

This thinksheet is defensive behavior against those who interrupt my teaching and counseling with requests for "What about Khomeini?" They deserve at least a few notes from me, and here they are:

1. As religion is the heart of culture and culture the heart of a civilization, the sacred is the heart both of religion and of politics. A private school headmaster who is currently a student of mine has this motto on his desk: "Stupidity is forever: ignorance can be fixed." Ignorance of the sacred, endemic among public-school trained (not "educated") Americans, can--I think--be fixed. And needs to be, for ignorance of the sacred is (1) impoverishing of life and (2) dangerous in domestic and foreign affairs. How explain, and relate to, Iran today (Nov/79) while ignorant of the sacred?
2. As the inviolable (the sacred on its negative side), the sacred is nonnegotiable. Foreign Minister Bani-Sadr had to be fired by Imam (priest-intercessor-with-Allah) Khomeini because he had worked himself into a negotiating posture--in, according to me, a magnificently human way, on the MacNeill-Lehrer program 25Nov79. Islam turns easily to violence not doctrinally, but by virtue of the fact that the sacred pervades the intellectual: the priest commands the scholar (the reverse of Judaism, almost the reverse of Christianity). The imam of Shiism (an elevated ayatollah--as it were, a high priest among priests) has automatic divine sanction for his decision, with the result that opposition thereto constitutes (religiously) blasphemy and (politically) lese majesty. Once an imam has made a proclamation, the very suggestion of negotiation is both blasphemy and lese majesty! This primitive response to the numinous-sacred excludes all rationality unconformed to obedience to the imam: this is its psychodynamics. Its sociodynamics is a swift movement to self-righteousness and then to jihad (holy war). In Shiism, this jihad is romanticized into martyrological identification with the crucifix (as it were), the martyred Hussein, grandson of Muhammed. This dynamic of the Crucifix (a Christian, not a Moslem, term) has often worked demonically in Christianity (as in the Crusades), so we Christians are living in a glass house!
3. The "servants of God" are never more than a step away from becoming servants of the devil. They need to check their signals with those who claim only to be servants of humanity. To be servants of humanity exposes human beings to become servants of the devil: the cross-criticism with "servants of God" is essential to humility and thus to protection against the demons. A hasid was thus protected from the devil: The devil came to him in the guise of an angel to mislead him, and he dismissed the devil with this word: "Who am I, that I should be honored by a visit from an angel?"
4. While Pres. Carter (esp. in his press conference 28Nov79) has been near-perfect in his handling of this crisis, America faces the temptation of two nonnegotiable sacralities, vis. the old sacrality of asylum ("cities of refuge") and the new sacrality of diplomatic immunity (the U.S. Senate having belatedly, in 1965, ratified the Convention on Embassies, U.N. Declaration of Human Rights). Combine these two sacralities and the U.S.A. has the "right" to view the seizure of hostages as an act of (1) war and/or (2) terrorism, and react with violence; but Pres. Carter is wisely not foreclosing on intermediate options and interventions.
5. Muslim Sharia (law extended from Qor'an) is against hostages seizure, but imam rights conflict with the written law (which is beautifully laid out on the ed. p. of the 28Nov79 WSJ).
6. Here, for your meditation and enfleshing, is the skeleton of the history of government in the Abrahamitic tradition (from Genesis 12 onward):
 - (1) THE HEARING ONE: Abraham through Moses through Jesus (and, aberrantly, Sun Moon and the "Mahdi"-Messiah who seized the Great Mosque of Mecca earlier this month).
 - (2) AMPHICHTYONY (tribes united only by a common faith: early Judaism and early Islam).
 - (3) MONARCHY, an ambiguous concession of laos to ethnos in theocracy (1Sam.8.7). Cf. Khalifs and the Shah vs. (4) Shiite HIERARCHY (and post-Exilic Judaism). over

Throughout the Abrahamic political history, the Hearing One keeps appearing both as historical character and as personal symbol of theocracy: the biblical philosophy of history is that the Creator of "ta panta" (the universe of nature and history) is also the Director, whose direction becomes manifest in "words" spoken to-through individual leaders (navis, prophets, "judges," kings, priests, wise ones, poets, storytellers). A subtheme of this guidance of "the people of God" is the reluctance-inability of these "chosen" (anointed, "messiahed" ones): Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Paul, Muhammed--Jesus, in the shape of the accounts we have, being the exception. [The world-view here is to be contrasted with that of the religions of India, whose gurus and swamis are not hearers of the Beyond Within but self-realizers of the Self (Atman is Brahman).]

Once, in Abraham history, the Hearing One is identified with the Speaking One: Jesus' incarnation, which I as an evangelical Christian believe literally. Yet I see the incarnation so radically as to teach that Jesus participated even in the historical illusions of his time: so was he taken by the love of God as to believe that the kingdom of God would be fulfilled in his lifetime. For me, this historical misjudgment (or was it, as Early Christian apologists maintained, not his error, but Israel's failure to respond unto Kingdom Come?) is a revelation of the truth that honest relationship supervenes over knowledge, especially over prevision....But that is another story: back to the skeletal history.

(4) "HIERARCHY" now refers to differential ranks of clergy within a church. In the political sense, however, it means the rule of the people by priests--i.e., government by priests. When in 587-6BC the Jews lost both land and king, rule was reduced to the management of small conventicles which came to be known simply as "gathered" groups (literally, "synagogues"). When in 516BC the returnees from Babylon to Jerusalem rededicated the temple, Ezra reconstituted priestcraft, combining Torah-leadership (to become "the scribes") with traditional hieratic functions; and, Cyrus not permitting the reestablishment of kingship, the priests had political powers put in their laps (as centuries later--from the AD 5th c. onward--monks had the papacy, with its religious-political powers, put in their laps).

As Moses and Muhammed appeared in interim periods between amphityony and monarchy, Jesus appeared between hierarchy and democracy. As, like Abraham and Moses before him, a Hearing One, Jesus viewed the going arrangements-settlements as betrayals. Like the prophets before him, he called for (1) life simplification vis-a-vis *illud tempus* (in his tradition, and therefore in mine, Genesis 12) and (2) penitent openness to "the new thing" God wanted to do: "Stop being afraid, little children! God wants to give you the kingdom!"

(5) The AD70 destruction of the temple and extradition of Jews from Jerusalem produced a second landless period in which Torah (God's "teaching"-leading of his people) had to be reconceived and revalorized. "Rabbinism," from the Council of Jamnia (AD 90) onward, was the result. As the Gentile form of Judaism, Christianity (except for the Jewish Christians fleeing to Pella, and disappearing soon thereafter) replaced the Torah-Center with the Jesus-Center but continued the synagogue form of government and worship, as it essentially does down to the present day. Our term for this type of government is DEMOCRACY.

Of the five forms of government in the Abrahamic political history, the first--"the Hearing One"--is the simplest and most direct form of THEOCRACY, God's im-mediate, i.e. unmediated, rule of his people. The messianic tradition, in its authentic and psychopathic forms, continues to break forth into (as a Germanism) "the Single One." Messianic pretenders--ancient, medieval, modern--usually (in my opinion) do more harm than good; yet I cannot agree that "the Messianic Age" is to appear without a Leader, and I see that leader as Resurrectus Redivivus Jesus ("the Second Coming" or "Parousia")--not as the appearance of another one, such as Sun Moon as "the Son of Man."

Now, Khomeini has focused on himself all the hope images of the biblical and ARABIC heritages, giving them a luddite-regressive political translation and sanction.