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'In a dark time the eye begins to see'
~THEODORE ROTHKE

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THE ERROR OF MISPLACED CERTAINTY*

BY MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

"The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness."

~JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH (1908-2006)

"The first and great commandment is: Don't let them scare you."

~ELMER DAVIS

Readers of the *Times Eagle* have lately asked why the same stuff over and over again. That is so true. The repetition is dated from the day George W. Bush and his sinisterly empirical cabal usurped the Presidency. How many ways can the same things be said; how many ways to write that the Bushites stole power and have kept it through pathological pieties and pathetically cloaked deception, and by rigged elections and contempt for the Constitution, especially the Bill of Rights? How often must it be reiterated that these bullies are destroying our democracy for their own selfish and despotic reasons? The answer is obvious: it should be said over and over again until we wake up from this nightmare we have carelessly allowed to happen to ourselves.

Frederick Douglass nearly a century and a half ago, critical of President Abraham Lincoln's wish to deport freed blacks to Central America, deplored Lincoln's "canting hypocrisy" — a good phrase that can cross the centuries and find a more precise target at the current President's "canting hypocrisy" on every folly, blunder and deception that he inarticulates of his inept and neo-despotic administration. Especially the major goals for eternal Republican dominance of American politics and society: criminal disregard of the environment, permanent tax evaporation for the very rich, so-called Social Security reform that would ultimately leave most of America's elderly penniless and defenseless, the infamous and incessant corruption of his corporate benefactors, the avaricious deceit of party allies who shamelessly conspire to dismantle democracy in the name of security and empire. His most egregious examples of canting hypocrisy have been his brazen lies to invade Iraq (WMDs and "liberation") and his denial/defense of torture he initiates.

Our democracy — what ever there is of it that remains — has been highjacked, our long fought for and sought after freedoms, liberties and justice for all contemptuously trampled upon by a group of arrogantly avaricious schoolyard bullies that has stampeded the citizenry with fear, recklessly usurped civil rights and liberties, biliously deceived and forsaken the very premise of free and open democracy.

We have allowed into political power the same kind of people who were slave traders and owners from our dark past, who would quite likely be Hitlers or Stalins in our future if we don't terminate their malevolent trajectory.

"The outlook of Richard Nixon was that he was above the law," Lincoln Caplan wrote in Yale Law School's *Legal Affairs*. "Watergate disabused him of the notion. The position of George W. Bush is that he is a law unto himself." Nixon is famous for having said, "When the President does it, it means it is not illegal."

Although he owes the mean spirit of his Presidency to Nixon and patriarchal predecessor Reagan/Bush, George Bush compares himself to Lincoln and to FDR — but his Presidency is much closer to Torquemada's infamous Inquisition of earlier centuries. GW plays the common man card, but as H. S. Bhaba wrote in his exceptional and only novel *Gestures*, "with most politicians... the common touch has been something vile and specious."

Perhaps as an example of the problem of endlessly attempting to vary depiction of the same ideas, here is how the Bush era was described in an article I wrote for this newspaper last year:

Like time and space is theorized to be, the Bush administration might be considered emergent phenomena — from the darkest malignancies of perceived psychoses, fundamentally capable of perpetrating horrible inhumanities which are after all particularly human however monstrous and savage. They are predators of an atavistic kind despite veils of theolitical pieties and righteousness, and they have hands on the grotesquely destructive forces concocted by humanity in its short bitter existence on this planet.

I might write now about the underlying realization that these people mean harm, that they will indeed use nuclear weapons in a cavalier manner: a self-fulfilling prophecy that the end days of evangelical prophecy are here, so they will end them. It almost seems, as anti-scientific as Bush personally appears to be, that the rightwing Christians would rather go out in a thermonuclear blaze of faith rather than be made aware of increasing evidence that the Bible is fiction — that God and humanity are not as depicted in the Good Book, nor for that matter is any other myth cloaked as theology.



STEVE ANSUL

The next paragraph of that same article:

But their emergent phenomena is also political, almost predestined by the earlier Republican administrations of Nixon and Reagan/Bush who softened up the Constitutional process for the second Bush to rape. Though disgraced, the Nixonians prepared the way for Reaganomics, the onerous ideology of rich over poor, and to religiously punish the poor for being poor. This is the Republican revolution. Alexander Hamilton trounces Thomas Jefferson, the essential and eternal struggle of American democracy. Plutocratic aristocracy versus equality and liberty. A belief in the manifest destiny of the United States to be the ruling power of Earth. The New World Order.

The credo of the Bush era can be summed up as: The people with the most wealth don't need civil rights or liberties. The poor don't deserve them.

The unelected President and his hard-right administration of corporate Tories are quite probably the people our ancestors warned us against and tried to prevent their usurpation of power with Constitutional government and separation of powers — as well as the series of initial addendums known as the Bill of Rights which clearly and concisely spell out the rights and obligations of the people.

President(-Select) Bush and his agents might have been, if not harmless at least containable in peacetime, but now war has set them loose on the Constitution and they are perhaps the greatest danger this country faces, much more than the terrorism they exploit as a shield and 'raison d'être' for annulling the very freedoms they shamelessly pretend to protect.

