

insurgency consisted largely of foreign jihadis. As in 1984, the ability to forget that any of these events ever occurred signals one's loyalty to the movement. (Hence, the rise of hawkishness against Iran, not four years after the last effort to sell a war to an otherwise balky public.) To prove his loyalty to the emperor, everyone must compliment him on his new clothes. The most loyal believe that the emperor is wearing clothes to begin with.

Fourth, conservatism is entertaining. Understanding the world, though rewarding, provides nothing like the pleasures of a "Two Minute Hate," a focused, ritualized denunciation of enemies. To induce its own Two Minute Hates, conservatism, like Ingsoc in 1984, manufactures bogeymen such as "judicial activists," "so-called realists," or "moral relativists" that become symbolic representations of detested outsiders. Meanwhile, like the Inner Party in 1984, conservative leaders tolerate the more vulgar, angry purveyors of ideology—think talk-show hosts or authors of bestselling political books. The most vicious attacks, meanwhile, are reserved for turncoats, like Goldstein in 1984. (Of course, as many paleoconservatives could attest, the hatred is usually mutual.) Rooting for conservative ideology is as engrossing to its partisans as rooting for the local football team is to its fans.

None of this is to suggest that conservatism is uniquely pernicious. The roots of ideology lie deep in our cognitive limitations and instinct for group loyalty. One could make similar observations of any ideology. The most distinguishing feature of conservatism is its misleading name. Lexically, "conservatism" denotes caution, prudence, and resistance to change. Conservatism the ideology, however, has if anything tended towards recklessness. "Nuke 'em!" has always been a popular conservative sentiment, never more so than today with respect to the Muslim world. *For frantic boast*

and foolish word / Thy mercy on thy people Lord!

Whatever its past accomplishments, the conservative movement no longer kindles any "ironic points of light." It has produced fewer outstanding books even as it has taken over more of the intellectual and political landscape. This trend will only continue. Worse, no reckoning will be made: they hope in vain who expect conservatives to take responsi-

bility for the actual consequences of their actions. Conservatives have no use for the ethic of responsibility; they seek only to "see to it that the flame of pure intention is not quenched." The movement remains a fine place to make a career, but for wisdom one must look elsewhere. ■

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Ideology Has Consequences

Bush rejects the politics of prudence.

By Jeffrey Hart

MANY REPUBLICANS must feel like that legendary man at the bar on the *Titanic*. Watching the iceberg slide by outside a porthole, he remarked, "I asked for ice. But this is too much." Republicans voted for a Republican and got George W. Bush, but his Republican Party is unrecognizable as the party we have known.

Recall the Eisenhower Republican Party. Eisenhower, a thoroughgoing realist, was one of the most successful presidents of the 20th century. So was the prudential Reagan, wary of using military force. Nixon would have been a good secretary of state, but emotionally wounded and suspicious, he was not suited to the presidency. Yet he, too, with Henry Kissinger, was a realist. George W. Bush represents a huge swing away from such traditional conservative Republicanism.

But the conservative movement in America has followed him, evacuating prudence and realism for ideology and folly. Left behind has been the experienced realism of James Burnham. Also vacated, the Burkean realism of Willmoore Kendall, who aspired, as he told Leo Strauss, to be the "American Burke." That Burkeanism entailed a sense of the complexity of society and the resistance of cultures to change. Gone, too, has been the individualism of Frank Meyer and the commonsense Western libertarianism of Barry Goldwater.

The post-2000 conservative movement has abandoned all that to back Bush and has followed him over the cliff into our calamity in Iraq. On top of all that, the Bush presidency has been fueled by the moral authoritarianism of the current third evangelical awakening.

Yes, aware Republicans are like that man on the *Titanic* who asked for ice, and this iceberg is too much.

The problem is that Bush campaigned in 2000 as a “compassionate conservative.” Today, the media calls him a conservative, yet there is nothing at all conservative about his policies, whether foreign or domestic. William F. Buckley once said that conservatism is the “politics of reality.” But Bush has not pursued reality-based policies. Will we have to find another word? It certainly looks that way.

Buckley has said that Bush has been “engulfed” by Iraq and that if he had been a European prime minister he would have resigned by now. Other commentators known as conservatives have agreed: Andrew Sullivan, George Will, Francis Fukuyama. It is worth considering a statement by Richard Cheney:

Once you get to Baghdad, it's not clear what you do with it. It's not clear what kind of government you put in place of the one that's currently there now. Is it going to be a Shia regime, a Sunni regime, a Kurdish regime? Or one that tilts toward the Baathists, or one that tilts toward Islamic fundamentalists? How much credibility is that going to have if it's set up by the American military there? How long does the United States military have to stay there to protect the people that sign on for that government, and what happens once we leave?

