

2022 Feb 20 Millenarianism, Neofascism and Christonationalism

The metaphysical (or at least ontological) threads involved in the magic carpet of contemporary millenarianism, neofascism and christonationalism have not been remarked upon as much as they should be. This is not surprising in regard to mainstream (i.e., corporate) media which, insofar as such stories tend to involve potentially explosive topics like screwball religious belief and wacko personal philosophies that might further alienate an (always?) already news-averse public market.

But except for a few veteran commentators like Chris Hedges (himself an ordained Christian minister), core belief topics are left pretty much alone by left-leaners, while on righteous/rightist channels they're noticed more by congratulatory images and dogtweets than by name.

I've recently been making my way through Morris Berman's *\*Coming to Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West\** (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1989). Some indication of the tenor of the book can be noted in Bantam's issuing of the paperback as one of what it called its New Age Books, a collection which includes such millennium's end luminaries as James Lovelock, Gregory Bateson, Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett, Deepak Chopra, Fritjof Capra, Richard Feynman and Robert Pirsig.

Which is not to say their work is not still useful today. Berman's book, for instance, contains a nice summary of what he calls "a secular variety of religious apocalyptic" that permeated National Socialism— not just in the upper or inner circles (which included some well-documented involvement with various arcane theories and practices), but in rank and file German society.

As in other respects, there are remarkable parallels of that aspect of Nazi-mentality with the so-called right-wing populism widespread today not just in the US but worldwide. Not just in the increasing discontent to the point of violence in a one-percent of one-percent plutocratic society coupled with a public indoctrinated by big money especially since the Reagan era to believe that government is bad, that all politicians are crooked, that public welfare is a fluke, a satanic ploy or worse, etc.; and, consequently, inclined either to retreat into idiotic non-political positions (< Gr. *idiot*, "non-involved person," Lat., "ignorant person") ranging from navel-watchers to anarchists, or into Dear Leader (Trumpist, Orbanist, Bolsanarist), personality cults, or into rugged-individual survivalist often/usually patriarchalist libertarian tribalism, or into advocacy of more or less revolutionary post-apocalypse utopias, etc; but also in the ontological/spiritual/metaphysical psyche (psyches?) of that public.

Within an overall background of Norman Cohn's now-classic *Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (1957; rvsd.ed., OxfordUP, 1970), Berman draws for his summary upon three books in particular: James Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement: A Modern Millenarian Revolution* (Hoover Institution, Stanford Un., 1980), J.P. Stern, *The Führer and the People* (Berkeley: Un. California P., 1975), and Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came to Power* (NY: Prentice-Hall, 1938; rpnt., Harvard UP, 1966).

Abel's book is based on and contains extensive excerpts from self-reporting by Germans who submitted to a memoir-like writing contest sponsored by Columbia University, the original documents of which were, as Berman notes (p.396, n.35), donated by Abel to the Hoover Institution after the war, from which in 1951 a hundred or so of them were seized by the FBI which later said they were lost so couldn't be returned.

On the main point, Berman says; "Although trance and occult experiences did float in and around the Nazi Party and Germany for many years. . . . National Socialism was. . . a secular variety of religious apocalyptic. People wound up in a kind of personal/political 'heaven' of existential clarity and immense psychic reorganization. . . . Rhodes. . . say[s] that mystical visions were present for many of them, in which they 'discovered' that (a) their troubles had been caused by Evil and its agents, to which Germany was succumbing; (b) that they had been chosen to defeat these demons, and thereby to save Germany and themselves; and (c) that the final battle for total victory or total loss would soon be at hand. . . . The pattern of personal disaster and psychic redemption follows exactly the pattern of Hitler's life as recorded in *Mein Kampf*. The Abel documents, no less than Hitler's speeches and the biographies of the Nazi elite reveal an 'ontological hysteria' out of all proportion to the actual danger, and a deliverance from it through a dualist [i.e., Manichean binary good/evil] cosmology and an ideology of racial purity. . . . The Abel writers speak of 'the call of the blood' and of 'following an inner voice,' in much the same way as Hitler told Rauschnig of his own 'magic insight.' None of this was rhetorical. It is clear that these writers 'believed that they had experienced personal revelations which guaranteed redemption . . . .' The murder of the Jews, concludes Rhodes, was 'a magical ritual slaughtering.'"

Shades of today's racism, White Supremacy, nativist nationalism, anti-science, anti-government and anti-majority-rule democracy, militias, Q-Anon inanity, The Rapture, and the whole lot of eschatological imaginaries we needn't get into now, but including (just to bring it home) our own Cochise County GOP Supervisors (teaming up with some 200 other small towns in the US) recently refusing a \$1.9m Covid-relief grant on grounds that the pandemic is some kind of hoax, the vaccines likely (or at least potentially a possibly unintended) mass-murder by the federal government, a government that has too much control already. Thus speaketh our local wing of the Arizona Trumplicans.

There is of course no question of the palpable actions of millenarian neofascist christonationalist elements — racist murders and other hate crimes, partisan advocacy of violence for political gain ("legitimate political discourse" in the current GOP argot), voter suppression and other blatant efforts to subvert or circumvent laws and regulations legally established by majority-rule democratic process

. . .the list goes on.

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