

THE POWER BEHIND GOD

God is always on the side of the strong battalions.
-Napoleon Bonaparte

Reason by association

It's fair to sympathize with primitive man's attempts to understand the nature of his environment. Try to imagine what it would be like to live two thousand years ago and beyond, when man knew nothing about nature beyond what's needed for basic survival. We take our understanding of nature for granted today, but ancients had none of that knowledge. The core of what they believed came from everyday experiences and by whatever was passed on orally from elders.

Their method of learning and understanding was based on what comes most natural to the human mind. If a particular pattern had a familiar effect, then they would associate similar patterns with the same effect. Sometimes they would associate impressions to have opposite meaning. Or if two or more patterns coinciding in some way, they might conclude that one affected the other. There is nothing wrong with this; in fact all learning is based on associating the unfamiliar to the unfamiliar. The problem is that learning by pattern association by literal interpretation usually leads to superstitious beliefs.

Examples. Observation: Humans and animals initiate actions on their own. Conclusion: Acts of nature are caused by beings who can't be seen. Observation: Breath can be felt, but it can't be seen. Conclusion: The wind comes from the breathing of invisible beings--souls and spirits. When the wind enters the body, it brings life; when it leaves, it brings death. Observation: The stars above move in repeatable patterns. Conclusion: There are beings up above in the heavens. Observation: When a woman gives birth, water (amniotic fluid) leaks out first. Conclusion: water is associated with birth--the birth of the universe, the birth of earth, the birth of a nation, etc.. These examples, by the way, comprise the foundational principles of theology.

Now reasoning by association is an effective way of understanding something complex. But as I've showed above, associations do not necessarily have cause and effect relationships. It would be unfair to criticize ancients for thinking that way. But now that we are in the twenty first century, it should give cause for rejecting these ancient beliefs as a truth, and concern for the sanity of those who parade it shamelessly like some moral imperative. That brings us to the topic of Biblical political theory.

By association, religious thinkers see the world they know as a series of beginnings and ends. So they reasoned that the universe must have a beginning and an end. Because of their bias, they associate social order with authority. Therefore the universe must have an authority who keeps order in the universe. Third, an authority is separate from those he rules over. Therefore the authority figure cannot be in the universe he rules. Finally, the family ruler is the father. Therefore the authority head of the universe must be a father.

To continue this series of superstitious associations. The human father comes before his offspring. Therefore the divine father came before the universe. And what follows is that the father produced the universe. They were wrong in that females create life, not men; but this is a man's club. Anyway, from their point of view, God is everybody's father; the church is the mother, and the rest are their children. It's an archaic notion of authority--and not coincidentally, self-serving too.

As a side note: The etymology of the word, God, comes from the German word *gott*, meaning, that which is invoked. The word *divine* was borrowed from astrology. Astrologers were known as dividers or diviners. More about biblical astrology some other time. Back to politics.

The holy wars

A common paradox of human psychology, is that the less we know, the more we are sure we know. While the more we know, the less we realize we know. Given the abysmal state of religious ignorance, Church thinkers believe their knowledge of God is infallible because it was given to them by God himself. And who should dare disobey them was-by analogy again--an act of treason against God. Americans take the First Amendment and the freedom of speech for granted. But with religious dogma, wrongful thought is ordained as a crime punishable by eternal torment. That's pretty intimidating if you buy into it.

There are two dates that stand out as the beginning and the end of religious influence over secular politics. 330 CE marks the date when the Roman Emperor, Constantine, made Christianity the state religion. And the year 1648, marks the end of the Thirty Years War and the demise of the Holy Roman Empire. Within this period, the ruling elites believed that the best way to maintain social order was to commit their empire to enforcing a single religious belief.

Persecutions started with the pagans and graduated to heretics. Then there were the Islamic jihads, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the witch-hunts, culminating in the corruption, persecutions, massacres, pogroms and wars during the Reformation period. This is not the place to go into the gory details; but it serves as a lesson to the pitfalls of the lethal combination of political and religious rule--politics over the body and religion over the mind.