Smart man, that Cheney. The only problem is that he said that back in 1991 during the first Gulf War when he was secretary of defense in the administration of George H.W. Bush. At that time, Brent Scowcroft was national security adviser and James Baker was secretary of state. Recently, Scowcroft has said that though he has been

friends with Cheney for more than 30 years, he no longer really knows him. What has happened to Cheney is anybody's guess.

It can't be 9/11. We know from many sources that Bush had decided to invade Iraq long before 9/11. In *The Right Man*, David Frum recounts being interviewed for a position by Michael Gerson, head Bush speechwriter and also policy adviser, not long after Bush became president. Gerson told Frum that Bush would topple Saddam. At that time nothing was being said about weapons of mass destruction.

National Review editor Rich Lowry sheds some light on the president's motivation for invading Iraq in a column titled “The Revenge of Orthodoxy.” Following historian Walter Russell Mead, he notices that we are in the “Third Awakening” of Protestant evangelicalism and that the Bush presidency should be stamped “Brought to you by orthodox Christian believers.” He makes clear the implications of this for American foreign policy:

The reinvigorated Wilsonian foreign policy championed by Bush—and motivated less by Woodrow Wilson's secular values (international law, etc.) and more by religious beliefs (the God-given rights of all people)—is a reflection of Bush's Christian base.

Lowry, following Mead, is surely correct here. But just what is conservative about it? Historically, American evangelicalism has veered wildly from the crusading lyrics of Julia Ward Howe's “Battle Hymn of the Republic” to the pacifism of William Jennings Bryan.

And has anyone ever claimed that Wilsonianism is conservative? To give Woodrow a bit of a break, his “Wilsonianism” was much more temperate than is sometimes thought: “It will now be our fortunate duty,” he said, “to assist

by example, by sober, friendly counsel, and by material aid in the establishment of democracy through out the world.” That statement by Wilson reflects the original meaning of the torch the Statue of Liberty holds aloft: the United States is a beacon of liberty. Emma Lazarus's famous lines about welcoming immigrants amounted to a misinterpretation. True enough, Lloyd George, when he returned to England from Versailles, remarked that he had not done badly considering that he had been sitting between Napoleon (Clemenceau) and Jesus Christ (Wilson). But just what did Wilson mean by “the world” when he spoke of “establishing democracy”? I hazard the thought that he focused on the West and was not thinking of Borneo or the Congo, nor, surely, of launching invasions and occupations of Mesopotamia. With Bush in mind, Woodrow's “Wilsonianism,” though naïve and though certainly not conservative, can be declared Not Guilty.

To define what “conservative” in fact means, the place to turn is Edmund Burke, the founder of modern political philosophy, the first political thinker to base his thought on empirical fact and on history. Both Hobbes and Locke were empiricists, but in their political thought they reasoned from assumptions they posited about human nature.

Hobbes took a relatively dark view of human nature, seeing human life in a mythical pre-social state of nature as “solitary, nasty, brutish and short.” Such creatures needed firm control. Locke, in contrast, was more optimistic, seeing man in a state of nature as governed by reason and thus requiring a much less intrusive government. The empiricism reflected by Locke, however, represented a new way of seeing the world and made political philosophy, beginning with Burke, possible. The opening pages of Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690) possess the promise of

a new and innocent dawn as Locke brushes aside much of Western philosophy, judging metaphysics to be a distraction from his focus on the facts of this world, with a view to improving it. As a result, we have the facticity reflected in the birth of the novel (Defoe), history (Gibbon, Hume), biography (Boswell), and Burke. In *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) we have the thrill of Locke's empiricism as it appears in the prose of our first novel, that is, in the first distinctively modern form of literature:

The sixth day of our being at sea we came into Yarmouth Roads; the wind having been contrary, and the Weather calm, we had made but little Way since the Storm. Here we were obliged to come to an Anchor, and here we lay, the Wind continuing contrary—viz. at South-west—for seven or eight Days, during which time a great many Ships from Newcastle came into the same Roads, as the common Harbour where the ships might wait for a wind from the river.

Never before in literature had man been placed so thoroughly in a physical (empirical) environment. Never before had biography come to us with the detail Boswell uses in his *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

Burke does not begin with hypothetical “states of nature” but with the facts of history and human behavior. His great breakthrough into new territory—he wrote that he had been “alarmed into reflection” by the completely unique events in France—came in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). To see his thought develop here in an exploratory way, then see him make further discoveries a year later, is to experience enormous intellectual excitement.

