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Willmoore Kendall, Man of the People

DANIEL MCCARTHY

Few leading intellectuals of the early postwar conservative movement considered themselves majority-rule democrats. But Willmoore Kendall (1909–1967) was one who did. While James Burnham looked to a Machiavellian elite as the “defenders of freedom” and others of the Right defined themselves in opposition to what José Ortega y Gasset had called (in the title of his famous book) “the revolt of the masses,” Kendall grounded his understanding of conservatism in the customs and attitudes of the American people.¹ This did not make him the father of right-wing populism: Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, for one, needed no help from Kendall in attracting a mass following, although Kendall was indeed “one of the great philosophical defenders of the Senator.”² Rather, what this “wild Yale don”³ achieved was to reconcile philosophical conservatism, particularly in its anticommunist and antiliberal modes, with the American political system, even at its most frankly democratic. His distinctive contribution to the postwar Right, historian George H. Nash has argued, was to Americanize and politicize the conservative intellectual movement.⁴

Kendall did this through brilliant readings of America’s foundational documents, including not only the Constitution, the *Federalist*, and the Bill of Rights but also the Mayflower Compact, the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, and the Virginia Declaration of Rights, among others. He sharply contrasted the tradition of these documents against modern liberalism’s commitment to a totally open society. For Kendall, the American political system was properly “closed,” and the keys to interpreting it were to be found not in theories of individual rights but

in such concepts as deliberative assembly, constitutional morality, and public orthodoxy.

Today, no institute, foundation, or center bears Willmoore Kendall's name. Yet his contemporaries acknowledged him as one of the foremost, if not preeminent, conservative thinkers of his time. Jeffrey Hart called him "beyond any possibility of challenge, the most important political theorist to have emerged . . . since the end of World War II."⁵ Leo Strauss considered Kendall "the best native [*i.e.*, American] theorist of [his] generation."⁶ Hart and Strauss were friends of Kendall's and philosophically sympathetic to him, but even critics, such as libertarian Murray Rothbard, recognized Kendall's gifts. Rothbard believed that Kendall's majoritarianism and hostility to theories of natural rights marked him as "the philosopher of the lynchmob," yet he credited him as "a very keen and stimulating thinker, incisive, and with a sharply radical spirit with a propensity to dig to the roots of issues without fear or favor."⁷

Why, then, has Kendall fallen into relative obscurity? Nash, the dean of conservative historiographers, has suggested three reasons. First, Kendall died at a comparatively young age (fifty-eight), before he could complete his projected oeuvre. Second, the corpus of his work in political philosophy is diffuse, consisting of just one original book (*John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*); a volume of revised essays and reviews (*The Conservative Affirmation*); a posthumous anthology of other essays, talks, and unpublished fragments (*Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*); and another posthumous work completed by George W. Carey (*The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition*). "There is a tendency among intellectuals," Nash suggests, "to study and memorialize those who leave their thoughts behind in the form of finished books rather than scattered articles (however luminous)." Third, "the most important reason for Kendall's still somewhat shadowy place in the conservative pantheon" according to Nash, was "his own 'volatile' personality and intellect. . . . So colorful was he, and so fascinating, that there has been a tendency to remember him more as 'the most unforgettable character I've met' than as a deep and daring conservative thinker."⁸

"When writing about Willmoore Kendall," Carey concurs, "a strong temptation exists to deal with the man, not his teachings or theory."⁹ Indeed, Kendall was such a remarkable man that, like Allan Bloom, he inspired a story by Saul Bellow ("Mosby's Memoirs," in Kendall's case).¹⁰ However unfortunate it may be that Kendall's life and personal-

ity sometimes eclipsed interest in his work, his biography is important for understanding both the development of his thought and his impact on modern American conservatism. This is especially true in light of the powerful indirect influence Kendall exercised on the development of conservatism through his student William F. Buckley Jr.

Kendall was born on March 5, 1909, in Konawa, Oklahoma. His father, Willmoore Kendall Sr., a Methodist minister, was blind, and Kendall's later philosophical rigor evidently owed much to his extensive reading to and discussions with his father. The senior Kendall preached in small towns throughout Oklahoma, and Nash credits this "rural, Democratic" milieu with helping to inspire Kendall's "faith in the inarticulate common man and distrust of 'undemocratic' elites—a feature of his thought throughout his life."¹¹

Young Willmoore was a prodigy. He learned to read at age two. He graduated from high school at twelve and from the University of Oklahoma at sixteen. His first book, *Baseball: How to Play It and How to Watch It*, was published (under the pseudonym Alan Monk) the year he turned eighteen. By 1932, he had completed course work for a Ph.D. in Romance languages at the University of Illinois. But before finishing his dissertation he accepted a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford, where he studied with philosopher R. G. Collingwood, who piqued Kendall's interest in political theory.¹² Kendall also became a fervent Marxist during his time at Oxford and conceived an ambition to become "a great socialist publicist."¹³

In pursuit of that dream, he worked for the United Press in Madrid between terms at Oxford, then returned to Spain as a full-time foreign correspondent after completing his studies. There he circulated among high-ranking Trotskyites; he seems to have had an aversion to Stalinism from the start. As the civil war approached, his sympathies lay firmly with the Republicans. What he saw in Spain, and later learned about the conflict after his return to the United States, cured Kendall of his youthful flirtation with communism. According to Nash: "The dictatorial, totalitarian, antidemocratic aspects of communism appalled him. He later told a friend that as Spain slid toward civil war he could tolerate the Communists' blowing up the plants of opposition newspapers. But when they deliberately killed opposition *newsboys*—this was too much. Exposure to the Spanish Republic 'really shook Willmoore up,' one friend recalled, and within a few months, 'his thought crystallized into fervent anti-communism.'"¹⁴

In 1936 Kendall returned to the University of Illinois, where he forfeited his credits in Romance languages and began work toward a Ph.D. in political science, which he received in 1940. His dissertation was published the following year as *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*. It was a work of startling originality, advancing a novel interpretation of Locke as a pure majoritarian and anticipating the later scholarly consensus that Locke's *Second Treatise* had been written before the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689.¹⁵ Kendall regretted, however, that the work did not receive more attention from the academic mainstream.¹⁶

He had a political as well as an academic interest in Locke. “The name of Locke, associated as it is in men’s minds with such values as tolerance, freedom of inquiry, love of truth, *etc.*,” he writes, “has become a *symbol* in the continuing struggle for power in the American constitution; and, as such has been extremely useful to those who prefer government by judiciary to majority-rule.” Kendall knew which side he was on and recognized the practical consequences that might flow from his research. If, he observes, “Locke’s natural rights are merely the rights vouchsafed by a legislature responsible to the majority, the opponents of judicial review can easily capture for themselves a symbol that might prove extremely useful.”¹⁷

