

Victoria

William S. Lind III

The triumph of the Recovery was marked most clearly by the burning of the Episcopal bishop of Maine.

She was not a particularly bad bishop. She was in fact quite typical of Episcopal bishops of the first quarter of the 21st century: agnostic, compulsively political and radical, and given to placing a small idol of Isis on the altar when she said the Communion service. By 2037, when she was tried for heresy, convicted, and burned, she had outlived her era. By that time only a handful of Victorian Episcopalians still recognized female clergy, and it would have been easy enough to let the old fool rant out her final years in obscurity.

The fact that the easy road was not taken, that the Episcopalians turned to their difficult duty of trying and convicting, and the state upheld its unpleasant responsibility of setting torch to faggots, was what marked this as an act of Recovery. I remember the crowd that gathered for the execution, solemn but not sad, relieved rather that at last, after so many years of humiliation, of having to swallow every absurdity and pretend we liked it, the majority had taken back the culture. No more apologies for the truth. No more "Yes, buts" on upholding standards. Civilization had recovered its nerve. The flames that soared on the lawn before the Maine State House that August

afternoon were, as the bishopess herself might have said, liberating.

In this Year of Our Lord 2050, we Victorians have the blessed good fortune to live once again in a country where things work. With the exception of New Spain, most of the nations that cover the territory of the former United States are getting things working again. The cultural revival we began is spreading outward from our rocky New England soil, displacing savagery with civilization a second time. It seems as if it had to happen, and perhaps it did. The giant that is Western, Judeo-Christian culture, that gave mankind Socrates and science, that made him stand forth as an individual and empowered him over nature, could never have fallen to such pipsqueak enemies as assailed it.

But it almost did. Truth be told, the almost-fatal weakness was a product of that culture's overwhelming success.

Western culture works. That alone distinguishes it from every other culture, past or present, except Chinese. Because it works, by the 1920s the United States had become the freest and most prosperous country the world had yet known. It was a remarkable achievement for a place that just three centuries before had been a wilderness peopled by howling savages who smeared themselves with bear grease.

Human nature being what it is, those 1920s Americans took advantage of freedom and prosperity to shift their focus from

production to consumption. The Depression of the 1930s and the war set them back a bit, but the virus lived on: the good life is dancing to the hot tunes, passing around the hip flask, and Last Night on the Back Porch I Loved Her Best of All.

When the 1960s rolled around -- the years one contemporary commentator called "that slum of a decade" -- the Iron Law of Decline hit: a generation reared in order and prosperity thinks they are automatic. They are like the rivers and the mountains and the sky. They're just there, they have always been there, and no matter what people do they will still be there.

So do they did. Piece by piece, they demolished the wise restraints on human appetites three millenia had painfully constructed. Morals were ridiculed (you could admit to anything except being a virgin); values were made contentless ("diversity"); virtue was reduced to a maudlin sentimentality. Every perversion was exalted, and whatever could be scooped up from the sewer was dumped on the alter to be worshipped.

Severed from her soul, America descended rapidly into the condition of a Third World country. Living standards plunged as things ceased to work; by the 1980s, it took two incomes to maintain a middle class family where just thirty years before one had sufficed. Cities were ravaged by criminals, bums and beggars; as in third century Rome, law was expected to apply only to the law abiding. The most powerful cultural force was the entertainment industry, which through the miracle of television brought Weimar Berlin into every home. Schools became little

more than daytime holding pens for young illiterates, despite record sums pumped into a self-serving education bureaucracy. Higher education fell first to technoids, dwarvish drudges who had learned to manipulate trivial facts about meaningless subjects, then to professor-insects who filled the vacuum the technoids had created with ideologies like "multiculturalism:" the celebration of failed cultures at the expense of one that had succeeded. The purpose of the university -- passing the inherited culture on from one generation to the next -- was either forgotten or consciously rejected.

Did no one realize that when the culture goes, it takes everything else with it? Many ordinary people did, but they were voiceless. The decadent cultural elite, which controlled the means of communication, made certain they were not heard. More, it bombarded them ceaselessly with the message that to think the obvious, that things were going wrong because people were behaving wrong, was mean. It was "intolerant" -- universal tolerance being a virtue cleverly chosen, since it made impossible any opposition to evil. So bizarre was the situation that as black gangs made cities uninhabitable, television presented the police as dangerous.

