# "See? I TOLDja so!"

Disasters tempt ideologies to dig themselves in deeper.

CASE: Hurricane Katrina

A rambling commentary on the conservative habit of filtering out all facts & fantasies inedible-unnourishing to one's partisan paradigm

After the destruction of wicked cities whose destruction they'd prophesied, the prophets may be forgiven--may they not?--for saying "See? I TOLDja so!" Forgiven, though not admired: "Don't rub it in," we say. Before Katrina, it could have been predicted that some after the devastation of New Orleans would say "See? I TOLDja so!" After all, a Roman Catholic (nuns in daylight, nudes at night) oasis in a Southern Baptist desert?

But how about an innocent city surrounded by concentric circles of wicked, neglectful governments? Hear Dennis Praeger (9.11.05 WSJ): "The left finds an avenging angel in Katrina....People can't live without meaning....Humans recoil at the thought that tragedies occur without reason. We believe that they must have been brought on by sins....The new wrinkle with Katrina is that the anti-religious left is identifying the sins and the sinners. Leftism is itself a religion, and its list of sins is at least as long as that of any traditional religion." (Kyoto [global warming], tax cuts, the Iraq war--progressives [formerly called "liberals"] lay all the woes on the doorstep of the sinner-in-chief, G.W.Bush: when issues are politicized, the chief politico is demonized--as though he were more in management than in sales.)

1 The heavier the blow (literally, hurricane; generally, disaster), the wider & deeper the **peshering** (confirmatory re-visioning). Archaeologists have counted 26 layers of Jerusalem (i.e., disasters + levelings + rebuilding): the Bible contains layers of rewrites (pesherings) after disasters. "Read with imagination, the NT can be seen as a great attempt to write history...as a consequence of revolution" (Rowan Williams, WHY STUDY THE PAST? [Eerdmans/05], 5). Shocks split, & the peshering must re-establish unity (& deny division: the church denied Marcion [who divided the Testaments], Arius [who divided Christ from God], Nestorius [who divided, in Jesus Christ, the human from the divine]).

If the blow is so severe that the conservative (re-confirming) peshering (i.e., rewriting) fails to persuade & inspire the community--(in this Thinksheet's opening analogy) the filtering fails--the paradigm dies, & communal-&-personal consciousness is re-formed in a new paradigm (Ro.12.2 TEV: "let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind.").

2 "In a permanent state of shock" is the way, yesterday in a group, I heard a pastor describe his parishioners. In my seminary office one afternoon in 1970, I was interviewed on "shock" by a man who that year came out with a book with that word in its title: the man, Alvin Toffler; the book, FUTURE SHOCK. He wanted to compare what he & I found shocking as we looked to the near & far futures. I was/am shocked by the assumption that a secular future can be a human future instead of the FLATLAND predicted in an 1881 novel of that title--the secular world "9/11"-shocked by fanatics violently opposed to the artifice of pouring off the sacred cream & leaving only the secular skimmilk.

Two kinds of shocks: (1) Violent, natural (Big Bang, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, fires) & human (murders, wars, resurrection). (2) Ideational (monotheism, the Trinity [& the person], natural science [including evolution], spirituality [as natural]). EXAMPLES: (1) That science teacher who in class 75 years ago sneered at me for believing in the Bible instead of science came to believe that the Bible, in its very first word ("Bereshit"), is scientific (in teaching that the universe had a beginning) & her "science" (which taught that the universe is infinite) was unscientific. (2) Physicians use the expression "a shock to the system." Take "the system" paradigmatically, as the common understanding of the way things work & can be expected to continue to work, & Jesus' resurrection was a shock to the system: unlike everybody else, somebody didn't stay dead. (N.T.Wright, in his treatments of the empty tomb, spells this shock out in great detail.) (3) "Natural [meaning random, unguided] selection" as omni-explicative of "the origin of species" shocked the world by eliminating purpose from "design" & meaning from "life" (even though Darwin's first edition ended by honoring God for setting in motion the few

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processes which produced all the wonders of the universe & , by natural selection, of life). To the shocked public, the (philosophical) materialists (religious) antitheists cried, "See? I TOLDja so!" "Darwin!"--a traveling exhibit beginning tomorrow (11.19.05) in NYC's American Museum of Natural History--continues this chortle &, on its last plaque, claims (contrary to fact!) that for these 150 years no significant challenge to Darwinism has risen. In '36 in ethics class, I learned that "A man convinced against his will / is of the same opinion still." In the NYT today (11.18.05), Edward Rothstein attacks the exhibit's old-fashioned, unreconstructed materialism. Darwin himself said that the phrase "natural selection" has "a relgious cast"; but the exhibit opens with the unscientific dogma that there's no intelligent design--things are as they are "all because of accidental events and the brute forces of nature. Chances...." Says ER, "The theory is made to seem...invulnerable," as propaganda against creation. Challenges are increasing, & "the fossil records don't provide the plentiful examples of continuous evolution that Darwin's theory predicted." / Scientific materialism is the philosophical underpinning of (1) communism & (2) American public-school biology--both, atheist (i.e., godless). In our schools, both Marxism & Darwinism should be taught as expressions of a specific philosophy, but neither as science (which should deal only with the method ["the scientific method"] & products of the repetitive verifiability/falsifiability processes--which should not be contaminated by cherry-picking from philosophy [e.g., prejudices for/against the random or directive, or for/against atheism or theism]). "Science," as now taught in our public schools (& by the traveling exhibit "Darwin!"), is not intelligently designed. "9/11" was a statement by 19 who by violence said that a civilization whose intelligentsia split the sacred from the secular & discarded the sacred is not intelligently designed: the West's <u>ideological</u> shock to the Wahabist Muslims boomeranged into a <u>violent</u> shock to the West--which brings us back to where this paragraph began.

3 When the tide goes <u>out</u>, we can see the underpinnings of harborconstruction; but also, when the flood comes <u>in</u> (yes, we're back to this Thinksheet's beginning, viz. Katrina) we can see some things we couldn't see at normal sealevel--e.g., we can see both that the flood lifts all boats & that it leaves the boatless to drown. In the 9.9.05 online SOJOURNERS, Jim Wallis asked what Katrina washed away. Of course you can see him saying "See? I TOLDja so!" We all see the world through the lens of our genes/experience/decisions/commitments, & the lens tells us which cherries are ripe for the picking. Here is what Wallis saw (as what Katrina washed away): (1) "our national denial of just how many Americans are living in poverty"; (2) "our reluctance to admit the still persistent connection of race and poverty in America"; (3) "the political power of a conservative ideology that, for decades now, has seriously eroded the idea of the common good." The width of a tragedy (the demographic of its effects) defines the audience for commentation, & the politically inclined use it to make partisan political points. So also with the religiously inclined: When the bombs were falling on London ('40), a London preacher (Leslie Weatherhead) had to put "God" in the series of sermons on the bombing--for if God isn't in tragedies that hit us, is he anywhere that matters? Said he, "God is allowing the bombings; they are of his permissive will." (The sermons are in the little classic, THE WILL OF GOD.)

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