This is not to say that Kendall intended from the start to overturn the conventional understanding of Locke as a philosopher of natural rights. On the contrary, he expected his investigations to confirm “prevailing notions about Locke’s political theory” and was surprised when his research led him to conclude instead that Locke was a defender of absolute majority rule.¹⁸ But that was what his close study of the *Second Treatise* revealed. His reading was guided by methods he had learned from Collingwood. As Kendall described this approach years later: “Let’s find out, above all, what *question* the book is asking, the problem to which it addresses itself first and foremost; let us try first to grasp that question, then to find out what the author’s overall answer to the question actually is. Let us, in a word, not make the mistake of trying to get answers to the question of parts of the book that turn out to have no bearing either upon the question or upon the answer.”¹⁹

Only after a painstaking reading that “accept[ed] no sentence or paragraph from the *Second Treatise* as Locke’s ‘teaching’ without first laying it beside every other sentence in the treatise” did Kendall conceive his thesis: “that Locke did not *say* the things he is supposed to have said” about natural rights; instead, Locke’s answers to the great per-

manent questions of political philosophy are “*at every point except one, [those] of the majority-rule democrats.*”²⁰

In *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*, Kendall argues that even in Locke’s state of nature there are no truly individual rights. Rights, rather, are reciprocal with social duties and communal in character, community in the state of nature being the community of all humanity. Kendall illustrates this point with an analysis of Locke’s account of the right to acquire property in the state of nature. “The right has its origin,” Kendall writes, “in a need which Locke represents as a common (= community?) need,” namely, the need for property as a means of ensuring humanity’s survival and flourishing as a species. Locke “is thinking of the right of property simply as a function of one’s *duty* to enrich mankind’s common heritage,” and what is more, “this same *functional* view of rights carries itself over into Locke’s handling of the problem of rights *in* organized society.” Kendall characterizes the presuppositions of Locke’s theory of property as “collectivist in the extreme.”²¹

He then proceeds to show that Locke’s description of the law of nature is complex and seemingly contradictory, yet the apparent problems matter little, since “Locke’s state of nature [is merely] an expository device,” as is Locke’s compact theory, “whose purpose,” Kendall states, “is to lay bare the essential character of the rights and duties which belong to men as members of (legitimate) commonwealths.”²² Just as the community of the human race is the supreme authority in the state of nature, the people are sovereign in political society. And the relationship in a given commonwealth between the sovereign people and a particular government “is, quite simply, assimilable to that between principal and agent in Anglo-American law.” The people as a whole remain sovereign and may cashier the government of the day, but the people may delegate to the government unlimited power over individuals, since “even the individual’s right to life is valid only to the extent that it is compatible with the good (= preservation) of his community, and it is the people, not the individual, to whom Locke has clearly imputed the power to make the necessary judgments as to what is compatible with its [i.e., the people’s] preservation.”²³

How is the will of the people to be expressed? Kendall reads Locke as assigning this power to the majority: “Wherever men live in community with one another, [Locke] is saying, the relations between them can be described in terms of an agreement which, in addition to assigning to the whole community that unlimited power which we have examined

... assigns to the numerical majority a *right* to make decisions (regarding the use of that power) which are binding upon the minority. The majority-principle is, in a word, implicit in the logic of community life.”²⁴

Kendall analyzes five arguments that Locke provides in support of majority rule, concluding that “what was really in Locke’s mind” as the ultimate basis for majority rule was the belief that, “individual consents being . . . the only rightful title to the exercise of power,” and consent being the only truly individual right for Locke, “the right of the majority flows as a matter of course from the fact that it can point to more consents than the minority.” From this theory follows the idea that a legitimate commonwealth must have “an institutional context in which the people are as a matter of course invited, from time to time, to express (by majority-vote) their preferences regarding future government policy and personnel.”²⁵

Kendall makes one concession in *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule* to the conventional interpretation of his subject. He accepts that “Locke could never have committed himself to the moral relativism implied in the proposition that majorities make right” because Locke “believed . . . not only in the moral law but also in the possibility of applying the moral law to the problems of politics!” To resolve the apparent contradiction between Locke’s beliefs and the logic of his argument, Kendall proposes a “latent premise” within the *Second Treatise*: the idea that “a ‘safe’ majority of men (thus the ‘average’ man) are rational and just.”²⁶ Thus majorities can be trusted to observe the moral law. (In 1966, after encountering Leo Strauss’s scholarship on Locke, Kendall would reconsider this “latent premise” and conclude that Locke did indeed hold no law higher than the will of the people.)²⁷

Many themes of Kendall’s later work are present in *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*, among them Kendall’s devotion to, and creative thinking about, majority rule itself; his concern for a reference in politics to a source of law higher than man; his rejection of individual rights; and his interest in the application of political philosophy to American political practice. Just as significantly, the book is a tour de force of Kendall’s reading technique, what he calls the “universal confrontation of the text.”²⁸

By the time he wrote *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*, Kendall’s personal politics had begun moving to the Right. He was outspokenly critical of Franklin Roosevelt’s foreign and domestic policies (as he had been while on the Left) and supported Republican Wendell



Willkie in 1940. He also favored the Ludlow Amendment, which would have required a national referendum before the United States could go to war, and opposed U.S. intervention in World War II before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.²⁹ After his father's death in 1942, however, Kendall resigned a post at the University of Richmond to work for U.S. intelligence in Latin America and later became chief of the CIA's Inter-American Division, Office of Reports and Estimates, after the war.³⁰

He returned to the academy in 1947 as an associate professor of political science at Yale, where he quickly alienated colleagues by subjecting their left-wing prejudices to blistering criticism. Yet the qualities that his colleagues found appalling charmed many of the undergraduates who took Kendall's courses, perhaps none more so than two young men named William F. Buckley and L. Brent Bozell. "His pugnacity and panache attracted Bill and Brent," wrote Garry Wills, who later came to know all three men through *National Review*. "They made a formidable trio—all three bright, handsome, Catholic (in varying degrees), Spanish-speaking, war veterans, glib, argumentative."³¹

According to Wills, "we hear refracted in Bill Buckley's tone and language" Kendall's "extraordinary speaking and writing style, precise but also flamboyant. . . . I had thought everyone talked like Bill at *National Review*. But they were talking like Willmoore—like the Oklahoma boy whose diction had been sharpened by his years at Oxford and doctoral studies in Romance languages."³² Kendall's influence on Buckley extended beyond his patterns of speech, however; he also channeled the course of Buckley's life and career. The younger man joined the CIA at Kendall's urging, and it was Kendall who introduced Buckley to the man who would become his "paramount associate at *National Review*," James Burnham. Kendall also provided, according to Buckley himself, "important editorial contributions" to Buckley's first two books, *God and Man at Yale* and *McCarthy and His Enemies* (the latter coauthored with Bozell).³³

