

THE RAIN MAN COMETH

BOB ZASLAVSKY

Who could have guessed that it was all so simple?

Only a visionary like Governor Sonny Perdue would intuit that the solution to an environmental impasse like a drought-inducing famine of heavenly moisture was prayer.

Now he needs to broaden his intuition. He needs to realize that since we are confronted by a multitude of problems that seem insoluble socially and naturally, we must go beyond the limited focus of a primitive Judeo-Christian-Islamic monotheism.

After all, the Biblical god's rain gambit is a deluge that makes Katrina look like a faucet drip, and that solves our problems by annihilating our world and starting from scratch. Although this approach has an attractive clean-the-slate simplicity and directness, it lacks subtlety.

We need a more nuanced theology for the multifaceted problems with which we have to contend. We need to turn to more precisely compartmentalized gods. We need a combination of American Indian animism and Greco-Roman polytheism as a state religion.

For the current water crisis, we need to appoint American Indian priests who are the true mavens of methods for inducing rain. The resurrection of the rain dance would give us a terpsichorean precipitation ritual with an impeccable pedigree and an existential efficacy on a level to which lofty Jehovah would not deign to stoop.

Instead of erecting elitist monuments to the Ten Commandments, we could erect more populist totem poles, which would have the side-benefit of creating many manufacturing jobs to replace some of the jobs that have been lost to outsourcing.

Our native American sistren and brethren are also eminently qualified to deal with global warming. No deity is more environmentally attuned and concretely concerned than the Great Spirit who would replace both the Secretary of the Interior and the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Under the Great Spirit's direction, husbanding our natural resources would become a preeminent national priority.

Therefore, for nature, animism is the answer.

For society, on the other hand, we need the Greek pantheon.

There can be no better exemplar of a beneficent imperial presidency than Zeus whose use of the legislature (the council of the gods) would be merely pro forma. Moreover, we could not doubt that his concern—as the second half of his name indicates—is first and foremost for “us.”

His first lady Hera would be a forceful and tenacious defender of family values. In addition, her first initial's resonance with our current political scene is proof enough that she could aspire to—and assume—the presidency when Zeus is distracted by one of his many extracurricular dalliances.

With Ares as Secretary of Defense, no nation would dare to challenge our hegemony. He could be supported ably by Odysseus, Poseidon, and Daedalus as the secretaries of respectively the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Apollo's qualifications for Secretary of Education are unimpeachable. He is the god of music, medicine, archery, and prophecy. Therefore, he could predict the future and ensure that our schools would cultivate the arts, science, and physical education. His efforts would be supported by Mnemosyne and her daughters the nine Muses, and they would embed the study of the humanities in all our school curricula.

Athena would make such a formidable Secretary of State that she would make the current holder of the position seem like an untutored naïf. Her combination of wisdom and militancy would be irresistible. Of course, we would have to change our national bird from the American eagle to the owl. However, that is a small price to pay for effective foreign policy and international harmony.

Demeter at Agriculture (with Dionysius as Deputy Secretary to fuel us and keep our spirits up) would be a responsible steward of our agrarian resources. She would preserve the integrity of our seasons and promote the agrarian ideal on which our nation was founded.

Other cabinet posts could be filled by Minos at Justice as Attorney General, Hephaestus at Labor to promote native artisans and manufacturers, Aesculapius at Health and Human Services, Hestia at Housing and Urban Development, and Helios at Energy (with Prometheus as Deputy Secretary to give us the blind hopes that we need to sustain ourselves).

The implications of this shift in regime to polytheocracy are stunningly Utopian. We would have an immortal executive branch, so there would be no need for the trouble and expense of quadrennial elections. Legislators would be tokens appointed by local councils for life terms. This would be a new golden age.

To guarantee that we realize how far we have progressed, we could commission a congressional legislators memorial on the mall in Washington.

How sweet it will be!

Bob Zaslavsky is author of the textbook The First Latin Course, and can be reached at www.doczonline.com