Review of Early Christianity and Society: 7 Studies, by R.M. Grant

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personality and psychological characteristics of American foreign policy decision-makers are more likely to cause error towards the use of force. This is partly because of the selection and advancement process and it is also tied to the dominance of foreign policy machinery by men.

The book is not, however, a study of errors or rationality in decision-making, but of the relationship between psychological and personality characteristics, on one hand, and attitudes toward foreign policy action on the other. The volume reports on two studies. The first relied on interviews primarily of foreign service officers and secondarily of mid-career military officers and officials of the Office of Management and the Budget. The second was an analysis of actual foreign policy decisions between 1898 and 1968 in which major participants (e.g., Presidents and Secretaries of State) disagreed about appropriate action. The study of decisions thus allowed correlation of personality traits of the participants with their desired policies, effectively controlling for their mutual domestic and foreign environments.

The strengths of the book are considerable. It is one of a very few serious efforts to look at the impact of personality and psychology on policy. The comparative study of decisions is particularly original.

There are, of course, weaknesses. Although we tell ourselves as scientists that results do not need to be surprising to be meaningful, it is always a bit of a disappointment when the results of a study do not call into question some of our prior notions. More seriously, the results of the interview study, because of the mid-level positions of those interviewed, tell us something about personality and attitudes, but do not really say as much about American foreign policy as Etheredge implies. I found myself much more impressed by the comparative decision analysis and wishing it had been expanded and had formed the core of the monograph. The book is not compelling reading. More methodological detail should have been relegated to appendices. The emphasis on psychological terminology and models is considerable. Many of the decision conflicts included in the study are of great interest, but the analysis is largely reduced to hypothesis testing and statistics.

In sum, the book is not a candidate for a text or supplementary reading in foreign policy classes. It is, however, a book with which many who have waited for an analysis of the personality and policy relationship will want to familiarize themselves.

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Despite the claims of the dust jacket, this book is not iconoclastic, although it will be a corrective for the general reader who has a romanticized view of Early Christianity—brave men and women wishing only freedom of religion heroically facing wild beasts in Roman arenas. This view does contain much truth—there were persecutions which cost many Christian lives—but in general it derives from the nostalgic urges so common to all societies and so well documented by Mircea Eliade. Losing their founder at a very early stage, persecuted briefly by Jews and sporadically for 250 years by pagan Romans, the Christians somehow managed to survive. Later generations,
grown soft and comfortable, idealized and idolized the vigor and strength of the early years. Historical emphasis fell on the good and the heroic, unsavory or unflattering elements, such as apostates during persecutions, shuffled off to the side. For those knowing only this view, this book will provide both enlightenment and a sense of balance. (In fairness to the romanticizing Christians, let us point out that the United States in 1776 offered a view of 1776 in which none of our patriotic forebears was anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, a swindler of Amerindians, a deserter from the continental army or a slave-owner.)

For the scholar, this book will offer what Robert Grant's books always offer: a concise, well-documented account of some facet of Early Christianity. The Christian sources are probably familiar to many, but few know them as well as Grant, who has managed to draw conclusions from them which will appear—belatedly—perfectly obvious to the reader. Grant also has a solid knowledge of classical sources which he used to support his arguments and conclusions.

Grant explains the reason for the book:

Far too often in modern religious thought one jumps from the Bible to the world today without paying attention to any of the practical problems religionists had to face in antiquity. Too often we are content with a mythical or even fabulous picture of the religious past and thus are unable to relate ourselves to it or to ourselves (pp. vii-viii).

These seven studies deal with the practical problems.

The first study examines the demographic evidence and concludes that Christianity was not "a proletarian mass movement" but "largely middle class in origin." (p. 11) The next proves that Christians generally supported the Empire. They wished to live in peace with Rome, they admired the effectiveness of the pax Romana, they hoped the emperors would grant them freedom of worship, and they vigorously supported the emperor (Constantine) who did.

Grant then turns to the ultimate in the mundane: taxes. Christians complained about them and, after the accession of Constantine, Church officials eagerly sought exemptions. Work, that is, attitudes towards it and types of occupations, forms the topic of the fourth study. Except for denouncing certain occupations (gladiators, actors, procurers), Christian leaders supported the work ethic and social justice.

Early Christian experiments in communal property failed, and most Christians accepted private property; the focus of the fifth study, for granted. They warned against avarice and encouraged charity, but assumed private property to be the norm.

Next Grant deals with a particularly Christian activity, organized alms-giving. Church leaders emphasized this at all times and, naturally, with varying degrees of success. The pagan emperor Julian could complain that "the impious Galileans (Christians) support not only their poor but ours as well." (p. 125).

The final study discusses "Temples, Churches and Endowments." It deals mostly with the fourth century, the age of the first Christian emperors, when some Christians competed with pagans for state-building funds and eventually were able to expropriate large amounts of pagan property. This chapter offers a sad contrast to the one on almsgiving.

Professor Grant has written a fine book for layman and scholar. Although not a sociological study (because of insufficient statistical data) nor a formal social history, it offers reliable, learned, and wide-ranging views of Early Christian social activity. It also offers the author's dry sense of humor.

International Journal of Comparative Sociology XXII, 3-4 (1981)
...let us simply note what (John) Chrysostom (a Constantinopolitan bishop) says in his sixty-sixth homily on Matthew: "I am ashamed to speak about alms, for though I have often discussed this subject I have achieved no results worthy of the exhortation. A little more has come in, but not as much as I wanted. So a fund-raiser could speak in any generation" (p. 134).

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Urban Sociology in an Urbanized Society focuses on aspects of urban sociology, rather than any substantive issues within that field. The book has none of the maps, photographs, charts or diagrams characteristic for studies of urban problems, but concerns itself with urban sociology as a discipline that studies these problems. The author presents a critical analysis of the societal and theoretical framework surrounding the historical development of urban sociology. The book consists of two parts. Part one deals with a number of sociological approaches to urban problems. Part two is an evaluation of some theoretical schools in urban sociology in the context of the previous discussion.

The book certainly does not provide a comprehensive treatment of the topics that have traditionally concerned urban sociologists. There is a clear selection of issues that characterize the British experience: uneven regional development, inner city problems, spill-over, housing problems, and spatial planning. While the general nature of these problems is not uniquely British, their discussion in specific aspects makes clear that policies aimed at their amelioration cannot be transplanted simply into other situations.

Mellor writes that we have to view the development of urban sociology as an intellectual response to urbanization in a society with a capitalist mode of production. The orientation of urban sociology is technocratic and elitist, and based on the assumption that problems can be solved by the rational application of knowledge. The result has been an accumulation of empirical data to inform social reform policies on such matters as immigrant adaption, social disorganization, and so on. Mellor notes that the impact of the production world has been largely excluded from the analyses. In particular the influence of locational decisions of capital owners on patterns of regional development has been virtually ignored. She argues that urbanization affects society as a whole, and the problems pertaining thereto can best be studied from the perspective of the political economy of regional development.

Mellor remarks that the effects of urbanization are not uniform, since the concomitant costs and benefits are not equally divided across regions, if only because scarce resource such as labor supply and favorable location do not have a regular spatial distribution. These inequities are not, however, a coincidence, but rooted in the ways in which at the national level capital, labor, and means of production are integrated for the purposes of economic growth. And also the benefits of this economic growth are again unequally distributed. In the context of an employment decentralization policy, for example, government support has been given to oil companies which also without these incentives would have located in peripheral regions. Bureaucratic institutions, (cf. Pahl's "gatekeepers"), further reinforce these tendencies.

International Journal of Comparative Sociology XXII, 3-4 (1981)