When Buckley launched *National Review* in 1955 he asked Kendall to become a senior editor, in which capacity he wrote a regular column, "The Liberal Line," and supervised the books department for a time. At the magazine Kendall soon discovered that his disagreements with other conservatives could be as bitter as his jousts with the Left. Reportedly, Kendall was never on speaking terms with more than one *National Review* colleague at any given moment. He may have made a permanent enemy of managing editor Suzanne La Follette by seducing a copy

girl on her office couch—known thereafter as the Willmoore Kendall memorial couch.³⁴

Ideas were certainly not Kendall's only passion. He married three times, with a series of extracurricular pursuits on the side. He was also prodigious in his cups. Jeffrey Hart spent a week at Oxford with Kendall in 1965 and recalls: "we consumed an ocean of booze, and after he left, for the only time in my life, I took up running. It was the only way to dry out." Hart provides a memorable taste of his friend's lacerating wit as well: "When a news report on an unsuccessful assassination attempt against Sukarno came over the pub TV, Kendall commented: 'This has all the earmarks of a CIA operation. Everyone died except Sukarno.'"³⁵

Perhaps spurred by the launch of *National Review*, Kendall came into his own as an explicitly conservative theorist by the late 1950s. In several essays published between 1958 and 1960, he took aim at the ideology that stood in antithesis to his own principles, delimiting conservatism first in the negative. Liberalism, according to Kendall, was characterized by a desire to create an "open society" free from all public orthodoxy, a desire that Kendall traced to John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. The educated elite that wished to remake America into an open society did not understand, Kendall warned, that no society could exist without an orthodoxy. (This concern had been at the back of Kendall's mind since at least 1935, when he wrote to his father, "the greatest single problem . . . is this: how to get across, to a generation for which religion has lost its meaning, that minimum of morality without which life in a community is downright impossible.")³⁶

As Kendall had earlier shown Locke to be something other than a natural law libertarian, so he now proceeded to examine other figures conventionally identified with minority freedoms. He began with one of the first and greatest martyrs to the mob: Socrates. In "The People versus Socrates Revisited" (1958), he argues that both the philosopher and the Athenian jury that condemned him had acted justly. Socrates, inspired by God and adhering to permanent truths, was not intimidated by his prosecution and refused to silence himself. Kendall notes, however, that Socrates did not claim in his defense anything like a right to free speech or freedom of thought. On the contrary, Socrates accepted his sentence of death and declined to escape from custody when given the chance. The texts of Plato's *Apology* and *Crito* make clear, Kendall argues, that Socrates endorsed the city's authority to punish dissent. The Athenians, for their part, were confronted with three alternatives: to con-



demn Socrates, to accept his philosophy and change their way of life, or to tolerate him. The second would have meant repudiating their own values, which they were not prepared to do. The third option also would have been a betrayal of their way of life, since it would have left Socrates free to preach a revolution that might have eventually succeeded. Kendall concludes that the best course for the Athenians would have been to adopt the ways of Socrates. But failing that, they chose the next best option by defending their way of life against a revolutionary agitator. “Perhaps,” Kendall writes, “a second-best but eminently worthwhile task for political theory is to try to learn to build—and preserve—so good a city.”³⁷ Kendall further develops his attack on the doctrines of the “open society” in “How to Read Milton’s ‘Areopagitica’” (1960), which argues that the poet was no more of a modern liberal than Socrates had been, and in “The Open Society and Its Fallacies” (1960). In what may be his most important scholarly article, “The Two Majorities” (1960), Kendall distinguishes between the plebiscitary majoritarianism favored by liberals and the carefully designed constitutional majoritarianism of James Madison. He identifies plebiscitary democracy as one of the tools by which liberals hoped to carry out their revolution, overthrowing the constitutional republic devised by the framers and substituting in its place the open society.³⁸

The opponents of the open society, according to Kendall, are America’s true conservatives. This would become the theme of his 1963 book, *The Conservative Affirmation in America*, in which he takes sharp exception to conservatives who define their philosophy otherwise. In a salvo evidently directed against traditionalist conservatives such as Russell Kirk, he writes: “I make no sense . . . of calling ‘Conservative’ the man who takes a dim view of his country’s established institutions, feels something less than at home with its way of life as it actually lives it, finds it difficult to identify himself with the political and moral principles on which it has acted through its history, dislikes or views with contempt the generality of the kind of people his society produces, and—above all perhaps—dissociates himself from its Founders, or at least holds them at arms’ length.”³⁹

Kendall’s understanding of American conservatism has “no axe to grind for ‘aristocracy,’ no quarrel (any more than had the authors of the *Federalist*) with America’s commitment to ‘democracy’ It views the pre-1789 John Adams with suspicion not reverence, shies off of vast reaches of the argument of Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in*

France, and deplores the pre-*Federalist* writings of even Alexander Hamilton.” He cites John C. Calhoun, Irving Babbitt, and Paul Elmer More as three figures with whom his conservatism could “do no business.”⁴⁰

Having thus disposed of the traditionalist brand of conservatism, Kendall turns his attention to the libertarians. In contrast to them, Kendall’s conservatism “has sworn no vow of absolute fidelity either to free enterprise a la von Mises, or to a certain list of ‘rights’ a la John Chamberlain, or to a certain holy trinity of government functions a la . . . Frank Meyer, or to revolving-door mistrust of political authority as such a la Frank Chodorov.”⁴¹

And again contra the traditionalists, Kendall proclaims that his book “treats the relation between American Conservatism and ‘religion’ as *problematic*” because “the United States is—has been up to now anyhow—a Christian society governed, or rather self-governed, under a secular Constitution. . . . Attempts to resolve the religious-society-secular-Constitution tension in the United States, in either the one direction or the other, are not only divisive, but contrary to the American tradition itself.”⁴²

Authentic American conservatism, according to Kendall, is nothing more or less than the defense of the constitutional order against the revolutionary attempt by liberals to transform the country into an open society. In practical politics, he argues, refining the case he made in “The Two Majorities,” that means a defense of the traditions and prerogatives of Congress against attempts to remake the American system into a plebiscitary democracy led by the executive branch: “Nothing can be more certain than that the Founders of our Republic bequeathed to us a form of government that was *purely* representative—a form of government in which there was no room, in which moreover there is *to this day* no room, for policy decisions by the electorate—that is, for electoral ‘mandates’ emanating from popular majorities. Or rather there is one thing more certain: namely, that the Liberals intend to overthrow that traditional form of government. . . . Abolish the electoral college, the Liberals insist . . . and so make the President also the direct agent of the popular majority.”⁴³

