Brent Nelson has written extensively on immigration-related issues. His latest book is America Balkanized: Immigration's Challenge to Government, *published in 1994 by the American Immigration Control Foundation, Monterey, Virginia.*

The Struggle for American Nationhood

A Book Review by Brent Nelson

Only those few Americans who regularly read reviews of political opinion follow the battle of ideas which is being waged between paleoconservatives and neoconservatives. Even many readers of the reviews do not fully appreciate the practical difference between the two ideological parties of conservatism. Reading their favorite review, they are apt to conclude that it represents simply "conservatism." That the difference "makes a difference" (i.e., is a matter of practical importance, not simply a focal point for ideological wrangling) becomes most obvious when the immigration issue is raised. Oversimplifying slightly, it can be argued that neoconservatives consider only the economic impact of immigration, while paleoconservatives see that economic impact as affecting but one dimension of a larger American identity.

IMMIGRATION AND THE AMERICAN IDENTITY: SELECTIONS FROM *CHRONICLES: A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE,* 1985-1995
Rockford, IL: The Rockford Institute
232 pages. Paperback, $14.95.

Chronicles is the only review (with the possible exception of *Modern Age*) which is wholly dedicated to the paleoconservative cause. Paleoconservatives can find space in the pages of other reviews, but only *Chronicles* is dedicated to paleoconservatism as *Commentary*, for example, is dedicated to neoconservatism. *Immigration and the American Identity*, therefore, is more than just another anthology of articles culled from a conservative review. Rather, it is a book which may make a difference in the battle of ideas because it analyzes a highly divisive issue from a paleoconservative standpoint.

Taking the writings of twenty-three different contributors and assembling them into a coherent and comprehensive survey of the reciprocal concepts of immigration and American identity is no easy task. Thomas Fleming, editor of *Chronicles*, seems to have done this as ably as anyone could. He has arranged the selections under four basic headings: "The American Identity," which defines that identity as independent of immigration; "The Immigration Crisis," which proves the existence of such a crisis; "The Multicultural Society," which describes the devolution of American identity under the impact of immigration; and "Citizenship," which examines the political problems generated by the immigrant influx.

Fleming's "Introduction" is frank. He sharply takes issue with those for whom "America has never been a nation, but only an opportunity to pursue happiness." With one deft turn of phrase, Fleming reveals the common ground on which neoconservatives and liberals meet, regardless of their disputes about whether the free market economy or governmental intervention is to be the primary means employed in the pursuit of that happiness. Fleming's criticism becomes almost barbed when he laments that "the influx of talented refugees from the Third Reich nipped the native growth of our civilization perhaps not in the bud but in the flower," and warns that "One evil empire has already collapsed, and the days may be numbered for its opposite number in the West." Yet he warns against searching for scapegoats because "the problem is not so much the cultural wreckage inflicted by too many Third World immigrants who are, after all, only looking for a better life, but in the apparent inability of Europeans and Americans to defend their civilization."

In considering the American identity, contributors dare to argue that it is a matter of content (ethnic composition) as well as form (constitutional government). Clyde Wilson, professor of American history at the University of South Carolina, explains that the ideal of America "As a City Upon a Hill" has been not only secularized from its first utterance by John Winthrop, but also adulterated. Not all of humanity was to enter into that city, Wilson notes, because "The Puritans were not only proudly Anglo-Saxon, they did not even like non-Puritan Englishmen." The original image has been transformed into something opposite. Moreover, faith in democracy now seems to require, in at least one area, a suspension of the principle of majority rule: "The democratic process may decide economic or military matters, but the future composition of the American population is something, apparently, which present citizens have no right to control or even examine."

