

followed to the logical extreme in foreclosing any rights to children born out of wedlock. The words of Mr. O'Sullivan in concluding his lecture on the family are very illuminating:

The family is the true unit of society; and the parent who gives life to the community is entitled to the highest status and dignity. Old wisdom and new science alike teach us that the services the parents render to the child in his mental and moral as well as in his physical life, are unique and almost irreplaceable; and that it is for the good of the whole community that children should be taught in the experience of love, the habit of obedience and the meaning of authority.

The lecture on *The Political Community* presents a rapid review of the fundamental idea as to the part and place of organized society, especially in its political aspects. However, it stems from the common law concept of the importance of the individual. Mr. O'Sullivan emphasizes the individual's importance in rendering his service to the community, particularly service on the jury. "The jury was thus in England the safeguard of civil liberty. . . . Through it men were thrust into the very arcana of the judiciary, and forced to become finders of fact, and judges in the most important crises of one another's affairs."

The effect of Christian thinking is evident in the common law courts whose jurisdiction was based upon reason and equity, even when the question was one of strict law. As the court of chancery evolved, it allowed for even more justice "in good conscience."

The core of the common law of England and its meaning to the peoples of those countries in which the common law is the foundation of its legal institutions, is set forth in the words of Sir John Fortescue: "Freedom is a thing with which the nature of man has been endowed by God. For this reason, if it be taken away from man, it strives of its own energy always to return."

This book is thought-provoking and a most timely reminder of the fundamental virtues of the common law, our great inheritance.

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Our More Perfect Union. By ARTHUR N. HOLCOMBE. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1950. Pp. xiii, 460. \$6.00.)

Succeeding generations have never ceased to marvel at the political sagacity and understanding of the men who were the architects of the American Constitution. Re-examination and re-evaluation of their handiwork from time to time, as new perspectives are attained, continue to yield worth-while results. Here is a thoughtful and scholarly study of this kind, the merit of which was recognized by bestowal of the Franklin

D. Roosevelt Award for 1950 upon its author at the last annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Professor Holcombe centers his attention upon the three basic principles which, in his view, have contributed most to give strength and durability to the American constitutional plan: federalism, separation of powers, and the natural limits upon the political power of numerical majorities under our representative system. The intent of the framers, especially of Madison who understood these principles well, was to create a government which not only could govern but would at the same time control itself. They were remarkably successful in achieving this basic objective, even though, as Professor Holcombe demonstrates, the intricate system of opposing forces they devised has evolved in some measure in directions not anticipated by the framers.

In the author's judgment both federalism and separation of powers, though much modified in practice, remain as effective principles, fulfilling the purposes for which they were designed. Executive dominance in the control of foreign relations is conceded to be a dangerously weak point in the system of checks and balances. Although able to exert a restraining and guiding influence on executive action in this area, Congress must necessarily continue to occupy a disadvantageous position, he maintains. The ultimate solution to this problem, the author declares, must be sought in the development of an effective, federalized world government which will subject the relations of nations to the rule of law. Most important of all these principles in maintaining political equilibrium under the American system, according to Professor Holcombe, is a representative system which prevents any single class or interest from attaining unchallenged power. Social and economic diversity in the nation operates to place the balance of power on the side of moderate elements of the political body. Expounding this theme, which provides the thesis of Holcombe's earlier study, *The Middle Class in American Politics*, he demonstrates by analysis of recent election results that the urban middle classes constitute that moderating element at present.

With his findings and conclusions regarding the sources of strength in the American constitutional plan, it is difficult to disagree. One finds it more difficult to share the author's optimism in recommending the basic principles of the American system to the world as a panacea for its political ills. Whether the lessons to be derived from American experience will be utilized by mankind generally will probably be found to depend, unfortunately, upon factors having little relevance to their validity.

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