The framers had indeed devised a majoritarian system, he contends, but of a special kind: one that depends on the “deliberative sense” of a virtuous people, who in turn choose virtuous representatives to deliberate in Congress. The people require only as much expertise as is necessary to elect virtuous representatives—moral expertise, rather than a

minute understanding of political technicalities. The people do not give their representatives specific, binding mandates; rather, they expect representatives to deliberate thoughtfully within the legislature. As Kendall summarizes the process: “In the election of a member of Congress, a community faithful to the constitutional morality of *The Federalist* makes a decision about whom to send forward as its most virtuous man, a decision which is the more important, and which it accordingly takes more seriously, because the community knows that it [i.e., the community] can have little effect on a presidential election.”⁴⁴

What is crucial here is that congressional districts have much smaller constituencies than the nation as a whole, and this difference in scale translates into several qualitative differences that Kendall enumerates. Perhaps most important, the smaller constituency is more structured and hierarchical than the national community; reputation and social authority hold greater sway within its limits. The smaller size of the constituency allows better opportunities for constituents to deliberate among themselves in choosing the most virtuous person to represent them. They are more likely to know the candidates, or at least to have a better sense of the candidates’ moral qualities, because of the relatively close proximity between the voters and the candidates. Moreover, the interests represented in small constituencies are more concrete than those in a national race, where candidates speak not to well-defined groups but to the nation at large using abstract, ideological rhetoric.⁴⁵

Perhaps surprisingly, Kendall draws on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a *bête noire* to many conservatives, for some of these insights, pointing to the admiration Rousseau expresses in *The Social Contract* for “small bands of Swiss peasants gathered around oak trees to conduct their affairs.” Rousseau trusts these small groups above “all the governments of Europe.”⁴⁶ Kendall understands the Constitution as providing representation for “structured communities,” like those of the Swiss peasants gathered around oak trees, through congressional elections. Elections for the executive branch, in contrast, embody the momentary impulses of a national, unstructured community and thus bear a closer resemblance to the homogeneous, egalitarian plebiscitary elections in which liberals prefer to rest authority. In presidential races, “there are no issues, because both candidates for the most part merely repeat, as they swing from whistle-stop to whistle-stop and television studio to television studio, the policy platitudes that constitute the table-talk in our faculty clubs . . . what you get out of the presidential election is what amounts

to a *unanimous* mandate for the principles *both* candidates have been enunciating, which is to say: the presidential election not only permits the electorate, but virtually obliges it, to overestimate its dedication to the pleasant-sounding maxims that have been poured into its ears.”⁴⁷ The presidential electorate, Kendall fears, is vulnerable to manipulation by demagogues and ideologues and permits no leeway for reasoned deliberation between representatives of different perspectives. He therefore cautions that there must be “no room in the American system for a presidential office so aggrandized as to be able to itself determine how much farther the aggrandizement shall go.”⁴⁸

One of Congress’s virtues, Kendall argues in *The Conservative Affirmation*, is that it is more sensitive than the executive branch to subversion and other threats to the public orthodoxy. Joseph McCarthy’s anticommunist investigations illustrate this sensitivity. Kendall found great significance in the white-hot anger the McCarthy hearings and other Red Scare episodes of the 1950s elicited from partisans of each side. For Kendall, McCarthyism was about much more than McCarthy or subversion; it was a struggle over public orthodoxy itself, a test of whether the American tradition or the doctrines of the open society would prevail in political practice. Each side of the clash “understood the other perfectly, and each was quite right in venting upon the other the fury reserved for heretics because each was, in the eyes of the other, *heretical*.” Alas, Kendall notes, a decisive confrontation was averted when liberals retreated to the “clear and present danger” doctrine as the test for whether subversion could be suppressed. The actual heart of the dispute, according to Kendall, was not whether real danger could be suppressed but whether anything like absolute freedom of speech or thought existed—whether the American body politic could, at will, punish elements it considered “wrong and immoral” quite apart from whether they were dangerous.⁴⁹

Behind the clash over public orthodoxy lay an even greater question that Kendall called “the ultimate issue between conservatism and liberalism”: the acceptance or rejection of a higher authority than individual consent in politics and society. In formulating his thoughts on this subject, Kendall drew on his reading of Leo Strauss, whom he called “*the* great teacher of political philosophy, not of our time alone, but of any time since Machiavelli.”⁵⁰ From Strauss, Kendall had learned to construe the conflict between liberals and conservatives as ultimately a war between the “great tradition” (the absolute truths of Western philosophy and religion) and a revolutionary moral relativism promulgated first by

Machiavelli and later by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and other modern philosophers. Locke's role in this struggle, Kendall came to believe, had been to camouflage relativism in the language of natural rights and contractual consent.

There is a critical difference, Kendall argues, between a contract such as the Old Testament covenant, which merely articulates rights and duties in an existing relationship (between God and his people, in this case), and a contract that actually creates a society out of nothing but human will. "We must distinguish between contracts understood as *creating* society, justice, law, and principles of right and wrong," he cautions, "and contracts understood as merely *specifying* society, justice, law, and principles of right and wrong in particular situations."⁵¹ Classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle predicated society on ideas of what was natural for man, and for them, "justice, the principles of right and wrong, and the law are not artificial and man-made, but rather are discovered by man through the exercise of reason." For modern philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, in contrast, "agreement . . . is the sole creator of society, of justice, of right and wrong."⁵² In the American context, the followers of Locke and the other social-contract philosophers were necessarily liberals, while the conservatives placed their faith "in the growing Great Tradition."⁵³ Conservatives must be anti-Lockeans, Kendall now believed.

He once confided to a friend that he wished to become American conservatism's answer to Edmund Burke.⁵⁴ *The Conservative Affirmation* was his bid to lay down, once and for all time, the definition of the American Right. But much as the widely hailed *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule* did not revolutionize the study of Locke, *The Conservative Affirmation* failed to reorient the American Right's self-conception. In sales terms, the book "was only moderately successful," according to publisher Henry Regnery, who recalled in his memoirs, "we printed 6,000 copies and sold during the first year or two about 3,800."⁵⁵

Kendall had originally proposed a different book—tentatively titled *What Is Conservatism Anyway?*—to Regnery.⁵⁶ Three chapters of that unfinished work, whose title later became *Sages of Conservatism*, were published in the posthumous collection *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*. They suggest how far Kendall was willing to go in criticizing the errors of other conservatives. Although the chapter on John Courtney Murray, "The True Sage of Woodstock," is appreciative of its subject, the others, on Russell Kirk and Clinton Rossiter, are scathing.

Kendall argues, for example, that “Mr. Kirk’s teaching on tradition is, on the face of it, an assertion of the very relativism and positivism that, in other contexts, he abhors.”⁵⁷ Kendall had once written to Francis Graham Wilson, his dissertation adviser at the University of Illinois, that he considered *The Conservative Affirmation* a “declaration of war” against Kirk. As Nash suggests, *Sages of Conservatism* would have made the war explicit.⁵⁸ The book probably would have shown many of conservatism’s other “sages”—among them James Burnham, William F. Buckley Jr., Frank Meyer, and M. Stanton Evans—in a similarly unflattering light.

