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# The Christian Century

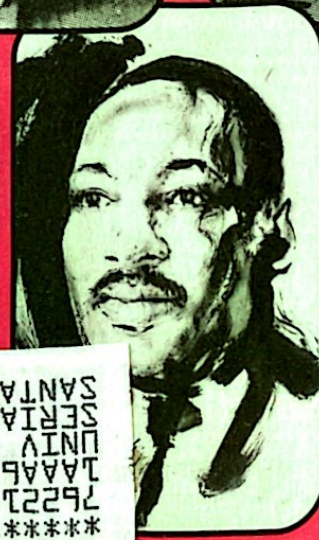
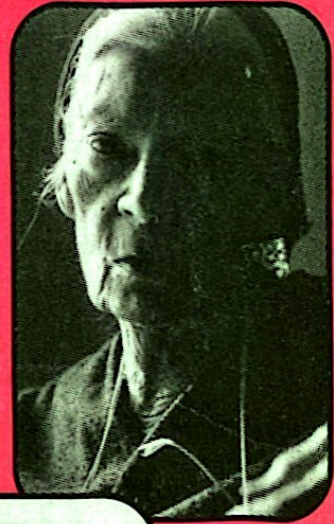
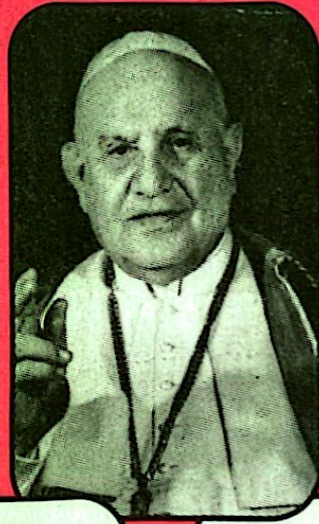
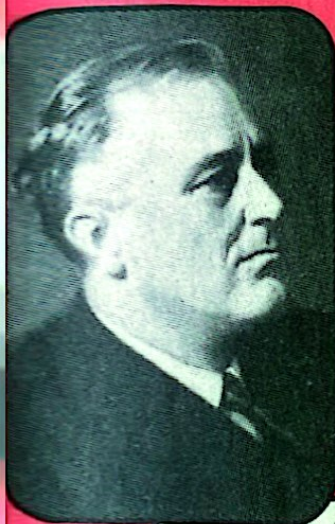
September 21-28, 1994

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## What makes a leader?

### Traits, types and antitypes

by William F. May



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On the cover (clockwise from top left): Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harriet Tubman, Pope John XXIII (photo by Planet News Ltd.), Dorothy Day, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr. (drawing by Rudy Magnani) and Mary Baker Eddy.

## Correction

In Kevin Hadduck's poem "Hand writing" (August 24-31), line 12 should read, "The angle of a feather draws my eyes" (not "angel of a feather"). Our apologies for the error.

# THE Christian Century

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treatments of contemporary Catholic conservatism. Especially important is his insistence on its lay character, as well as on the parallels between it and concurrent liberal movements in American Catholicism.

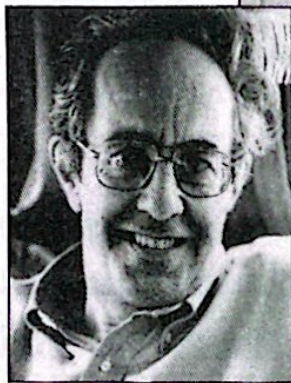
At the same time, the book has significant flaws. Structurally, the transition from a chronological treatment to two biographical chapters is jarring and does little to advance the argument. Moreover, it is hard to under-

stand why Allitt chose to devote a whole chapter to two such marginal figures as John Lukacs and Thomas Molnar. Serious intellectuals though they were, neither had the public presence of Buckley or Russell Kirk, who is cursorily treated. The epilogue which deals with the bishops' pastorals on war and peace (1983) and on the economy (1986) is an attempt to contemporize the work and is notably inferior to the earlier chapters.