The issue is not whether the American people think it is a good idea to deny or abrogate certain civil liberties but whether the President can bypass Congress and dramatically alter our legal system by himself — the unilateral dismemberment of civil liberties and Presidential assault on due process and Constitutional law in general.

That was from December 2001. I don't know how often or in how many variations I have written in these pages that our revolutionary founders warned us about the coming of tyrants like Bush and company, more concerned about domestic seizure of power than foreign attempts, or how often in so many phrases reminded that our first patriots were traitors.

The new term for arbitrary seizure of Presidential powers is facetiously sculpted into a theory, termed unitary executive theory (as if it has some sort of plausibility), which arbitrarily

declares the office of Presidency and its vast apparatus of law, intelligence gathering and especially its military ascendancy at time of war, supreme over every other political, legal or public organization. This regal pretense crowns Bush as king-emperor.

The theft of the Presidency of the United States by a born again Federalist Party is probably not the worst blow to the disintegrating democracy but it is a major setpiece for a take over of constitutional government by a powerful minority that from the very beginning of the Republic has insisted that liberty is the property of the elite and the rest of the population must be made to serve its interests.

These newly reconstructed Federalists share a constrained interpretation of the Constitution: its rights and privileges belong to the wealthy and propertied, its dues and obligations to everybody else. They would like to suspend the Bill of Rights and believe that what they call the 'original intent' of the framers of the Constitution (who were all white propertied and/or mercantile males) should be its only interpretation.

(NCTE, July 2002)

The Bush administration is conspicuously flagrant in its rapacious grab for power domestically and in the wider world. It not only distrusts the common intelligence of the American citizenry but generally regards it with fatuous contempt, shamelessly mismanaging its concerns in Orwellian doublethink — and like oldtime Federalists the Bushites are confident that a pompous, arrogant and self-serving elite are capable of not only ruling the people but faith-basing them also, saturating the populace with propaganda and theolitical obscurantism while designing Kafkaesque laws to subdue (and punish) dissent or insurrection. Despite major resistance to the USA Patriot Act, the Bush cadre are reorganizing the United States into a militant corporate theocracy under its patently unconstitutional edicts.

(NCTE, Marpril 2004)

The Cato Institute, in its recent report, *Power Surge: The Constitutional Record of George W. Bush*, said of the so-called "unitary executive" claim, "Under (the President's) sweeping theory of executive power, the liberty of every American rests on nothing more than the grace of the White House."

George W. and his cohorts started pushing the American people around right away — Enron, a major backer of Bush from his beginning as governor of Texas, celebrated the rapacious new world order of Bush's presidency by creating the West's energy shortage right after the first inauguration, stealing billions from ratepayers; Bush bullied China when it shot down a U.S. reconnaissance plane flying over China; and Bush immediately canceled the U.S.'s participation in the Kyoto Protocol designed to eventually end global warming. From the very beginning the Bushites have been arrogant and menacing. The old Cold War belligerence was back.

George Bush is cocky, arrogant and about as crooked a President the nation has ever had — add to that he was not even elected although he claims to be the resurrection of Theodore Roosevelt. Here might be an opportunity to examine Bush's sense of himself as a war hero, a 'Rough Rider' in the image of his fantasy mentor, although he actually is a deserter during time of war from a cushy reserve pilot job that would never have put him in combat (possible rumors that his Texas Air National Guard unit might go to Vietnam could have precipitated his year-long absence). Now as commander in chief of the United States Armed Forces he has seized the power of a shogun or perhaps more aptly that of a comic opera South American dictator self-decorated with military awards of his own invention.

He deliberately and arrogantly flaunts as well as corrupts international law, making war on another nation because it is his will (and that of his handlers) to do so. He demonstrates little concern for truth and dismisses the fact he lied the nation into war. He aggressively ratchets up the old arms race with a new generation of nuclear weapons, disregarding numerous treaties designed over half a century to prevent such a possibility (while berating Iran and North Korea for their attempts to develop nuclear power in possible defense of his use of nuclear weapons upon them). The Bushites are rapidly turning the USA into a rogue nation and the world's major nuclear terrorist.

George Bush is as perfidious a saboteur of American democracy as the enemies he inspires to attack the USA — and just as radical Islamists claim for their own jihadism, he declares he is selected by God to speak and act in His name; a dark, proto-omnipotent vision of retribution and intolerance; a harsh unrelenting crusade against "evil" whether foreign or domestic (evil as represented by non-Christians).

He and his cabal have instituted a massively sinister apparatus of domestic surveillance and police pervasion not unlike the infamous Nazi Gestapo: hundreds of FBI abuses of these sanctioned 'Patriot Act' spy-upon-the-people powers have been revealed but are dismissed as "administrative errors" — torturing and murdering political prisoners is an unpardonable and relatively useless method of information but certainly effective as an instrument of applied "counter" terrorism.

This cabal has made a war that has killed possibly a half million persons by now (2,000 Americans in Iraq), with no other

*A mental state derived from alcohol intake cited by bartenders and cocktail servers: from Michael Burgess, *Uncle Mike's Guide to Sex & Drinking*: "This heady sense of freedom in the face of a diminished capacity for reason is alcohol's great gift to the human comedy."