“Within the conservative movement, as well as the political science profession,” Nash writes, Kendall “remained to the end the Great Dissenter.”⁵⁹ Through students, colleagues, and friends such as John Alvis, Jeffrey Hart, and George Carey, Kendall continues to shape the intellectual Right’s understanding of the American political tradition. But his influence has been limited by his exacting definition of conservatism. Kendall cannot be placed in any of the intellectual Right’s factional camps, and he had a propensity to alienate each of them in turn (and on occasion, as in the preface to *The Conservative Affirmation*, all of them at once). Certainly as an avowed opponent of individual rights, Kendall could not expect to find many allies among libertarians. But he was a poor fit for traditionalists as well: he thought them too attached to European traditions, too preoccupied with literature, and insufficiently confident in the American people and the U.S. constitutional system. As a great admirer of Leo Strauss, Kendall might have gained a following among Strauss’s disciples, and to some extent he has.⁶⁰ But Kendall’s interests diverged from those of Strauss and his students on several points, particularly regarding the concept of equality in the American tradition. Harry Jaffa, the preeminent West Coast “Straussian,” has objected vehemently to Kendall’s criticisms of Abraham Lincoln and the equality clause of the Declaration of Independence, going so far as to claim that Kendall’s conservatism in practice amounts to “a distinctive American fascism, or national socialism.”⁶¹

The personal qualities that made Kendall a memorable individual could cost him friends, and jobs as well. He “never lost a polemic, but could not keep a friend,” recalls Reid Buckley, who, like his brother Bill, studied with Kendall at Yale.⁶² Such was the animus toward him among his colleagues at the university that in nineteen years Kendall never received a promotion. He was encouraged to take sabbaticals. Finally, in 1961, he offered the university an opportunity to buy out his tenure, a

deal that was quickly accepted. He received \$42,500, paid out over five years, “to teach, not at Yale.”⁶³ In 1963 he resigned from *National Review* after Buckley, noting that Kendall had not written for the magazine in two years, suggested that he step down as senior editor and accept the title of contributing editor instead. Kendall wrote back that it would be “too great an honor” to remain on the masthead. Later, after the magazine refused to run a free advertisement for the University of Dallas, where Kendall had become chairman of the Department of Politics and Economics, he wrote to Buckley that he now thought about *National Review* “much as I would about an ex-wife of mine who’d become a call-girl.” Buckley replied that he could “only welcome the news that you have finally learned to distinguish between the two.”⁶⁴

His feuds with other conservatives may create the impression that Kendall could not appreciate anyone else who stepped on his philosophical turf, but that was far from the case. He was profoundly respectful, even deferential, toward Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, and he nominated Richard Weaver “for the captaincy of the anti-Liberal team” in a review of *Ideas Have Consequences*.⁶⁵ He also suggested that Weaver’s later *Visions of Order* belonged alongside *The Federalist* on any conservative’s bookshelf.⁶⁶ To be sure, Kendall’s affection for Strauss, Voegelin, and Weaver may have endured, in part, because he had only limited interaction with them, chiefly by correspondence. But in any event, his strained relations with other conservatives were not a product of professional jealousy. He may have aspired to be the American Burke, but he was not above apprenticing himself, even in middle age and at the height of his reputation, to other scholars he esteemed.

After *The Conservative Affirmation*, Kendall turned his attention with renewed vigor to the American tradition. Having shown that neither Socrates nor Milton had advocated an open society, he now sought to demonstrate that the American founding fathers had not done so either. He found confirmation for this belief in Leonard Levy’s books *The Legacy of Suppression* and *Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side*. In 1964 Kendall wrote an essay-length review of the latter for the *Stanford Law Review*. Among the founders, Thomas Jefferson might have been expected to be a proponent of the open society, if anyone was. But as Levy showed, despite his libertarian rhetoric when out of power, as president, Jefferson did not govern as an open society liberal. Moreover, Kendall argued on the basis of Levy’s work that even Jefferson understood freedom of the press (the keystone of the open society) to mean only

freedom from prior restraint, not freedom from prosecution for seditious libel. None of the founders had subscribed to doctrines with any resemblance to modern notions of freedom of speech.⁶⁷

In his 1964 essay “The Bill of Rights and American Freedom,” Kendall’s contribution to the Frank Meyer–edited volume *What Is Conservatism?* he contends that “the major provisions of the First Amendment are conspicuous precisely for the *absence* of overtones to the effect that the ‘freedoms’ involved are ‘rights’ and so, in [Justice Hugo] Black’s favorite phrase, ‘absolute.’” Madison had carefully phrased the First Amendment so as not to embed the language of inviolable individual rights in the Constitution. He did so in part, Kendall argues, because he knew that such rights would have been unenforceable against Congress and could only have led to a disruptive showdown between the legislative and judicial branches. The true bulwark for natural rights, according to Kendall, is found not in the “parchment barriers” Madison derided but in “the deliberate sense of the American community” as expressed within Congress.⁶⁸

This, it must be said, seems to imply something very similar to the “latent premise” Kendall once detected in Locke’s *Second Treatise*. In Kendall’s account of Madison’s thinking, natural or minority rights are better protected by a virtuous majority than by abstract guarantees; the majority, properly constituted, is simply too good to jeopardize the minority. In his 1965 introduction to *The Federalist* coauthored with George Carey, Kendall elaborated on how majority rule can protect rights. In the American system, the answer could be found in the “constitutional morality” taught by *The Federalist*. In Kendall’s reading, the Philadelphia Constitution established legislative supremacy; the genius of *The Federalist*, however, was to teach legislators to use the Constitution wisely, to respect moral limits on their own power and thereby preserve legitimate rights and avert confrontations that could only humiliate the Supreme Court. *The Federalist*, in short, transformed the Philadelphia Constitution into something more than a charter for majority rule; it became a charter for a special kind of majority-rule government that would emphasize reasoned deliberation within Congress over intragovernmental confrontation.⁶⁹

Kendall had lost none of his interest in majority rule by the mid-1960s, but he had developed a more supple understanding of the concept. In light of his reading of Strauss, he reexamined his earlier work on Locke, finding now a moral void in place of the “latent premise” he

had once perceived. The influence of Strauss is also evident in Kendall's 1966 introduction to Rousseau's *Government of Poland*, a work that Kendall translated. (He had earlier produced a translation of *The Social Contract* for Regnery's Gateway Editions.) Kendall supplies not one but two incisive interpretations of *The Government of Poland* in his introduction. The first takes the text at face value, "as a book dealing centrally with Poland, and saying pretty much what it seems to say." In this reading, Kendall finds Rousseau's surprising support for the inefficiencies of the traditional Polish constitution to be indicative of a rejection of the modern, centralized nation-state. For Rousseau, Kendall argues, "the alleged 'vices' of the Polish Constitution represent a clearheaded and intelligent choice on the part of the rank-and-file Poles, against the centralized authority that their intellectual betters are urging upon them, and are, therefore, not vices but *virtues*."⁷⁰

