

upholds — contrary to Schmitt’s own anti-liberal position — that “one can be liberal in one’s personal political values and practices and still think that we need a theological account of political experience” (25). Yet ultimately, when looking to position Kahn’s work between liberalism and its critics and when seeking to encapsulate its meaning, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* is an ostensibly scurrilous love letter to the perceived failings of liberal political theory, and a defense of a secularized political theology for a modern age of the Schmittian exception.

***How Two Political Entrepreneurs Helped Create the American Conservative Movement, 1973–1981.* By Alf Thomas Tonessen. Ceredigion, UK: The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2009, iv + 337 pp. \$119.95 cloth**

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It may be that the best way to understand the United States, and a social movement like the rise of the conservative right, is to read about it from a European perspective. After all, Americans have been pouring over Alexis de Tocqueville’s writings for nearly 200 years trying to gain insights about their own country in the process. Alf Thomas Tonessen’s book is no *Democracy in America*, but it is an insightful chronology of the events and people who created a political revolution in American politics.

Tonessen, a lecturer in American Studies at the University of Oslo, uses journals, interviews and articles, as well as books, to tell his story of how Richard Viguerie and Paul Weyrich birthed the conservative movement. The two political adventurers are protagonists in a story that links the central players to one another and a movement that changed American politics. Viguerie’s direct mail fundraising operation and Weyrich’s organizational networking were central to the electoral successes Republicans enjoyed in the 1970s and in 1980, as well as much later.

It would be hard to find two more unlikely patriarchs of a social movement than Weyrich and Viguerie. Both were supporters of Barry

Goldwater who moved the rocks of his landslide defeat aside to lay the foundation for a political renaissance. Weyrich was from Wisconsin, grew up Catholic and became a Republican the very year John Kennedy won the presidency in 1960. His was a lonely, but convicting, experience. Viguerie grew up in Texas, and cut his anti-communist political teeth by supporting the “two Macs,” Joseph McCarthy and Douglas MacArthur. What the two men had in common was a shared vision for a new conservative majority, something they believed possible when they talked to everyday citizens, but almost unthinkable in the halls of power.

The conservatism of both men was deep-seated, and resulted in their mutual opposition to the ideological compromises offered by President Richard Nixon, and their support for candidates willing to oppose the dominant Democrats and moderate Republicans in Congress. From these humble roots, Viguerie and Weyrich worked with others to create an infrastructure of political and legal interest groups, coalitions of grassroots activists, think tanks, journals of opinion, magazines and political action committees to counter the entrenched establishment of the left, and the equivocations of the conservatives.

The book is well-researched and complete as to important people and events. That virtue means that many issues like the conservative opposition to Richard Nixon, the importance of the Reagan candidacy, and the economic issues associated with each election are given brief mention. But this is no shortcoming, since virtually unknown events, like the founding of the Republican Study Committee (1973), the growth of Weyrich’s Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (1970s), and the Council on National Policy (1981), are explained in detail. Interviews with both Weyrich and Viguerie allow the reader to pull back the curtain on conservative strategy meetings, targeted campaigns, and direct mail fundraising operations. The result is a behind-the-scenes understanding of something that the press, and many scholars, missed at the time.

Central to the book is the rise of evangelicals as a potent force in American politics, the so-called “sleeping dog” of the movement. The persuasion of Jerry Falwell by Richard Viguerie and Howard Phillips (who is Jewish) to lead the new organization makes especially good reading. “Out there is what might be called a moral majority,” said Viguerie, and Falwell declared in response, “that’s it.” Such are the coincidences and insights that led to a social and political revolution.

The reader is able to sense the immense size of the task Weyrich and Viguerie faced in the 1970s, when they began to talk about traditional values, balanced budgets, and a Republican rebirth in a decade labeled

“me,” with the rebellion of the 1960s still a faded flower memory. Yet they sensed, and Tonnessen is able to convey, that the seeds of contradiction in leftist policies and rhetoric were producing a harvest in the “Silent Majority,” neo-conservatism and main street businesses across the land. The story of these two men is really the story of millions of others who joined them in turning the tide of American politics.

If there is a peculiar European way of looking at American politics, it is that foreigners are often prone to give undue attention to leaders, and neglect the underlying social shifts that move people to action. Recall that the French had an admiration of George Washington, and an underappreciation of the colonial Virginian aristocracy of which he was a part. Is Tonnessen prone to give too much applause to two figures, who never won electoral office or appeared on the forefront of the political stage? Perhaps, but that limitation is more than offset by the way the reader is able to see the birth of a social movement from the inside.

***Dagestan: Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance in the North Caucasus.* By Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2010. ix + 251 pp. \$94.95 cloth, \$34.95 paper**

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Understanding the role that Islam plays in both the private lives of Muslims and the public politics of state, nation, and security in post-Soviet states is vitally important for both intrinsic reasons (how do people in these states construct meaningful lives?) and for policy reasons (to what extent is it correct and necessary to view politicized Islam as a potential threat to domestic, regional and international stability in these regions?). Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev’s new volume on Dagestan, a constituent state unit of the Russian Federation that shares an internal border with the Chechen Republic and external borders with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea, reveals through its title an appreciation of the importance of “the Islamic factor” in this region. The book itself, however, while providing a useful chronicle of