But still, the people had their thoughts, and in them they knew the real score. As early as the 1980s and 90s, a few voices were beginning to rise in defense of the traditional culture. The basis of politics began to shift from economics to culture, and in that shift the ground work for the Recovery was being laid.

Books that carried the message of cultural conservatism began to appear,¹ and a national network of cultural conservatives was slowly put together through the medium of satellite television (turning the Devil's weapon against him).²

Most important, in the mid-1990s the Retroculture movement got started. It began as little more than a return to past fashions, but it quickly became something more serious -- as we, its inheritors, know well. A growing number of Americans began to try to return to the past. They knew the past had worked. It had given earlier generations good lives.

As early as 1992 one public opinion survey showed a startling shift in attitudes toward the past (remember, up to that time Americans had always thought the future would be better). Already by that date 49% of Americans thought life in the past was better; only 17% thought it was worse. 61% thought life in the 1950s was better than in the 1990s. 47% said their grandparents were happier than they were -- and the margin was 15% higher among blacks. 59% said, even at that early date, that the nation's political leaders should be trying to take the country back toward the way it used to be.³

But those leaders were deaf to such calls. Through the end of the 20th century, the political establishment in Washington played the same old insider games of power, perks and privilege, keeping themselves in office by feeding their favored interest groups money backed only by debt. Everything seemed frozen;

real change, change that even at that late date might have saved the union, was impossible. Alienated from politics, beaten into silence by the decadent media, the people waited for deliverance.

Then the Hammerblows fell. First, the currency collapsed. Inflation had been rising for years, because the only way the government could manage its massive debt was to pay it off in inflated dollars. People had adjusted as they did in other Third World countries, opening foreign currency accounts, bartering, burying gold in the back yard. Then, in the Spring of 2004, the new Administration really opened the valve. By that summer, inflation was running 40% per month; by fall, 400%. Financial Weimar had followed cultural Weimar. Most of the middle class was wiped out.

By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, it was obvious that the rate of AIDS infection was rising sharply; everyone had friends, relatives, neighbors who were suddenly stricken. These people weren't druggies or perverts either. But the government still pumped out the same old line. Terrified of the "gay" lobby, they conspired to reassure the public that there was no cause for alarm, AIDS could not be casually transmitted, "Homophobia" was the real problem (the real wisdom, as it turned out).

The L.A. Times got the scoop. It seems that as early as the 1990s there was strong medical evidence of a mutation of the HIV virus that could and did spread through casual contact. The

government ordered the evidence suppressed, fearing to cause panic and "negative perceptions" of homosexuals.

They were right about the panic. When the story hit, the cities emptied. Everybody simply ran. Most came back, because they had to go to work or starve, though they left the kids in the country if they could. People demanded effective action: quarantine of anyone diagnosed with the new virus. Instead, the government classified the infected as "disabled," which made any preventive measures illegal discrimination. The sacred cult of the phony "victims," launched in the 1980s by the politically correct, now seemed likely to make everyone into real victims, i.e., dead.

In the spring of 2009, the blacks of Newark rose and took over the city. They rebelled not against the whites, but against their real oppressors, other blacks: the drug dealers and drug users, gunmen and hit men, car thieves and squatters and the rest of the Lumpenproletariat who made life hell for honest blacks -- the majority -- who wanted to work and walk home safely and not see their kids shot in front of their house just for kicks. They knew who the guilty parties were, and they went and got them with ropes and kitchen knives and "necklaces." For the first time in decades, Newark saw peace.

Average people cheered "right on," but the government, drooling pieties like "due process" and "law and order" (in a place where the law had long since ceased protecting anyone but

criminals), sent in the National Guard. The people of Newark met the troops and begged for their help, and the soldiers either went over or went home. Washington ordered in the 82nd Airborne; the New York Air Guard painted pine tree insignia on their aircraft and said they would bomb any Federal forces approaching Newark. On May 3, Governor Ephraim Logan of Vermont told the legislature that the Federal government no longer represented the people of Vermont or America and asked for a vote of secession. Vermont became a republic again the next day.