Kendall's second reading of *Government of Poland* treats it as an exercise in "secret writing" that "is apparently addressed to the Poles but is actually intended for a much wider audience, encompassing all those who find themselves unwilling participants in the modern, territorially extensive political regime." On this telling, Rousseau is attempting to show modern states how they might supply the public-spirited ethos that allowed classical regimes to flourish, an ethos above "those selfish and private attachments of modern man that cause division in society." Rousseau's answer, Kendall reveals, is to devise a "radically new," gentle but totalistic society permeated by the power of the state. "It is the business of the state, or, more properly, it is the business of the founder of the state," Kendall explains, "to see to it that the citizen passes every waking moment within institutions that will insure his constant attention to public affairs."⁷¹ Control of the state educational apparatus is the means by which this revolution can be realized. Rousseau is not, it must be noted, attempting to abolish political liberty; rather, he is looking for a foundation for political liberty other than natural law.

The contrasts Kendall highlights between *Government of Poland* and *The Federalist* illuminate both works. Whereas Publius advocates a national constitution that draws moral strength from heterogeneous local communities, Rousseau has devised a genuinely federal system for "a people who have been made more or less homogeneous through the inculcation of a national *ethos*." Rousseau "seems to feel that the only sure means of providing against the despotism of the large nation-state is to decentralize the deliberative process so that the general wills of the

local assemblies may assert themselves, when the occasion demands, against the incursions of the national legislature.” Kendall concludes that *Government of Poland* “provides us with a model for representative government which, because it is in many ways opposed to the prevailing Publian version, enables us to better understand both the virtue and the limitations of our current practices.”⁷² The *Government of Poland* is the anti-Federalist.

In 1963 Kendall accepted what would be his final academic post, as chairman of the Department of Politics and Economics at the University of Dallas in Irving, Texas. Returning to the Southwest, he told Francis Wilson, made him feel like Moses reaching the promised land. He was leaving “the world of the Buckleys” for “the warmth and affection of home.”⁷³ By all accounts, his four years at Dallas were happy ones. After two annulments, he was married for a third and final time in 1965, to Nellie Cooper. In the final year of his life, he created a unique Ph.D. program at Dallas, which he described in a letter to Voegelin: “We are launching, this Autumn, a Ph.D. program—built, as nearly as I have known how, in the image of you and Strauss—in Politics and Literature.”⁷⁴ He hoped that Strauss and Voegelin would teach at Dallas as visiting professors. But before that could happen, Kendall died of a heart attack in his sleep on June 30, 1967.⁷⁵

At the time of his death, Kendall was working on a volume expanding on lectures he had delivered at Vanderbilt University in 1964. Those lectures, and the book posthumously published as *The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition*, attest to the impact of Voegelin’s thought on Kendall. Voegelin, Kendall wrote, “has set us off, as political scientists, on a new kind of task, specifically, the identification and understanding of the symbols and myths that ‘represent’ the American people in their experience as a political society.” Through Voegelin, Kendall now understood political tradition as “a matter . . . of a people’s own understanding of its place in the *constitution of being* and of its *role in history*, of what it calls itself to be and do as it lives its life as a political society—a matter, in short, of the *symbols* by which it represents or interprets itself to itself.”⁷⁶

In *Basic Symbols* Kendall applied the insights he had acquired from Voegelin to the interpretation of four of the American political tradition’s foundational (or prefoundational) documents: the Mayflower Compact, the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, the Massachusetts Body of Liberties, and the Virginia Declaration of Rights. (George Carey, with

whom Kendall had discussed his ideas at length, completed the book after Kendall's death, contributing chapters on the Declaration of Independence, *The Federalist*, and the Bill of Rights.) Kendall called attention to the similarities in the four documents he examined: the texts of the Mayflower Compact and Massachusetts Body of Liberties attested to their composition through a deliberative process and demonstrated that minority views had been subsumed into the final consensus; the documents' wording leaves no unreconciled minority. All four documents assume the existence of a virtuous people united in self-government under a higher law. And in all four, Kendall finds, "a man's legal rights are, in general, the rights vouchsafed to him by the representative assembly—which, like the Lord of the Scriptures, giveth and taketh away."⁷⁷

The documents do possess significant differences, however. Indeed, they demonstrate over time what Voegelin called the process of symbolic "differentiation." The status of religion, in particular, undergoes several changes. The Mayflower Compact refers to the "advancement of the faith" as one of the purposes of political community. The Connecticut Orders denote, in greater detail ("ominously, some might say," Kendall remarks), a mission "to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of said gospel is now practiced amongst us."⁷⁸ The Massachusetts Body of Liberties, yet again, assumes a Christian society but invokes a less doctrinally specific kind of Christianity than the Connecticut Orders. Finally, the Virginia Declaration of Rights sounds faintly deist in its formulation of religion as "the duty which we owe to our Creator" that "can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence," although it also cites "Christian forbearance" among the "mutual duties" of citizens. Kendall, however, contends that the authors of the Declaration of Rights did not see themselves as any less Christian than their Massachusetts and Connecticut counterparts. Rather, with the Declaration of Rights, "we are on the threshold of the idea, which in due course will become explicit in *The Federalist*, of a Christian *society* with a secular, that is precisely *not* religious, form of government."⁷⁹

Basic Symbols serves as a capstone to Kendall's political philosophy. To the end of his life, he defended majority rule and legislative supremacy, doctrines that he found embodied in the foundational documents of the American tradition no less than in Locke's *Second Treatise*. Even in the Massachusetts Body of Liberties and Virginia Declaration of Rights,

Kendall found no support for absolute individual rights of the kind advocated by modern liberals. In the earlier documents, as in *The Federalist*, reasoned deliberation and recognition of a higher source of law temper the legislative assembly's awesome power. The tension between a secular Constitution and a Christian society that Kendall noted in *The Conservative Affirmation* he saw developing in the process of symbolic differentiation throughout America's colonial experience. Kendall's own philosophy, it can fairly be said, also underwent a process of development and differentiation over the course of his career, but it never changed tracks entirely. He incorporated what he learned from Strauss and Voegelin into what remained a remarkably consistent outlook.