Three contributors, Grady McWhiney, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Allan Carlson, reveal an understanding of

how the American identity has been shaped by a complex interplay of ethnic and regional factors. Elshtain, professor of ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, writes on "Unsere Leute," a familiar essay rich in anecdotes, which progresses to the affirmation that social contract theory is inadequate. Ethnic community is truly vital. Carlson, president of the Rockford Institute, searches for "The Midwestern Identity" and spells out what Elshtain seems to be groping towards; i.e., the Midwest is defined by its essentially Germanic ethnic core (i.e., German, Dutch, Scandinavian).

While Elshtain's and Carlson's definition of the Midwest is demonstrable (on the basis of 1990 census reports) as a matter of fact, McWhiney, professor of American history at Texas Christian University, offers in his "The Celtic Heritage of the Old South" a somewhat more controversial ethnic reading of his region. McWhiney's theory that the South was and is essentially defined by its Celtic population, from early on consciously opposed to the mores and folkways of the English northern states, is more arguable. Today, according to the census reports, there is a higher percentage of English Americans in the South than in other regions. Moreover, from the founding of the republic, the English element of the north was cut off from the supposedly Celtic South by German Pennsylvania and Dutch New York.

E. Christian Kopff, professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Colorado, offers a singular contribution in his "Our Classical Roots." Kopff takes as his reference point Jefferson's defense of education in the classical languages. This, alas, seems to be irrevocably lost in a period when enrollments in classical languages are almost minuscule, while enrollments in French, German, and Russian fall, and enrollment in Spanish (newly utilitarian) soars.

"…the future composition of the American population is something, apparently, which present citizens have no right to control…"

Thomas Fleming, writing on "The Broken Promise of American Life," sees in the ethnic history of Rockford, Illinois, a test tube sample of the process of assimilation. Ethnic groups in that city have been obliterated as neighborhoods, but have not been raised to a new level of community. At fault is the homogenizing process begun during the New Deal and continued thereafter.

Peter Brimelow's "The National Question" is one of the more controversial essays in the collection. He begins forthrightly, affirming that "I believe the central issue in American politics at the end of the century is what might be described as `The National Question' — whether America is that interlacing of ethnicity and culture we call a nation and whether the American nation-state, the political expression of that nation, is going to survive." This is the central theme of his recently published book *Alien Nation*. Here he limits himself to some necessary clarification of the concepts of state and nation, concepts about which confusion abounds in most discussions of American public policy.

Proving that there is an immigration crisis, the crux of the second section, requires citation of specific facts and figures. Here, the most successful contributions are Wayne Lutton's "The Silent Invasion" and Donald L. Huddle's "The Cost of Immigration." Lutton examines demographic realities, particularly illegal immigration, while Huddle, professor of economics at Rice University, effectively refutes the argument that the immigrant influx is a stimulant to the economy.

Thomas Fleming's "The Real American Dilemma" recognizes that "Part of the problem is a question of numbers," but sees the crisis as really arising from a fundamental shift in attitudes prior to the new influx: "The trouble began with treating the nation as an abstraction: the land of the free and the home of the brave was turned into the land of opportunity for what the Statue of Liberty's plaque so quaintly calls `the wretched refuse' of the world. A real country, with its own history, its own particular set of virtues and vices, its own special institutions was reduced to cheap slogans and loyalty oaths."

"…the cultural core of the American nation is in danger of being lost."

In his "The Transnational Elite," Samuel Francis considers what he believes to be the cause of the crisis; i.e., the fact that "the internationalization of our population is consistent with the interests of the elites that welcome and encourage it." Francis has a vision of the future which is bleak, but unblinking. The crisis is the outcome of a resolution of forces which must be understood if anything is to be done about it. As of now, "Caught between the new underclass and the new elite, plain old Americans can look forward to subsidizing through their taxes not only their own cultural dispossession but also the eventual disappearance of the nation itself, to the advantage of an elite that has disengaged itself from the body of the society it manages."

Richard D. Lamm's "Caring for Our Own," a brief call to put the interests of unemployed citizens before those of aliens, seems somewhat tepid following upon Francis's trenchant analysis. It is, nonetheless, significant because Lamm, former governor of Colorado, was one of the few nationally known elected officials to recognize the immigration crisis when to do

so was even more politically unfashionable than it is now.

