

My Personal Observations about Politics

William H. Gross

www.onthewing.org

Last updated 7/15/2024

My favorite quote (*unfortunately, I can't remember who said it*):

We all have the power to change things. Very few have the courage.

There are no political solutions to spiritual maladies; but biblical principles must govern our political choices.

Idealists would destroy the good in search of the perfect. *Realists* must accept the imperfect to preserve the good.

The secret to POLITICAL SUCCESS is to tell people what they want hear. It doesn't have to be true; you don't need to believe it. It only matters that *voters* think it is true, and *they* believe it.

CENTRALIZATION is prone to evil; and urbanization is inherently evil (Gen 4.17; 11.4-8). Why? Because each of these tends toward anonymity and lack of accountability for bad actors. To put it another way, centralization and urbanization are the soil in which tyranny most readily grows. Therefore, extensive protections must be put in place to prevent it.

In a nutshell, all societies begin in ANARCHY; there's no formal government. The only rule is tribal. When anarchy is too much to bear any longer, the tribes band together in a cooperative venture, whether economic, political, or defensive. A government is formed. Because of mutual distrust, the bonds between the tribes are weak; cooperative power is limited by covenant. Where government is constrained this way, LIBERTY reigns, but only for a short time. Pressures mount as their enemies gain power. And so more and more power is granted to the rulers to protect their umbrella society from those enemies; its armies grow and become permanent; laws multiply; control is consolidated; taxes rise; corruption and injustice spread; and a brutal police force is needed to enforce the preferential laws. Along the way, some of the tribes (subcultures) get excluded from the governing table. Sound familiar? It has now become TYRANNY, and it will reign for a very long time. Tyrant replaces tyrant, as new ones scramble to gain and hold onto the scepter of power. At some point, this too becomes an untenable system, and unbearable to the people. The tyrants are thrown down in a bloody revolution; anarchy follows; and the cycle starts over.

Therefore,

LIBERTY exists only briefly between Anarchy and Tyranny, because liberty requires the least government to avoid anarchy. As government inexorably increases, liberty decreases until tyranny reigns. And tyranny will end only at the cost of anarchy. It's a cycle, not a pendulum.

LIBERTY is inefficient and insecure. We must therefore choose between efficiency and liberty, and between security and liberty. Each step *toward* either efficiency or security in a society, is a step *away* from individual liberty in that society.

LIBERTY is rare, fragile, and short-lived because it requires personal responsibility. Most are willing to give up liberty, in order to avoid responsibility.

INDEPENDENCE. There are always those who want to be told what to think and what to do; and there are always those who are willing to tell them. But there is a rare breed who wants neither to be told, nor to tell others. They are *independent*; and they alone know the value of liberty.

America

Politics is about community governance. Because Christians are citizens, they are entitled to participate extensively in the political process. But having a different worldview, they are often at odds with their fellow-citizens. This can result in backlash against the wider Church.

For the record, America is *not* a Christian nation; it was never *intended* to be a Christian nation; and theologically speaking, it *cannot* be a Christian nation. Nations cannot place their faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation; only individuals can do that. But America *has* been a nation of Christians; and that has helped to influence America's politics, culture, laws, and education, often for the better. Even so, the presence of Christians cannot make a nation "Christian."

The late James Montgomery Boice wrote that Augustine (in *City of God*) "distinguished between two entirely different societies: the city of man, which is characterized by self-love, and the City of God, composed of those who love God and want to serve him. The city of man will *never* be God's city. It has a different origin, progresses along a separate path, and is moving to a radically different end. Yet those who are members of God's city are nevertheless in the world and need to conduct themselves as a renewing force within it." That's what Christians did in America for nearly two centuries; they were its salt and light. But our light is now dim, and our salt isn't as salty...

We always have the government we deserve. *How can I say that? Well, consider the evidence:* A moral people will not tolerate immoral leadership; and an immoral people will not tolerate moral leadership. Thus *we always have the government we deserve*. If we have immoral leaders, then we have become an immoral or an indifferent people; and Christianity will become increasingly intolerable. And that's what we're seeing.

On the Federalist Papers:

During the formation of the United States government, and preceding the adoption of its Constitution, a series of letters were sent by three men in support of the proposed Constitution to the editors of a number of prominent newspapers, from October of 1787 to April of 1788. These men were John Jay, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. The composite of what they wrote is arguably the finest treatise ever written on political philosophy. It reflects the heart and soul of the American system of government, and the intent of its founders. Forty-six of the letters advocate a strong central government under which certain rights were reserved to the states – this shared system of state and federal control, emphasizing central control, is called federalism; and its adherents were known as federalists. Hence, the collective title of these papers. To encourage a fair reading on the merits of the case presented, they each signed their letter "Publius."

In our current era, the **Executive** branch is striving to reassert its independence. It wants to be acknowledged as a "separate but equal" federal branch. Rather than being a mere agent of the Legislative Branch; it has begun to act autonomously, like an autocracy. The **Legislative**

branch abdicated its responsibility for the purse and for writing laws, by delegating them to an unelected and unaccountable bureaucracy. They cannot oversee it because, *first*, it is under the Executive branch, and *secondly*, it has been granted autonomy by the **Judicial** branch.

Meanwhile (and here is the danger), many in the Judicial branch have become activists, choosing to exercise legislative powers which the Founders never intended, and to overrule the Executive Branch on policy issues. The Founders understood that the federal Judiciary would be tempted to abuse its power because it is unelected, and therefore unaccountable to the voters. Furthermore, the Judiciary refuses to purge its ranks of those who would abuse their power. Because of such temptations, the Founders limited the Judicial branch to judging the laws, *and* their enforcement, against a strictly constructed Constitution. Hence the limited scope of government required by the ninth and tenth Amendments. *But that's no longer so.*

The Executive branch nominates and the Legislative branch approves judges who will further their party's political ends. They are able to "shop" for judges in particular cases, because the Judiciary lacks coherence and consistency in the application of the law. Some judges are originalists, who see the Constitution as a *restraint* on government power. But most judges today, because of the activism taught in our law schools, see the Constitution as a *means* to power. Shockingly, they see this as a *good* thing! They believe the Constitution must be expanded, in order to expand government power! They interpret it to accommodate and even impose urban cultural trends on the nation at large, rather than preserving the principles laid down in the Federalist Papers.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Patriot Act of 2001, and the NSA lawsuit of 2006, reflect this ongoing "struggle for power and control" between the three branches, that I described in the 1970s. But they also show a lust for government power, and an indifference to individual liberty. *However, the Leviathan grows only because the American people allow it. They have been convinced by the media, and taught in public schools and universities, that government is somehow a force for good rather than a necessary evil.* I believe our Founders would be appalled at the thought.

Creators, Contributors, and Consumers. The PARETO PRINCIPLE suggests that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Technically, the square root of the total number of people producing something, will do half the work required to produce it. So for 1000 people, 31 people (3%), do half the work, and the rest want to take credit for it.

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS find that 4% of a population are the movers and shakers; 10% may directly assist them; and 20% will contribute material resources or money. The rest are passive observers who typically enjoy criticizing the others.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS find that 30% of people willingly submit to government authority (conformists); 10-30% will resist that authority (non-conformists); and 40-60% may disagree, but will go along just to avoid conflict (the silent majority).

Most Pastors will affirm that these percentages hold true among professed Christians too, as George Barna has demonstrated. Only 4% know the core beliefs of Christianity, and regularly perform key Christian duties.