

Client Nation Arrogance: Thomas Sowell's "Vision of the Anointed": the Religion of Progressivism v. Christianity; the Elite of Each Rejects the Beliefs of the Other

- 33) The term "anointed" is a word used by Thomas Sowell to describe the proponents of Progressive ideology. He refers to them as anointed because they assume this of themselves while assigning upon all others the moniker of the "benighted." His comments in the first chapter of his book, *The Vision of the Anointed*, contribute to our understanding of client nation arrogance:

Dangers to a society may be mortal without being immediate. One such danger is the prevailing social vision of our time—and the dogmatism with which the ideas, assumptions, and attitudes behind that vision are held.

It is not that these views are especially evil or especially erroneous. Human beings have been making mistakes and committing sins as long as there have been human beings. The great catastrophes of history have usually involved much more than that. Typically, there has been an additional and crucial ingredient—some method by which feedback from reality has been prevented, so that a dangerous course of action could be blindly continued to a fatal conclusion. Today, despite free speech and the mass media, the prevailing social vision is dangerously close to sealing itself off from any discordant feedback from reality. (p. 1)

The focus here (is) the vision prevailing among the intellectual and political elite of our time. What is important about that vision are not only its particular assumptions and their corollaries, but also the fact that it is a *prevailing* vision—which means that its assumptions are so much taken for granted by so many people, including so-called "thinking people," that neither those assumptions nor their corollaries are generally confronted with demands for empirical evidence. Indeed, empirical evidence itself may be viewed as suspect, insofar as it is inconsistent with that vision.

Discordant evidence may be dismissed as isolated anomalies, or as something tendentiously selected by opponents, or it may be explained away ad hoc by a theory having no empirical support whatever—except that this ad hoc theory is able to sustain itself and gain acceptance because it is consistent with the overall vision. (p. 2)

What a vision may offer, and what the prevailing vision of our time emphatically *does* offer, is a special state of grace for those who believe in it. Those who accept this vision are deemed to be not merely factually correct but morally on a higher plane. Put differently, those who disagree with the prevailing vision are seen as being not merely in error, but in sin. (pp. 2-3)

The benighted are to be made "aware," to have their "consciousness raised," and the wistful hope is held out that they will "grow." Should the benighted prove recalcitrant, however, then their "mean-spiritedness" must be fought and the "real reasons" behind their arguments and actions exposed. These are not mere debating tactics. People are never more sincere than when they assume their own moral superiority. (p. 3)

A contemporary writer [Joseph Epstein] has summarized the differences between those with the vision of the anointed—the left—and others this way:

Disagree with someone on the right and he is likely to think you obtuse, wrong, foolish, a dope. Disagree with someone on the left and he is more likely to think you selfish, a sell-out, insensitive, possibly evil. (p. 4)

One reason for the preservation and insulation of a vision is that it has become inextricably intertwined with the egos of those who believe it. Despite Hamlet's warning against self-flattery, the vision of the anointed is not simply a vision of the world and its functioning in a causal sense, but is also a vision of themselves and of their moral role in that world. *It is a matter of differential rectitude.* It is not a vision of the tragedy of the human condition: Problems exist because others are not as wise or as virtuous as the anointed.

The great ideological crusades of twentieth-century intellectuals have ranged across the most disparate fields—from the eugenics movement of the early decades of the [twentieth] century to the environmentalism of the later decades, not to mention the welfare state, socialism, communism, Keynesian economics, and medical, nuclear, and automotive safety. What all these highly disparate crusades have in common is their moral exaltation of the anointed above all others, who are to have their very different views nullified and superseded by the views of the anointed, imposed via the power of government. Despite the great variety of issues in a series of crusading movements among the intelligentsia during the twentieth century, several key elements have been common to most of them:

1. Assertions of a great danger to the whole society, a danger to which the masses of people are oblivious.
2. An urgent need for action to avert impending catastrophe.
3. A need for government to drastically curtail the dangerous behavior of the many, in response to the prescient conclusions of the few.
4. A disdainful dismissal of arguments to the contrary as either uninformed, irresponsible, or motivated by unworthy purposes.