Kendall championed legislative supremacy at a time when many other conservatives, such as James Burnham, also considered Congress the proper institutional focus for conservatism. In the four decades since his death, however, American conservatives have moved decisively in a presidentialist direction. This transformation of the American Right may have as much to do with Kendall's neglect as a theorist as his difficult personality. What place can Kendall have in an intellectual movement that, for forty years now, has largely seen its role as defending the presidential prerogatives of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush?⁸⁰

Even Kendall's admirers have struggled with this question. Writing in 1985, Gregory Wolfe mused that "Ronald Reagan may signify the reversal of the system as Kendall saw it."⁸¹ A year later, in an appreciative essay titled "Prophet of the Heartland," Samuel Francis similarly contended that, "since 1968 . . . the American presidency has displayed conservative inclinations that are well to the right of what most members of Congress are willing to support. This development appears to contradict Kendall's understanding of how the electorate and its representatives manifest the political aspects of the traditional public orthodoxy." Francis noted that "congressional investigating committees were abolished in the 1970s, and it seems unlikely that they will be restored to perform their traditional functions."⁸²

In 1988 John Alvis undertook a close examination of how well Congress lives up to Kendall's theories. Alvis, a professor of literature at the University of Dallas, is in many respects sympathetic to Kendall. But there are indications throughout his essay that he takes a more sanguine view of executive power than did Kendall. He speculates, for example, that the president may indeed, at times, possess a national mandate.

“One has to wonder,” Alvis writes, “whether Kendall gave due weight to those three or four presidential elections that did seem to set the course of national policy for generations and which did so by elevating one political party decisively over the others precisely because that party recaptured the founding principles of equality and liberty.” That aside, however, Alvis holds that “Kendall could hardly be pleased with the present Congress,” not only because “it is certainly true that Congress is now more liberal than the president” but also for several institutional reasons: Congress no longer deliberates openly about controversial issues such as abortion and affirmative action, preferring to leave them to the courts; the proliferation of congressional staffers and executive agencies has given representatives a more administrative, and less deliberative, role than in the past; and congressional districts may now be so large as to make the small-scale electoral deliberation that Kendall described impossible.⁸³

Alvis suggests the solution to these problems in the form of a question: “Can these changes be offset by a President more determined than Reagan has been to restore deliberative virtue to Congress?” His conclusion leaves no doubt about his answer: “If Kendall’s ideal of democratic responsibility can still guide us, it must guide us in electing presidents who will force congressmen to govern by lawmaking rather than by inquisition, private pressure, or *ex parte* negotiation” with executive agencies.⁸⁴

Kendall’s faith in the legislative branch may have derived from a latent premise: namely, the Congress would continue to be more conservative, or more in line with Kendall’s own views, than the executive branch. As the remarks of Wolfe, Francis, and Alvis suggest, a case can be made that Kendall, confronted with Congress’s drift to the Left during the Nixon, Carter, and Reagan years (and again since 2006), might have felt compelled to reassess his belief in legislative supremacy. But at least as strong a case can be made that Kendall’s constitutional theory is fundamentally correct regardless of whether Congress or the president is more “conservative” at a particular time.

The degradation or absence of legislative deliberation to which Alvis called attention surely would have dismayed Kendall. Yet it is hard to imagine him embracing Alvis’s solution. Kendall, after all, not only argued in favor of the virtues of Congress but also was alert to the dangers of executive aggrandizement carried out in the name of high moral purpose. He warned of “a future made up of an endless series of Abra-

ham Lincolns, each persuaded that he is superior in wisdom and virtue to the Fathers, each prepared to insist that those who oppose this or that new application of the equality standard are denying the possibility of self-government.⁸⁵

In the closing chapter of *Basic Symbols*, “Derailment and the Modern Crisis”—a chapter revised by Carey but based on Kendall’s fifth, supplemental Vanderbilt lecture—Kendall describes presidentialism as a species of utopianism, a manifestation of the belief that “God does not exist, but the American people are still the chosen people who must . . . build the Promised Land on earth.”

According to this myth, our national genius expresses itself not so much in the Constitution and *The Federalist*, but in an apostolic succession of great leaders: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Roosevelts I and II, and John Kennedy, each of whom sees more deeply than the preceding leader into the specifically American problem, which is posed by the “all men are created equal” clause of the Declaration of Independence. America will build a New Jerusalem which will be a commonwealth of free and equal men. If all of this requires remaking human nature, making the unequal to be equal—well, no job is too big for the self-chosen people if it knows its destiny and is determined to achieve it.⁸⁶

Nor is the hubris of this vision mitigated by adding a religious component. In fact, for Kendall, a divinized sense of an American mission in the world represents an even “more important derailment” of the founders’ tradition. In this scenario, “God has appointed America, not as the suffering servant of mankind, but as the arbiter of mankind, the supreme judge of all people, with a special insight into Divine Providence that no other people can match. . . . In due course . . . we, God’s own people, can get down to our proper business, which is building the New Jerusalem and spreading it over the face of the entire earth.”⁸⁷

Kendall was not only an advocate of legislative supremacy but also a keen critic of executive power. However disillusioned he might be, if he were alive today and saw the present condition of Congress, there is every reason to believe he would continue to admonish conservatives against aligning themselves with presidential power. Indeed, he was inclined to support the legislature even at its least “conservative”—for

example, in its pork-barrel spending and trade protectionism—against the executive’s claims to represent a more enlightened, unselfish conception of the national interest.⁸⁸ Kendall would not have looked with favor on conservatives’ newfound commitment to presidents with “the vision thing,” who seek to lead the country and the world into a more open and liberated future.

Notes

1. According to Burnham, “Political freedom is the resultant of unresolved conflicts among various sections of the élite. . . . The future of liberty will, therefore, depend upon the extent to which, whether by necessary accident or conscious design, society is kept from freezing.” See James Burnham, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970), 287. For postwar conservatism as “A Revolt against the Masses,” see George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2006), 51–83.

2. Francis G. Wilson, “The Political Science of Willmoore Kendall,” *Modern Age* (winter 1972): 38.

3. Dwight Macdonald, reviewing the first issue of *National Review*, characterized Kendall as “a wild Yale don of extreme, eccentric and very abstract views who can get a discussion into the shouting stage faster than anybody I have ever known.” Dwight Macdonald, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), 333.

4. George H. Nash, “The Place of Willmoore Kendall in American Conservatism,” in *Willmoore Kendall: Maverick of American Conservatives*, ed. John E. Alvis and John A. Murley (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002), 12.

5. Jeffrey Hart, “Willmoore Kendall: American,” in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, ed. Nellie D. Kendall (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1971), 9.

6. Letter from Leo Strauss to Willmoore Kendall, May 14, 1961, in *Willmoore Kendall: Maverick*, 237.

7. Murray Rothbard, “Report to Volcker Fund, Sept. 1956.” 6. I am indebted to David Gordon of the Ludwig von Mises Institute for providing me with a copy of the unpublished manuscript.

