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Permanent Things



Number 24

Spring 2014

A Scottish Remembrance of Russell Kirk

One of the major commemorations to mark the 60th anniversary of *The Conservative Mind* took place on a fall weekend in Scotland, where a distinguished group of scholars and public figures joined members of the Kirk family at the [University of St. Andrews](#), where Kirk's seminal work was written as a dissertation.

On Friday evening, Annette Kirk hosted a dinner at the cliff-side Russell Hotel, where guests were treated to a talk by André Gushurst-Moore, author of *The Common Mind: Politics, Society and Christian Humanism from Thomas More to Russell Kirk*.

Gushurst-Moore elaborated on some of the principal themes in Kirk's works, and discussed Kirk's defense of humane learning, the moral imagination, and "the permanent things." His was an eloquent tribute, which many found quite moving. It was a testament of sorts to the impact that Kirk's writings—and his gentle character—had on people. Now two decades after his death, Kirk continues to touch people with the evocative power of his words.

Men of Letters & Politics

The [main event](#) in Scotland took place on Saturday morning, with lectures at Parliament Hall. An energetic welcome was offered by [Michael Bentley](#), professor of political and intellectual history at the University of St. Andrews. He

gave a brief but deeply respectful overview of Kirk's life, his work at St. Andrews, and the friendships he cultivated in Scotland.

Bentley then introduced the eminent historian of the American conservative movement, George Nash, senior fellow at the Russell Kirk Center and celebrated author of the 1976 classic, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*. The highly articulate and soft-spoken Nash provided a more detailed biographical look at Kirk, delving into some of the early experiences that provided the insights leading to the development of *The Conservative Mind*.

The Right Honorable [David Willetts](#), a Member of Parliament, and Minister of State for Universities and Sciences, followed Nash with a speech that was both scholarly and inspirational.



Historian Michael Bentley and
the Right Honorable David Willetts, MP



Joseph Stuart recounts
the historic sites of St.
Andrews in Kirk's fiction

A Scottish Remembrance

Willetts raised provocative philosophical questions (for example, if modern conservatism is essentially Anglo-American, then what might, say, a Chinese account of conservatism look like?) and identified two of the biggest challenges facing conservatism today: the anti-state libertarianism that has taken over the movement, and the role of religious belief.

It is in regard to these two last points that Willetts found some of the most important and insightful contributions in Kirk. In fact, he demonstrated an uncommon familiarity with Kirk's entire oeuvre and referred easily to pertinent passages in a well-thumbed copy of *The Conservative Mind*.

The day ended with a gala dinner held in Parliament Hall and a final lecture by [Owen Dudley Edwards](#), a renowned BBC broadcaster, and reader in Commonwealth and American history at the [University of Edinburgh](#). His was a long and discursive talk that took in many literary greats—including John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, and T.S. Eliot, which concluded with a spirited tribute to Russell Kirk, who he placed among the greatest belletrists of history.

On Sunday, the last day of the anniversary celebrations, guests traveled to [Kellie Castle](#), the ancestral home of the Lorimer family who befriended Kirk when he was a student at St. Andrews. It was here, in one of the large, yellow rooms on an upper floor, that Kirk wrote parts of *The Conservative Mind*. Today the Castle, whose origins date back to around 1360, is in the hands of the National Trust for Scotland.



Cecilia and Andrea Kirk, graduates of St. Andrews,
with Annette Kirk and Jeff Nelson

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

The importance of *The Conservative Mind* is that it can point the way to a recovery of a proper understanding of our flawed human nature—which could then lead to a recovery of our American political tradition. It remains a necessary read, especially if one claims to be a conservative thinker: for on Kirk's shoulders, the rest of us stand.



George Nash and Annette Kirk viewing
Kirk's dissertation in the university library

And this is a perfect image with which to conclude, for recognition that we are “inheritors and guardians” of something that came before us requires a great deal of humility, a virtue about which few people speak today—but which Kirk knew was necessary for a truly authentic conservatism.

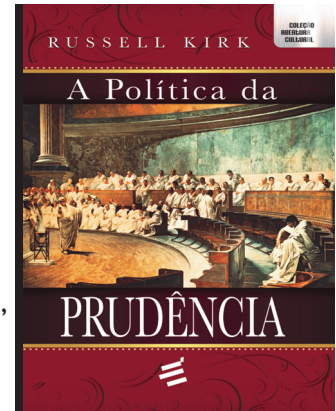
A version of this essay appeared at www.theamericanconservative.com.
Alvino-Mario Fantini is editor-in-chief of *The European Conservative*.