(p. 5)

This vision so permeates the media and academia, and has made such major inroads into the religious community, that many grow to adulthood unaware that there is any other way of looking at things, or that *evidence* might be relevant to checking out the sweeping assumptions of so-called “thinking people.” Many of these “thinking people” could more accurately be characterized as *articulate* people, as people whose verbal nimbleness can elude both evidence and logic. This can be a fatal talent, when it supplies the crucial insulation from reality behind many historic catastrophes.¹ (p. 6)

- 34) I have adopted Dr. Sowell's terms “anointed” and “benighted” to describe the very same people he analyzes in his book, the anointed being the progressives and the benighted designated as the traditionalists—same people, different titles.
- 35) The anointed consider themselves intellectually advanced beyond anyone not graduated by an Ivy League university (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, Penn, or Yale) or Rutgers and two spin-offs from the Ivies, Stanford and California. One might throw MIT into the mix, but graduates of the eight Ivy League schools consider themselves to be the nation's super elite.
- 36) Some definitions are helpful:

Elite: 1 a: The choice part; b: the best of a class; c: the socially superior part of society; d: a group of persons who by virtue of position or education exercise much power or influence.

¹ Thomas Sowell, “Flattering Unction,” chap. 1 in *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 1-6.

Intelligentsia: Intellectuals who form an artistic, social, or political vanguard or elite.

Literati: The educated class.²

- 37) Having spent their entire academic career being propagandized into progressive ideology, having taken the bait hook, line, and sinker, and having proclaimed themselves the nation's most advanced thinkers, these self-assumed brainiacs have mentally adorned themselves with the mantelet of the anointed.
- 38) The word "anointed" enters our lexicon from Scripture where those who were placed in high office were assumed to be there by divine appointment, the greatest of these being Jesus of Nazareth who was revealed to be the Messiah: מָשִׁיחַ *Mashiach*, or the Anointed One.
- 39) Since the elites consider Jesus to be a tragic historical figure at best, the Bible as literature, and Christianity on par with all the world's "religions," then to assign messiahship to themselves is not considered by them as much of a stretch:

Anoint: To apply or pour on oil as a religious ceremony.

Anointed: A consecrated one. Christ or the Messiah.³

- 40) Since the anointed claim possession of a superior intellect from which emerges superior ideas, then they take on the aura of a religion. They do not necessarily deny absolutes they just reject those associated with (1) the traditional standards of establishment, (2) biblical standards related to cosmology, soteriology, hamartiology, Christology, angelology, and eschatology, and (3) societal standards related to Anglo-Saxon culture, Western- European heritage, and Judeo-Christian ethics.
- 41) These are considered passé, anachronistic, and unenlightened. In fact, those who subscribe to such antique ideas are considered the benighted:

Benighted: In moral or intellectual darkness; unenlightened; ignorant;⁴ in a state of pitiful or contemptible intellectual or moral ignorance.⁵

- 42) Borrowing from these terms we have developed a vocabulary to describe the difference between the believer who pursues wisdom through inculcation of biblical principles and the unbeliever who is ignorant of the universal truths they contain.
- 43) Since the Bible teaches that only believers are equipped to understand the "deep and secret things of God" (Daniel 2:22; 1 Corinthians 2:10), then the unbeliever becomes the benighted while the believer becomes the anointed.

² Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.: "elite," "intelligentsia," and literati."

³ The Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.: "anoint" and "anointed."

⁴ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. "benighted."

⁵ The Oxford American Dictionary, s.v.: "benighted."

- 44) And so it is: the believer is a member of an elite corps of royal aristocrats who possess knowledge of eternal and immutable standards that transcend the generations while the unbeliever is happy to wander in the darkness of anthropocentric academic speculation.
- 45) This defines the Invisible War. Its lines have been drawn, the strategies and tactics of each have been decided; the combatants' artillery are the principles to which each subscribes and never the twain shall meet. It is a pitched battle to the end, only to be resolved by the returning Messiah.
- 46) Therefore, it may be stated that the Invisible War is a battle of the two anointed: (1) from the intelligentsia, those who believe, profess, and apply standards of an elite human system of enlightenment and (2) from Christianity, those who believe, profess, and apply standards of an elite spiritual system of enlightenment.