Once, while I was a graduate student at Columbia, I took a seminar in impor-

tant thinkers with Jacques Barzun and Lionel Trilling. Barzun, in particular, liked to start by identifying the core of a great thinker's thought. When it came to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution*, I offered: “Burke knows that if you tried to tie your shoes in the morning by means of reason you would never get out of the house.” That is, you tie your shoes by habit. Barzun nodded approval but gave this a social dimension, saying, “Burke wanted his morning newspaper delivered on time.” That is, the writing, manufacture, and delivery of that newspaper require a great many actions that are accomplished by habit. Social institutions are the habits of society.

What Burke faced in the radical *philosophes* across the Channel was something new: an actual society in France being attacked by abstract “rights of man.” To this he opposed the historic liberties of England. He saw the abstraction-based attack on an actual society as something new in history—and inherently dangerous. Part of the excitement of the *Reflections* consists in Burke confronting this novelty, searching for a vocabulary to describe it: “abstract theory,” “metaphysical dogma.” Burke was seeking terms to describe a belief system impervious to fact or experience, and he brought to bear a permanently valid analysis of human behavior and the role of social institutions. Burke's “abstract theory” and “metaphysical dogma” we would call ideology.

Burke's thought, however, did not conclude with the *Reflections*. And it is exciting to watch him responding to events as they unfold. By 1791, in his “Thoughts on French Affairs,” he recognized that the social forces converging against the absolute monarchy had made revolution inevitable. Saying that the French Revolution had occupied him for two years, he now recognized that:

If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and they, who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.

Burke there moved from social structure in the *Reflections* to social process. In his great essay “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1865) Matthew Arnold rightly described this as one of the great moments in modern thought.

In the free nations of the world at the present time, we have experienced changes that can be called revolutions, certainly the biomedical, also the women's revolution, which has been one of the most far reaching in its implications. Not until 1912 was women's suffrage on the agenda of a major American political party, Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive (“Bull Moose”) Party. And women's suffrage implied women's equality. The sources of women's demand for equality surely went back before 1912. The result today can be seen in almost any college or university graduate school, indeed in the armed forces. I know the subject is fraught with emotion and contention, but I consider analytically that the demand for the availability of abortion is a derivative of women's equality: that is, equality requires that women be able to shape their lives as freely as men do. Many will find that analytical conclusion disagreeable. No doubt Burke hated to see that the French Revolution had been inevitable. Yet he knew that those who “persist in opposing [the implications of] this mighty

current in human affairs ... will not be resolute and firm but perverse and obstinate."

While it is not incorrect to call Burke a conservative, it is also correct to call him an analytical realist. And I suggest that they may be the same thing. Indeed there is a sense in which any successful government must be based upon such analytical realism. Today, many historians judge that Franklin Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower were among the best presidents in the 20th century and rank them among the best in American history. I think Ronald Reagan will join them. All were realistic in handling the challenges they faced.

Bush has offered two justifications for his invasion of Iraq. First, that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. None were discovered, and Bush's claims, upon examination, have been found suspect. He has also projected a democratic Iraq, some of his statements being so disconnected from actuality as to qualify as pure ideology.

For example, at the American Enterprise Institute on Feb. 26, 2003, Bush put forth the following theory of human behavior:

Human cultures can be vastly different. Yet the human heart desires the same good things, everywhere on earth. In our desire to be safe from brutal and bullying oppression, human beings are the same. For these fundamental reasons, freedom and democracy will always and everywhere have greater appeal than the slogans of hatred and the tactics of terror.

Yes, human beings do dislike "brutal and bullying oppression," but everything else there is false. The people going to work at the World Trade Center on 9/11 did not want the same things as Mohammed Atta. Historically, holiness,

power, glory, conquest, and empire have had greater appeal than freedom and democracy. But Bush's belief in the convergence and even identity of goals apparently is unshakable.

Speaking in Whitehall later in 2003, Bush was at it again, claiming, "The establishment of a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will be a watershed event in the global expansion of democracy ... as the alternative to instability and hatred and terror." Sure, "global expansion of democracy." Andrew Bacevich of Boston University, a strategic thinker, wrote of Bush's

fusion of breathtaking utopianism with barely disguised machtpolitik. It reads as if it were the product not of sober, ostensibly conservative Republicans but of an unlikely collaboration of Woodrow Wilson and the elder Field Marshal von Moltke.

On April 24, Bush repeated his fantastic theory in a speech in Irvine, California:

I based a lot of my foreign policy decisions on some things I think are true. One, I believe that there's an Almighty, and secondly, I believe one of the great gifts of the Almighty is the desire in everybody's soul, regardless of what you look like or where you live, to be free. I believe liberty is universal. I believe people want to be free. And I know that democracies do not war with each other. And I know that the best way to defeat the enemy, the best way to defeat their ability to exploit hopelessness and despair is to give people a chance to live in a free society.