The first Civil War was on the whole a gentlemanly affair; the second one wasn't. Here in northern New England we were lucky; because we didn't have many ethnic divisions or cults or Deep Greeners, we didn't get the militias. Elsewhere, it was what Lebanon and Yugoslavia and the former Russian empire saw in the late 20th century. The Reconquista drove the Anglos out of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and southern California; the Anglos drove the Hispanics out of what was left of the American west. On both sides, the lucky ones got out with nothing but their lives, and the unlucky ones didn't get out. The blacks and the Hispanics in L.A. turned on each other, but there were a lot more Hispanics. Korean Marines landed in Long Beach to get their people out.

The Deep Greens took over Oregon, and north Americans got their first taste of totalitarianism. If you weren't one of them, you didn't get a Breathing License and they tied a plastic

bag over your head. They lasted three years, until the rest of the state took Portland ~~with Japanese help~~; (they needed the timber). Both Oregon and Washington are doing OK now; recently, they got the right to sent non-voting members to the Diet in Tokyo. East Asian culture also works.

Elsewhere, it took about ten years for all the hate caused by decades of social experiments to work itself out. Not much was left of the cities or the people who had lived there, but most folks in the countryside had at least been able to eat. By 2017, the South had a second Confederacy going. Southern culture had stayed pretty strong, outside the cities anyway. Their fight had mostly been with what came out of Washington and Hollywood (which by then was nothing). Florida was a mess of course, but otherwise Dixie didn't see much fighting.

But it is really our history that concerns me. We were the luckiest. Maine and New Hampshire followed Vermont in secession within a few months, and upstate New York came in too (in its resolution of secession, the legislature in Albany ceded New York City to Puerto Rico). We knew we were all in this together, and formed the Northern Confederation later that year. Massachusetts was not invited, but in 2011 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland joined (Canada didn't make it into the 21st century).

We had some tough economic times, but nobody starved, and we had only one rumpus on our own soil, when a small band of Deep Greeners tried a putsch in Vermont (the state cops put it

down without even killing anyone). Even the upstate New York cities avoided the usual urban warfare, in part because there weren't many people left in them anyway and in part because the local blacks took the Newark example to heart and put their own house in order. Most whites don't hate blacks so long as they don't have to be afraid of them.

But it was what happened on the cultural front that really made the difference for us. Quietly, the Retroculture movement had been growing from the mid-1990s on. It wasn't political, it was just individuals and families deciding to live again the the old ways. By the 2000s there were books, magazines, clubs, even special communities for people who wanted to discover how Americans used to live and bring those old ways back. Some people liked one period, some another, but gradually more and more found themselves looking to the Victorian era as the model. The Victorians had been an astoundingly productive bunch, building, inventing, creating, conquering -- all the things we needed to do again if we were to live better than dogs.

The family was the first Victorian institution to make a comeback. With everything else falling apart, people saw pretty quickly how important a family is. That would have happened without Retroculture, but the Retro movement helped us see how to make families work. We dug out the many good books, most written by women, the Victorians had published on how to make a good home, raise children, and live together happily (the secret was sacrificing the late 20th century's god,

the self). We learned a lot that our ancestors had known and our parents had forgotten.

With the only effective government local government, people suddenly found themselves empowered to fix local problems. In most places, they started with the schools. They tossed out the vast accretion of guidance counselors and bureaucrats, put the teachers back in charge, and backed up discipline in the schools with discipline in the home (the "copy book rules" ruled again). The kids learned to read with Mr. McGuffey's readers, they learned to figure on a chalk board, not a computer that did the work for them, and they learned the difference between right and wrong or got their bottoms fanned until they did. After school, they worked; we all worked, or went hungry. Poverty somehow seems friendlier to real education than wealth.

Christians took back their churches from the agnostic clergy, and the pews filled up again. (We got some important help here from the Russian missionaries; Russia was again Holy Russia, and she took as her mission re-Christianizing the West). The church, not the government, became the problem-solver in our communities, when people were hungry or sick or old and without family. The government was broke anyway, with the need to defend the borders and not much tax base left. So people learned to help each other again, the Victorian way, through the church.