The Conservative Mind at 60

- **The Philadelphia Society's** Fall Meeting, “The Permanent Things,” celebrated Kirk's book.
- **The Heritage Foundation's** Lee Edwards moderated a [panel](#) with Matthew Spalding, Yuval Levin, and Peter Wehner.
- The **Intercollegiate Studies Institute** partnered with **The Hauenstein Center** to host a seminar for college students.
- **The Imaginative Conservative** held a conference at Houston Baptist University.
- **The University Bookman** and Liberty Fund's **Liberty Forum** published symposia.

Brazilian Edition of *The Politics of Prudence* Sells 5,000 Copies in Three Months

The Politics of Prudence, which some believe is the best introduction to Kirk's political and cultural thought, was published in Brazil for the first time in Portuguese by É Realizações Publishing House. The reception of this book was so successful that the 5,000 copies that were printed sold out in three months. Now on its second edition, the book continues to receive rave reviews.



Gustavo Santos and Márcia Xavier de Brito rendered a beautiful translation of the book which included an introduction by Mark Henrie, an original study on the formation and development of Kirk's conservatism by Alex Catharino with historical, cultural and cross-reference endnotes, as well as three essays about the book by Edward Ericson, Bruce Frohnen, and Gerhart Niemeyer.

The launchings of this critical edition of *The Politics of Prudence* in Brazil occurred in two major cities—São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The first event in São Paulo on December 17, 2013 featured lectures by Alex Catharino, Gustavo Santos and Luiz Felipe Pondé, a well-known conservative journalist who has a weekly newspaper column in *F. de São Paulo*, the largest newspaper in the country. The second event took place in Rio de Janeiro on January 23, 2014 and in addition to lectures by Alex Catharino, and Gustavo Santos, two other persons spoke: Rodrigo Constantino, an economist and weekly columnist/blogger of *Veja* magazine, and Christian Lynch, director of one of the most prestigious Political Science graduate programs in Brazil.

The impact of the Brazilian edition of *The Politics of Prudence* has been most impressive. Not only has it become a best-seller, but at present, the book is being quoted by two candidates for the presidency of Brazil, elections for which will take place in October. *The Politics of Prudence* is being cited in all social networks and was the subject of four television programs. Mr. Constantino also wrote three articles for *Veja* magazine's blog which has an average of 3,000,000 readers. Perhaps all the attention given the book was what occasioned the sale of 5,000 copies of the first edition in three months.

With the successful publication of *Eliot and His Age* in 2011 and now of *The Politics of Prudence*, we hope to bring you more news about the next two Kirk books to be published in Brazil: *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* in 2014 and *The Conservative Mind* in 2015.



Luiz Felipe Pondé,
Alex Catharino, and
Gustavo Santos
at the launch in
São Paulo, Brazil
in December 2013

Alex Catharino is the Executive Vice President of the Centro Interdisciplinar de Ética e Economia Personalista (CIEEP) and Managing Editor of *Communio Review* (Brazilian edition).

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THE PHILADELPHIA SOCIETY'S FALL MEETING

OCTOBER 4-5, 2013 - GEORGIAN TERRACE HOTEL - ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Permanent Things:

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Russell Kirk's The Conservative Mind

Friday: *Chairman, Edwin J. Feulner, The Heritage Foundation*
Introductory remarks: Annette Y. Kirk, Russell Kirk Center
Keynote Speaker, Bradley Birzer, Hillsdale College

Saturday: **History and the Permanent Things**

Part I: Israel to the Roman Empire

Chairman, Jeffrey Nelson, Intercollegiate Studies Institute
David Lyle Jeffrey, Baylor University
E. Christian Kopff, University of Colorado at Boulder

Part II: Renaissance, Reformation and the Enlightenment

Chairman, Ingrid A Gregg, Earhart Foundation
Renaissance and Reformation, R.V. Young, Editor, *Modern Age*
The Enlightenment, Alan Charles Kors, University of Pennsylvania

Luncheon: America and the Permanent Things

Ralph Hancock, Brigham Young University
Gerald Russello, Editor, *The University Bookman*

How Can We Transmit the Permanent Things?

Chairman, Larry P. Arnn, Hillsdale College
Elizabeth Corey, Baylor University
Bradley C.S. Watson, Saint Vincent College
Michael M. Jordan, Hillsdale College

Human Nature and the Permanent Things

Chairman, Bill Campbell, The Philadelphia Society
Larry Arnhart, Northern Illinois University
Peter Lawler, Berry College
Brendan Foht, *The New Atlantis*
Sarah Beth Vosburg, Louisiana State University

STUDIES IN

Burke
AND HIS TIME

The journal
STUDIES IN BURKE AND HIS TIME
is now on The Russell Kirk Center website.

Launched April 2014
www.kirkcenter.org