Well, it is certainly taking a long time for what the Almighty wants to make its appearance in the actual world. Most of

the world today is far from democratic. Over the long span of human history, democracy is almost invisible. In the real world, many people want a society in which the rules laid down in the Koran govern all activities and take absolute precedence over liberty. In Iraq, the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has no interest in freedom, and al-Sadr is the power behind the present Prime Minister Maliki. What planet is Bush living on? He makes the "metaphysical dogma" of the radical *philosophes* seem sober by comparison.

Before long, students may be allowed to take entire history courses in the expanding library of books analyzing Bush's Iraq calamity and other failures of his administration, which also derive from his tendency to privilege ideology over realism. Supply-side ideology led to large tax cuts and mountainous deficits. Privatization ideology led to an incomprehensible and unnecessarily expensive prescription-drug plan. No previous administration has produced such an outpouring.

Is Bush a conservative? Of course not. When all the evidence is in, I think historians will agree with Princeton's Sean Wilentz, who wrote a carefully argued article judging Bush to have been the worst president in American history. The problem is that he is generally called a conservative, perhaps because he obviously is not a liberal. It may be that Bush, in the magnitude of his failure, defies conventional categories. But the word "conservative" deserves to be rescued. Against the misconception that Bush is a conservative, and appealing to Burke, all of our analytical energies must be brought to bear. I hope I have made a beginning here. ■

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The Gospel According to Bush

If God promises universal freedom, why does He need our help to liberate the world?

By Daniel Larison

IN TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY, the motif of liberation and deliverance is a strong one—so strong that the story of Israel's freedom from bondage in Egypt and the spiritual liberation of humanity from sin through Christ's death and resurrection can easily become confused with ideas of earthly, political liberty from which they are clearly and sharply distinct. We have seen this sort of conflation of spiritual and earthly emancipation in the liberation theology of Latin American Catholics, who give their preaching of the Gospel a steady dose of Marxism and vague endorsements of revolutionary violence, but lately here in America we have started to see a similar blurring of the lines between Christian spiritual liberty and political liberty, the latter of which assuredly has its historical roots in the lands and traditions of Christian civilization. The latest proponent of the idea of a divinely bestowed "universal freedom" has been none other than President George W. Bush.

On Sept. 12, President Bush spoke with an assembled group of conservative journalists, who relayed his comments. Rich Lowry, editor of *National Review*, quoted the president's explanation for his confidence in the "rightness of his strategy" and the eventual success of the administration's "freedom agenda" in the Middle East:

Freedom is universal. ... And I recognize there's a debate around the world about the kind of—whether that principle is real. I call it moral relativism, if people do not believe that certain people can be free. I

mean, I just cannot subscribe to that. People—I know it upsets people when I ascribe that to my belief in an Almighty, and that I believe a gift from that Almighty is universal freedom. That's what I believe.

This was hardly the first time Bush had asserted, as he had at the Republican National Convention in 2004, that freedom was "God's gift to every man and woman in this world." This had played an important epideictic role in earlier speeches that raised the president's rhetoric to the level of the revelatory and prophetic, freeing it from the burdens of proof and deliberation. This claim had also served a useful political function in rallying both Christians and secular conservatives to support global liberal revolution and tapped into an American tradition dating back to Lincoln of closely mixing biblically derived rhetoric with specific political goals. As the respected literary scholar and great conservative thinker M.E. Bradford wrote of this mixture in Lincoln's rhetoric in the context of the American political tradition:

We [Americans] were a fellowship of 'the Book' and took all government and political philosophy—even the Constitution—to be practical and unworthy of mention in the same breath with Holy Scripture. Politics might, within reason, be tested against revealed truth. But we never imagined more than a tangency for the political and the sacred—never a holy beginning or conclusion *by* politics.

For the same reason, there is something deeply disturbing about the conflation of God's gifts and political liberty, and especially with the political liberation of other nations. (Disregard for the moment whether such liberation of other peoples is entirely genuine or in the best interests of the United States.) First, it can dangerously blur the lines between the sacred and the profane, investing the "freedom agenda" with a divine mandate and the presumption to represent God's will in a shockingly impious manner. Even more importantly, in President Bush's claim that God bestows universal freedom on all of humanity there is the danger of encouraging despair and loss of faith in a God who supposedly gives universal freedom but nonetheless withholds it from billions of our fellow human beings and who denied it to most of humanity for thousands of years. Bush's assertion ends up sounding rather like a theistic version of Rousseau's "man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains," which is a suggestion either of divine impotence or an invitation to revolutionary warfare to realize God's supposed purpose of bestowing universal, political freedom on the world.

Friedrich Hayek, who, it may fairly be said, gave more thought to the question of the origins of liberty than George W. Bush has, once wrote:

Freedom is an artefact of civilization that released man from the trammels of the small group, the momentary moods of which even the leader had to obey. Freedom