Chilton Williamson, Jr., in his "Promises to Keep," raises an issue which is worthy of more attention than it receives in this collection. Williamson believes that "the time has arrived for plain speaking: the environmentalist argument, plus the cultural one, provide the essential overriding case against the waves of immigrants now cresting along the borders of the continental United States. Contrary to `conservative' opinion, America is *not* `underpopulated' (whatever that might mean)." Williamson warns conservatives that "In the modern age, big populations mean big regulation and big regulation means big government."

Richard Estrada, columnist for the *Dallas Morning News*, challenges another facile assumption when he asserts that "Hispanic-Americans have emerged as the greatest *victims* of our immigration policy since 1965, instead of its greatest beneficiaries." He finds particularly objectionable the tendency to insist that "Hispanics," considered as a single category comprising citizens and aliens both legal and illegal, have common interests. On the contrary, uncontrolled immigration is largely detrimental to the interests of Hispanic citizens.

Garrett Hardin's "The P's and Q's of Immigration: A Letter to My Granddaughter" takes on one of the most difficult issues. Although Hardin is professor emeritus of human ecology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, he dares to wander beyond the boundaries of that discipline to answer a popular religious objection to immigration control. This is the Christian assumption that everyone must be his "brother's keeper." Hardin boldly cuts the Gordian knot of ethical and theological argument by admitting that, indeed, one may be one's brother's keeper, but that "Quantities are important. Numbers matter." Cain had but one brother. The practice of world brotherhood, however, is just not feasible.

Samuel Francis leads the section on multiculturalism with his "A Curriculum of Inclusion," which despite its serious title is leavened with the Francis wit, often reminiscent of Samuel Johnson or H. L. Mencken. The battle for what the Marxist theoretician Gramsci called "cultural hegemony" is all-important, Francis believes, and will not be won if conservatives accept a mistaken strategy which relies on invoking "pluralism" and "democratic values."

Thomas Fleming, in his "A Not So Wonderful Life," agrees with Francis that the cultural core of the American nation is in danger of being lost. Fleming maintains that there is an Anglo-American tradition, not necessarily co-extensive with the population of Americans of British descent, which must not be lost if America is to remain American.

Since Geoffrey Wagner is a professor emeritus of English at the City University of New York, he writes from a position at the front of the culture war. "The Intransigent Uninvited" to whom he refers in the title of his essay are the millions of those who are excluded and deported by other nations of the world, but who claim some kind of right of entry to the U.S. and a further right to ignore its long-established culture once they are admitted.

In "Conspicuous Benevolence" Garrett Hardin attempts to define the altruistic zealotry, defended in the name of multiculturalism, which leads American citizens to support an immigration policy clearly detrimental to their own interests. Since their stance is an inversion of ethnocentrism, Hardin coins an appropriate word for it: "*ethnofugalism*, a romantic flight away from our own culture." This is also a flight from reality because, as Hardin demonstrates, the dominant trend in the world is toward "national fission," not world citizenship. There are limits to the practice of "conspicuous benevolence" in which "the rich send food to the poor, never having the nerve to ask the fertile poor to mitigate their reproductive extravagance." A worse horror will ensue if the rich "dismantle their national borders and invite the poor and fertile in to enjoy their greater riches." Hardin believes that "A peaceful, borderless global village is an impossibility. But *a globe of villages* can, if we keep our fences in repair, endure and enrich our lives."

"A peaceful, borderless global village is an impossibility. But a globe of villages can, if we keep our fences in repair, endure and enrich our lives." — Garrett Hardin

Claes G. Ryn, professor of politics at Catholic University, warns in his "Cultural Diversity and Unity" that massive immigration strains the limits of assimilation. In a multicultural America, "social cohesion will increasingly have to be imposed from without." This will necessitate the big government most feared by both neoconservatives and paleoconservatives.

