they live up to the criteria of oranges.

This critique goes far beyond the specific problem of child-abuse cases. In other matters, too, the seriousness that a given society places on a partic-



ular act may change swiftly and radically. An act that a society regards as fairly minor at one time may 30 years later come to be seen as so appalling as to be unforgivable, and *vice versa*. Over time, indeed, some kinds of conduct move entirely outside the scope of criminal law. In the 1950's and 60's, consensual adult homosexual behavior constituted a very serious crime in most jurisdictions, although attitudes were radically transformed in later years. But even when acts have remained criminal, the stigma that attached to them has changed to an amazing degree: Just think of the attitudes prevailing toward drug use in the 1970's compared with today's.

Can any of us say with confidence how the laws and mores of our society will change between now and 2040? I may today be a law-abiding person, observing laws and social standards as best I understand them; but unknown to me, I may be engaging in behaviors that, in the retrospect of 30 years, could come to seem irresponsible or cruel, and deserving of stern sanctions. Will future courts be trying people on charges that, in 2009, they campaigned against "gay marriage" or denied the reality of global warming? By no sane or reasonable standard should I be judged by the standards of a future generation. Lookback laws represent a looming catastrophe for the U.S. legal system. ☞

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