As the Victorian spirit spread, standards were revived. Communities decided that some things were acceptable and some

weren't. Crime wasn't; with justice local and the lawyers digging potatoes, somebody who mugged on Tuesday hanged on Wednesday. "In your face" sexual deviancy met with the horsewhip or tar and feathers, though odd sorts were generally left alone as long as they didn't frighten the horses. Entertainment was expected to be decent (with the kind of war that was going on elsewhere, sex and violence no longer seemed so entertaining). In the best of American traditions, the Retro folks launched a campaign to get people to "take the pledge" -- the pledge that they would not own or watch a television. It was so successful that within five years the television stations had all gone broke, and the monster was dead.

In a world grown ugly, there was small desire for ugliness in art and music as well. The traditional canons were revived (Palladio remains much in fashion), and young people in particular went in heavily for choral singing. (The last rock concert was held in 2013 in the Milwaukee stadium. It featured all the big rock bands left in north America and most of the remaining rock fans too. The local TFP boys (Tradition, Family and Property) sealed the doors, flooded the place, then hooked it up to the high tension lines. A regrettable excess, perhaps, but not without an element of Karmic justice).

By the mid-2020s, people had started to speak of the Recovery. Things were starting to work again, at least for us up north. And it was obvious why: the Victorian spirit,

and Victorian practices, were making them work. The slogan became, "What worked then will work now," and, of course, it did. The economy began to move forward as, with Victorian ingenuity and hard work, we began to make things other people wanted. By the mid-30s we had become the recognized world leaders in cold weather agricultural techniques, in renewable energy technologies and in lighter-than-air aircraft.

This time we didn't let success go to our heads. We had plenty of reminders to our south of just how fragile an achievement a functioning society is. We knew the Recovery would last only so long as its cultural underpinnings did. Instead of relaxing our morals as we became more prosperous, we made them ever stronger. We were especially concerned to see that the next generation would not forget the past and thereby repeat its tragic errors. We seem to have succeeded in that, thanks largely to the reintroduction of classical education. No one graduates from high school without both Greek and Latin, nor without having read the classical authors and the Church Fathers. University undergraduate education is built around the great books of Western culture. It is astonishing to think that all this had almost been forgotten, in pursuit of nothing but ephemera.

More in gratitude toward our Victorian exemplars than for

any other reason the Northern Confederation became, in the years 2035 A.D., the nation of Victoria. It was done by citizen petition and referendum, the way all important questions are decided -- town meeting government is an old tradition with us. In fact, there isn't much other government, nor is it needed now that we again have a virtuous citizenry. The legislature meets for a couple months every two years, with citizen legislators who can't be reelected and get paid one hundred gold dollars per annum. To prevent another government bureaucracy from growing, the federal capital moves every six months from one province to another; at last count, it had 76 employees. The President is chosen by lot from among registered voters.

And so it was, in 2037, that we burned the bishopess. We knew that with that act we were closing and sealing the old book, the book that had seen us go from decay to dissolution to renewal and Recovery. The auto-da-fe was symbolic; the Recovery was in fact already on solid ground or we wouldn't have had the moral fiber to torch the old girl.

We are hopeful as we look to the future now, and not only here in Victoria. Victorian parties are growing fast in the other states in north America, in the Confederacy and in Vandalia, in the Trans-Mississippi and New Prussia. Only in Nueva España, where the Hispanic party is locked in bitter warfare with the Aztec Alliance (the latter's slogan is "You'll leave your heart in Mexico City") does it look hopeless. Elsewhere, there is even talk of some kind of a new union,

much looser, of course, built on shared values and culture, not a shared public trough -- there will never be another Washington.

And that, too, shows that we have learned some lessons from history.

William S. Lind III recently retired from the General Staff of the Victorian armed forces with the rank of major. He now farms near Hartland, Maine. He wrote this memoir of the time of troubles and the Recovery for his grandchildren.

NOTES

1. See for example Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda (1987) and Cultural Conservatism: Theory and Practice (1991), both published by the Free Congress Foundation, Washington, D.C.
2. The reference of course is to National Empowerment Television (NET), which began broadcasting in April, 1991.
3. The figures are from a national survey of 1000 respondents done in January, 1992 by Lawrence Research for the Free Congress Foundation.