8. Nash, “Place of Willmoore Kendall,” 3–15.

9. George Carey, “How to Read Willmoore Kendall,” *Intercollegiate Review* (winter–spring 1972): 63.

10. The story was published most recently in Saul Bellow, *Collected Stories* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 355–73.

11. For Kendall’s background, see George H. Nash, “Willmoore Kendall: Conservative Iconoclast (I),” *Modern Age* (spring 1975): 127–35, and George

H. Nash, "Willmoore Kendall: Conservative Iconoclast (II)," *Modern Age* (summer 1975): 236–48.

12. Letter from Willmoore Kendall to Leo Strauss, August 29, 1960, in *Willmoore Kendall: Maverick*, 228.

13. George Carey, "Prologue," in *Oxford Years: The Letters of Willmoore Kendall to His Father*, ed. Yvona Kendall Mason (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1993), xx.

14. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 353.

15. For the dating of the *Second Treatise*, see Peter Laslett, "Introduction," in *Two Treatises of Government* by John Locke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 123–26.

16. For Kendall's reflections on the reception of *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*, see Willmoore Kendall, "John Locke Revisited," in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 418–48.

17. Willmoore Kendall, *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 57–58.

18. *Ibid.*, 53.

19. Kendall, "John Locke Revisited," 423.

20. Kendall, *John Locke and the Doctrine*, 58, 67 (emphasis in original).

21. *Ibid.*, 70–72.

22. *Ibid.*, 90.

23. *Ibid.*, 106.

24. *Ibid.*, 113.

25. *Ibid.*, 117, 131.

26. *Ibid.*, 133, 134.

27. Kendall, "John Locke Revisited," 418–48.

28. *Ibid.*, 422.

29. Nash, "Willmoore Kendall: Conservative Iconoclast (I)," 128.

30. George Carey, "Epilogue," in *Oxford Years*, 513.

31. Garry Wills, *Confessions of a Conservative* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 21. Kendall had taken an interest in Catholicism during his time in Spain and would convert in 1956. See Nash, "Willmoore Kendall: Conservative Iconoclast (I)," 132.

32. Wills, *Confessions*, 22.

33. William F. Buckley Jr., "Foreword," in *Willmoore Kendall: Maverick*, ix.

34. For Kendall's relations with his colleagues at *National Review*, see Hart, "Willmoore Kendall: American," 10, and Jeffrey Hart, "Willmoore Kendall: The Unassimilable Man," *National Review*, December 31, 1985, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_v37/ai_4074623.

35. Hart, "Willmoore Kendall: The Unassimilable Man."

36. Mason, ed., *Oxford Years*, 451.

37. Willmoore Kendall, "The People versus Socrates Revisited," in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 149–67.

38. Willmoore Kendall, "The Two Majorities," in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 202–27.
39. Willmoore Kendall, *The Conservative Affirmation in America* (Chicago: Gateway Editions, 1985), xxv.
40. *Ibid.*, xxv–xxvi.
41. *Ibid.*, xxvii.
42. *Ibid.*, xxviii.
43. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
44. *Ibid.*, 44.
45. *Ibid.*, 44–45.
46. *Ibid.*, 45.
47. *Ibid.*, 47.
48. *Ibid.*, 27.
49. *Ibid.*, 76.
50. Nash, "Willmoore Kendall: Conservative Iconoclast (I)," 132.
51. Kendall, *Conservative Affirmation*, 88.
52. *Ibid.*, 98.
53. *Ibid.*, 99.
54. Nash, "Place of Willmoore Kendall," 3.
55. Henry Regnery, *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 188.
56. *Ibid.*, 185–86. In a letter that Regnery reproduces, Kendall writes that his book will cover "the Old Sage of Mecosta, the Pseudo-Sage of Ithaca, the Rubbed Sage of Woodstock, the Young Sage of Stamford, the Muscleminded Sage of Kent, and the Nascent Sage of Indianapolis." These sages correspond, respectively, to Russell Kirk, Clinton Rossiter, Frank Meyer, William F. Buckley Jr., James Burnham, and M. Stanton Evans.
57. Willmoore Kendall, "The Benevolent Sage of Mecosta," in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 29–57.
58. Nash, "Place of Willmoore Kendall," 9.
59. *Ibid.*, 7.
60. *Willmoore Kendall: Maverick of American Conservatives*, for example, contains several scholarly essays on Kendall by "Straussians," including contributions from George Anastaplo and Leo Paul de Alvarez. The volume also contains the collected Kendall-Strauss correspondence.
61. Harry V. Jaffa, "Willmoore Kendall: Philosopher of Consensus?" in *American Conservatism and the American Founding* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1984), 198.
62. Reid Buckley, *The Future of American Culture* (Camden, S.C.: Peor Es Nada Press, 2006), 21.
63. Carey, "Epilogue," 514.
64. John B. Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 212.

65. The review is reproduced in Kendall, *Conservative Affirmation*, 184–87.
66. Willmoore Kendall, “How to Read Richard Weaver: Philosopher of ‘We the (Virtuous) People,’” in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 386–402.
67. Willmoore Kendall, “Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side,” in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 290–302.
68. Willmoore Kendall, “The Bill of Rights and American Freedom,” in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 303–25.
69. Willmoore Kendall and George W. Carey, “How to Read *The Federalist*,” in *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum*, 403–17.
70. Willmoore Kendall, “Introduction: How to Read Rousseau’s *Government of Poland*,” in *The Government of Poland* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. Willmoore Kendall (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1985), xix, xxvi.
71. *Ibid.*, xxvi, xxxi, xxxii.
72. *Ibid.*, xxxix.
73. Nash, “Willmoore Kendall: Conservative Iconoclast (II),” 244.
74. Letter from Willmoore Kendall to Eric Voegelin, July 24, 1966, in “The Eric Voegelin–Willmoore Kendall Correspondence,” ed. Steven D. Ealy and Gordon Lloyd, *Political Science Reviewer* (fall 2004): 401.
75. Hart, “Willmoore Kendall: American,” 26.
76. George W. Carey and Willmoore Kendall, *The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 18, 22.
77. *Ibid.*, 71.
78. *Ibid.*, 44.
79. *Ibid.*, 73.
80. For an account of the American Right’s turn toward presidentialism, see Gene Healy, *The Cult of the Presidency: America’s Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2008), 118–22.
81. Gregory Wolfe, “Introduction,” in Kendall, *Conservative Affirmation*, xviii.
82. Samuel Francis, “Prophet of the Heartland,” in *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 85.
83. John Alvis, “Willmoore Kendall and the Demise of Congressional Deliberation,” *Intercollegiate Review* (spring 1988): 59–63.
84. *Ibid.*, 65.
85. Kendall, *Conservative Affirmation*, 252.
86. Carey and Kendall, *Basic Symbols*, 153.
87. *Ibid.*, 153–54.
88. Kendall, *Conservative Affirmation*, 22–23.

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