Theodore Pappas's "The Noncitizen Advantage" briefly points to certain abuses, already evident when he wrote in 1989, which the citizens of California are attempting to end with their approval of Proposition 187.

Peter H. Schuck and Rogers M. Smith, respectively professors of law and of political science at Yale University, examine the balance between citizenship by ascription and citizenship by consent. As the title of their essay, "Consensual Citizenship," suggests, they believe that it is necessary that the U.S. move away from its current policy of ascribing citizenship to children born to illegal aliens in the U.S.

John Lukacs, professor emeritus of history, and himself an immigrant, muses in his "The Patriotic Impulse" on the difference between patriotism and

nationalism. The latter, he fears, is likely to arise when the rootedness essential to the former has been lost.

Paul Gottfried, professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College, warns that "Therapeutic Democracy," to the extent that it has egalitarianism and diversity as its goals, encourages the rise of an ever-growing bureaucracy determined to make the citizenry become what democratic theory suggests that it is supposed to be.

In "Citizenship and Immigration," Governor Pete Wilson of California, writing in 1993, considers the cost to his state of illegal immigration. He emphasizes the problem discussed at greater length by Schuck and Smith.

Last, but certainly not least, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, professor of economics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, raises a baleful question in his "Free Immigration or Forced Integration?" Is it possible that the lack of proprietary interest in the nation which characterizes elected officials means that they must be heedless of the quality of the people they admit to that nation? A monarch, who sees in his nation his property, will be very reluctant to admit to it people who will reduce the overall quality of its population. This reservation will not be as salient for a democratically elected ruler, who may be tempted to seize whatever property he can for his own enrichment and care naught for the sinking value of the nation as a whole. Hoppe concludes that "The best one may hope for, even if it goes against the `nature' of a democracy and thus is not very likely to happen, is that the democratic rulers act as if they were the personal owners of the country, as if they had to decide whom to include and whom to exclude from their own personal property." The immigration act of 1965, however, has ruled out the discrimination which was formerly embodied in "the explicit preference for European immigrants." The immigration act of 1965 is the foreign policy equivalent of the civil rights laws enacted during the same period in that it dictates "the adoption of a nondiscriminatory immigration policy, meaning mandated international desegregation (forced integration)."

Hoppe's assessment of the situation is a grim one, but not to be dismissed for that reason. His essay stands with Francis's "The Transnational Elite" as the most thought-provoking among the contributions in this book. Although Hoppe and Francis employ different societal models in their analyses, — Hoppe accepting market theory and Francis elite theory — they both see the same dynamics at work in American society; i.e., a disengaged elite, allowing into the country additions to what is already a burgeoning underclass, all the while regardless of the long-term interests of the responsible middle mass of American citizens.

Hoppe's and Francis's essays are important not only because they start from divergent perspectives and come to see much the same factors at work, but also because they both imply that it is not enough to define the American identity in terms of tradition or logic. Rather, they suggest that the American identity is that for which American citizens must contend. Appropriately, therefore, Peter Brimelow's "Afterword" is a call to action.

It is a truism that conservatism is, or should be, rather more a matter of practice than of theory. When conservatism becomes no longer simply a guiding approach to day-to-day realities, but generates an ideology in its defense which is as comprehensive as the Utopian schemes of the left, that is evidence that that which is to be conserved is undergoing a serious erosion if not a destructive assault from its enemies. The publication of this book is evidence, therefore, that the state of American nationhood is far from sound. Forty years ago, the defense of American identity which it presents would have been unnecessary. It was then the unquestioned assumption of all educated Americans save a leftist minority which even then was preparing its future assault. *Immigration and the American Identity* is a call for thinking Americans to arise in the eleventh hour and struggle to preserve whatever remains of their national identity. It is a book which should be circulated beyond the readership of *Chronicles* and belongs in most academic and public libraries. ■