His analysis of the fifty states and the need for the sixteen new districts is good. It must be granted that those who assembled in Philadelphia would never have drawn the map of the United States as they did were they faced with the economic facts of today. They took cognizance of thirteen existing sovereignties, while today they would recognize districts constituted along the lines of natural boundaries, population centers, and communities of interest. It is to his great credit that Baldwin sees this need for change.

Many of the points raised by Baldwin are excellent. It is difficult to argue against the need for more centralization of local government; the fact that Congress and the executive branch have been at odds at times over our history; that there is a decline in party responsibility; that in a nuclear age with transportation and communications compressed as they are there ought to be some limitations on the president's power to wage war; that perhaps there ought to be some restraint on the use of excess judicial power by the Supreme Court. It is true to say our Constitution has its defects, but, even so, there is built into it enough flexibility to make it work today in the complex civilization in which we live.

The notion of the theory of separation of powers is not seen in a rational manner today. All in all the system of checks and balances has worked well and, given the peculiarities of human nature, ought to work as well in the years to come. The document of 1787 has its defects; it has ambiguities but it has served its purpose well over the years of our history. Perhaps what is needed is not a new document but a better understanding on the part of all citizenry and elected officials alike of the principles which brought it into existence and have made it work so well for 186 years.

As a stimulating exercise in historical reading and in anticipation of the forthcoming bicentennial, this book by a scholar who has meant so much to Pittsburgh and the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania makes interesting and provocative reading.

Pittsburgh

JOSEPH G. SMITH


Christopher Dawson (1889-1970) was born in Wales and educated at Trinity College, Oxford. A lecturer of world renown, he
taught at Liverpool and Edinburgh universities and later became the first Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at Harvard University. He wrote extensively on many subjects but gained justified fame for his inquiry into the formation of Europe and the influence of Christianity on that development. Of particular importance is his examination of the movement of revolution in the history of western civilization. The Gods of Revolution, published posthumously, is a definitive and exhaustive study of the French Revolution. Further, it concludes a series of his writings dealing with religion as a dynamic force in history.

In light of the forthcoming celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the publication of this work is timely. In recent years there has matured in this country an attitude held by many historians and political scientists that the American and French revolutions ought to be classed as one since their underlying principles can be assumed to be identical. So strong does this opinion become at times that the Declaration of Independence is often wedded to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man or, at least, it is said that the philosophy underlying the two documents is essentially the same.

Any celebration of our bicentennial ought to take scholarly cognizance of the principles and ideals which motivated the two revolutions of the late eighteenth century. Dawson's book makes such a contribution. While it is not a history of the French Revolution it is a reflection on that tremendous social, political, religious, and economic upheaval in France. Dawson's erudition and perceptiveness are superb. Despite the fact that the history of the Reign of Terror and all that came before and followed hard after has been written and rewritten, Dawson's reflections contribute new and thought-provoking analysis. In fact, Arnold Toynbee, in his introduction to this volume, says, "However often the subject has been dealt with by his predecessors, Dawson's handling throws new light on it." Fair tribute from a great historian to a contemporary.

Dawson is excellent in his examination of the religious aspect of the French Revolution and speaks in a most interesting fashion of the civil constitution of the clergy. His view of the ultimate downfall of Robespierre is unique, and his observations about William Blake and Joseph de Maistre constitute a major contribution to this period in Europe's history. The disillusions and tragedies of the revolution became the key to a new philosophy of society dramatically opposed to
the philosophies of the Enlightenment — and Dawson makes this clear. He brings the total revolutionary movement up to date in his final chapter, "Revolution and the Modern World." How well that world can ponder one of the last lines in this book, "And a free society requires a higher degree of spiritual unity than a totalitarian one, hence the spiritual integration of western culture is essential to its temporal survival."

His style is simple yet forceful and is such as to please and satisfy the reader despite the treatment of many deep philosophical notions and the broad sweep of history compressed into the book's 190 pages. Anyone interested in the powerful currents of thought which flowed through western Europe at that period will find this a most rewarding volume to read.

Of particular importance for this reviewer is the motivation for the reader to distinguish between our own revolution and that of France. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man is philosophical nonsense, while the Declaration of Independence makes philosophical sense. John Dickinson, speaking of the need for a constitutional limitation of power, put it this way, "The father of mercies never intended man to hold unlimited authority over men"; while Voltaire's reaction to this point was the cynical remark that, "Equality is thus the most natural thing in the world but also the most chimerical."

If one is tempted by Dawson's book to study further the events which preceded and followed the fall of the Bastille and if Dawson's scholarship is sound, nowhere will the writings or the record of Paris and Versailles produce such a statement as this by James Otis in his "Rights of the Colonies Asserted":

What shall we say then? Is not government founded on grace? No. Nor on force? No. Nor on compact? No. Nor on property? No. Not altogether on either. Has it any solid foundation? Any chief cornerstone, but what accident, chance or confusion may lay one moment and destroy the next? I think it has an everlasting foundation in the unchangeable will of God, the author of nature whose laws never vary. — Government is therefore most evidently founded in the necessities of our nature. It is by no means an arbitrary thing, depending merely on compact or human will for its existence.

This volume is a major contribution to our understanding of the forces which produced the tragic events in France from 1789-1799 and, as such, is sound evidence to show what the American Revolution was not.

Pittsburgh

Joseph G. Smith