Conceptually, Allitt is unclear in his construction of contemporary Catholic conservatism. He argues that Gary Wills has moved toward the left in recent years but still seems to type him as conservative. Similarly, though John Noonan's magisterial work on abortion, *A Private Choice* (1979) shows his conservatism, earlier writings on usury and contraception reveal him to be a far more complex figure. A different set of categories might have made for more plausible analysis. Had Allitt placed his subjects on a continuum ranging from libertarian to communitarian rather than conservative to liberal, his analysis would have been more cogent.

Finally, Allitt's affinity for his subjects sometimes leads to the gratuitous slurring of their opponents, as in the comment that Mary Daly's feminist critique took her out of the church and "so far as she could legally arrange it, out of the company of men altogether, but not out of Boston College's theology department." Still, Allitt has done the historiography of American Catholicism a service. His attempt seriously to examine recent Catholic conservatism both establishes a context and lays the groundwork for further study.

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**The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World.**

By Gilles Kepel. Pennsylvania State University Press, 215 pp., \$35.00; paperback, \$14.95.

**T**HAT TRADITIONAL religion has been giving secularism a run for its money is widely acknowledged. That this resurgence is not simply an American phenomenon but is to be found throughout the world is also increasingly recognized. How all this is to be understood and explained is not as certain, however, nor are the social, cultural, political and religious circumstances from which this resurgence draws. Gilles Kepel, who teach-

*Reviewed by Walter H. Capps, professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

at the Institute of Political Studies Paris, offers a provocative, compelling thesis.

In brief, the catalyst for religious resurgence is a deep moral and spiritual disquietude with modernity. The social upheavals and cultural innovations of the 1960s and 1970s were too radical and sweeping to be easily accommodated. In addition, they offered insufficient spiritual nurture. Religious movements are functioning as powerful social critics, underscoring "the undeniable evidence of a deep malaise in society that can no longer be interpreted in terms of our traditional categories of thought." In some instances, as under fundamentalist sponsorship, traditional religious belief and practice are being restored with a vengeance. In other instances, the efforts are less combative. But the attention is much the same everywhere: to help re-establish the spiritual conditions upon which traditional societies rest, conditions that have been challenged or supplanted during the time of pervasive social and cultural change.

In this excellent book, it is almost as if Kepel had seized upon the spirit of Stephen Carter's argument in *The Culture of Disbelief* and applied it to the three dominant religious traditions of the Western world. His achievement includes approaching resurgent fundamentalism as a subject that belongs with other examples of religious revitalization and can be analyzed within the framework of comparative studies of religion. Finally, Kepel has provided powerful evidence that societies cannot forever move away from their inherent religious and cultural roots.

#### **My Sweetheart's House.**

By Robert Drake. Mercer University Press, 184 pp., \$18.95.

**I**N *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud uses the telescope as a model of consciousness: the light rays of simple perception converge on the lenses of memory to produce emotion. The telescope is a good model of healthful fiction, which mixes perception and reflection. The

unhealthful fiction that floods our bookstores offers perception but offers little reflection. We are famished for fiction in which reflection confronts perception, refusing the turning away that exemplifies repression of memory. We should be delighted, then, with Robert Drake's *My Sweetheart's House*, whose subtitle "Memories, Fictions" announces that he will not abandon fiction's traditional role as an instrument of validation and evaluation.

A typical story is "Queen Anne Front, Mary Anne Behind." The narrator recalls the old house located across from his family's house that had been Victorianized and added on to as the Kings—their status stated by their surname—flourished and increased. The narrator, an "only child, born late in the day to middle-aged parents," realizes now that he had often appeared

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*Reviewed by Lewis A. Lawson, professor of English at the University of Maryland in College Park.*

at the Kings's door with a cup—to be filled always with some relational experience, time with a grandfather, some older siblings or even a shiftless uncle.

The vitality of the King house is beautifully illustrated by the attention given to the porte-cochere. "which somehow served to inform the Kings and their lives for me," first as the portal for prime perceptions, then, in time, as the point for departures—to college, marriage, work and death. Finally the house contained only the widow King, whose children lived in Memphis or Nashville. When the now-grown narrator would visit her on his trips home, she would delight him with stories about the house of King and about lesser Woodville. She also told him that when she was first left alone she "thought she would die." But as time went on, the house, with all its stories, became a companion: the house "was the story of her life, she said, maybe even of a whole way of life. And really it was about as much

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