I wish I could say it's stopped there, but it hasn't. Islam still dominates secular politics in the Middle East. There's the middle east wars and acts of terrorism between Jews and Muslims. Asian religious violence is a topic in itself. The Protestants and Catholics still fight among each other in Ireland. The Christian' labeling of Jews as Christ killers led to centuries of Jewish pogroms, culminating with the Holocaust. When you think about the idiocy of Christians claiming that the coming of the Jewish savior, Jesus, was prophesized in the Old Testament. Whereupon Jesus turns out to be the rallying cry for Jewish persecution.

If religion served some practical moral purpose, it would have been apparent a long time ago. Apologists say religion has changed since then. Not exactly true! There is not one instance in history where the Church has voluntarily relinquished its political authority; in every case, it was taken away. Still cocksure they are on the right side of every moral issue, almost every major religion lobbies for political influence as a matter of policy. There is not one among them who has renounced political coercion--in words and in deeds--as a means of achieving its ends.

It's more accurate to think of the Church as a corporate interest group. Since their product is based on emotional beliefs, which can be anything imaginable, there are hundreds of them in competition, and dozens of different Bibles in print. All promoting themselves to keep their coffers filled. Give to God, they say, as if God needed the money. Come visit once a week and get lectured to like you're a child. The theory of Darwinian evolution doesn't have enough evidence, they say, as if the idea of God has any supporting evidence at all.

There's poor old helpless omnipotent God, who without the Church, would have no one to believe in him. And there's the Church, God's professed representatives. If history is any guide, God abandoned the Church a long time ago; only the clergy doesn't hasn't figured it out yet. The Church can complain about too much materialism, but if that is the direction society is moving, then by its own logic, it must be part of God's plan. Judging by the decline of religious influence in the past few hundred years, if there is a God, it certainly doesn't fit any religious definition.

Like the proverbial question about which came first, the chicken or the egg, there is a political controversy that rages to this day. Implicit in the Genesis of Creation is the idea that the authority of a God had to precede society, otherwise there would have been no social order. According to the naturalistic view, man is inherently self organizing. The idea of authority developed in late evolution as a need to establish common standards of agreement and as a means for self defense. Science and historical evidence supports the naturalistic side.

In prehistoric times, the earliest human tribes couldn't afford a governing authority; everybody had to forage for food. There were no gods, no priests, no written laws, no kings, no written language, no armies, no police, no professional politicians. There were probably rogues, but generally, life was too perilous; cooperation was essential to man's evolutionary survival. It wasn't until about 10,000 years ago, when farming enabled the production of enough surplus food to support an elitist class. Religious authority is a relatively new invention in the evolution of human existence. The perfect word that God created in the Garden of Eden is a child's story.

The nature of social order

There are essentially two poles of thought that go into explaining the nature of social order: coercion verses cooperation. Religious dogma and political ideology comprise the coercive authoritarian model. Social order comes by way of the masses supporting an elitist class to create and enforce a system of laws. There is a sad fact that runs throughout history: More people have been killed and persecuted, in the quest to enforce arbitrary religious and political law, by their own government, than they have by common criminals and foreign powers. This coercive model, by definition, relies fraud, fear and force to garner support. They are the same means employed by criminals.

The cooperative model is the most efficient in terms of maximizing social well-being. It follows that man could not survive alone in prehistoric days. He owes his survival to his cooperative nature. In the twenty first century, we can see man's cooperative nature embodied in the market economy. The cooperative model recognizes the need for a minimal political authority to protect the rights of every individual to conduct his affairs in peace.

There will be more to say about the abuses of language later, but for starters there is no such thing as an entity called Society. Politicians use that term the way clergy use the word, God. Society, in real terms is a collection of individuals. And thus, laws can only be enforced at the individual level. The coercive model favors conformity, while the cooperative model favors the right of every individual to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as the Declaration of Independence puts it.

The conformity ideal has proved to be an impossible goal and inconsistent with human nature. In the last century, we've seen it do its misdeeds in the Communist and Fascist movements. Equally, the Medieval Church went down the same path and failed.

The Church says God has a plan, but they do not know what that plan is. Now if there was a God in command, as the Church preaches, then we must take heed to the long decline of Church influence, in favor of secular concerns. Two thousand years of history gives us enough information to see in what direction God's plan is headed. The results are in. Clearly, the Church has no benefactor, proof that the Church concept of a God doesn't withstand any test of truth. Reality can't be changed by words and beliefs.