I think Voegelin thought rather clearly. And just as ancient Gnosticism was about finding the "real, hidden god" who is concealed by the false God of the Bible and his false creation, so modern Gnosticism is about getting rid of God and the transcendent and making man into a god in some political transformation of the world. Of course common sense and a knowledge of reality ("rocks are hard and water is wet" as Winston Smith used to tell himself in Orwell's 1984) will interfere with this, which is why so many modern Gnostics deny the reality of the real world, though they tend not to know much about it. One thinks of Marx in the library until 3 AM, then sleeping until 12 PM, without washing his clothes or bathing, totally disconnected from reality, and any friendship.

This is in front of our faces in this election. We are confronted with activists who want to grab power—all of it—power over climate, over health care, over death, and over all future legislation. Men like Bernie Sanders strike me as no longer being liberal or progressive politicians. They seem more like Gnostic activists.

It's as though they take the side of the serpent in the story of creation in Genesis. God is seen as a fraud and a tyrant, He is the villain. This reinterpretation of Genesis is the classic Gnostic position. And in modern Gnosticism, as in ancient Gnosticism, man is radically dissatisfied with the structure of the world, and wants to change it radically and become its master. All the "isms" of the last century and the beginnings of this one have this in common. Each constructs a single truth to dismiss the world as it is. Inequality, difference, the uncertainty of things, the perishing of things; all these and other inherent aspects of existence make the liberal Gnostic deeply dissatisfied. So by gaining total control over health care, they seek to end all inequality and uncertainty in health care. By gaining control over the global economy and industry, they seek to end climate change and end all inequality between rich and poor countries. By mass migration the same end might be achieved.

Here is the Catholic Encyclopedia's definition of Gnostic: "A collective name for a large number of greatly-varying and pantheistic-idealistic sects, which flourished from some time before the Christian Era down to the fifth century, and which, while borrowing the phraseology and some of the tenets of the chief religions of the day, and especially of Christianity, held matter to be a deterioration of spirit, and the whole universe a deprecation of the Deity, and taught the ultimate end of all being to be the overcoming of the grossness of matter and the return to the Parent-Spirit, which return they held to be inaugurated and facilitated by the appearance of some God-sent Savior."

So Voegelin fled the Nazis, and to him, they were the natural evolution of a deficient ideology, an ideology that was opposed by the Catholic Church from the beginning. An ideology which as mentioned, evolved numerous heads like a hydra though the centuries, all of which have as a running theme, the projecting to God of all human failings, and attributing to man the power which rightly belongs to God alone. In its other manifestations, because Gnosticism bears elements of skepticism, it denies God in a stealthy way by redefining what God is, what God has been understood to be.

To the Gnostic we say, "In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God: and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life: and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness did not comprehend it." (Jn. 1: 1-5)

Modern Gnosticism I

Eric Voegelin knew a thing or two about totalitarianism, as he was on the Gestapo's hit list, and fled from his native Austria to Switzerland and then eventually to the U.S. He wrote in 1952 (The New Science of Politics), "A civilization can, indeed, advance and decline at the same time—but not forever. There is a limit toward which this ambiguous process moves; the limit is reached when an activist sect which represents the Gnostic truth organizes the civilization into an empire under its rule. Totalitarianism, defined as the existential rule of Gnostic activists, is the end form of progressive civilization."

I'm not so sure about the phrase "progressive civilization," but the passage above reminds me of Shakespeare, "Something wicked this way comes." Thuggish, totalitarian tactics have worked very well for the White House and in general for the American Left. And this causes many to wonder, "Is our country – I mean in its present state and where it appears to be headed – worth defending? I no longer think it is." But this sentiment is likely what the Left has been working for all along – to make this country unlovable. Whether railing against Christopher Columbus or Robert E. Lee, the object is the same, that Americans would cease to love their country, throw up their hands and quit trying to defend it with borders, quit trying to maintain its laws with a police force, quit voting, etc. The goal reminds me of what our good Lord prophesied of the last days. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall put you to death: and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be scandalized and shall betray one another and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall seduce many. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold." (Mt. 24: 9-12)

In general, the Left portrays existing social order as false, evil and oppressive. This is quite similar to the Gnostic portrayal of the universe which St. John was combating when he wrote his gospel. The Gnostics saw the whole universe as evil, false and oppressive. And once citizens have been convinced of this, then to them, society loses all its worth or value, and they become open to and even willing to let something else take its place, even totalitarianism, which will make things right.

Funny word Gnosticism. It literally means "knowledge-ism." But Gnostics ought to be known as lacking knowledge. That is, the Gnosticism that St. John was fighting rejected the Scriptural knowledge of God as worthless, and thus they had to make up their own distinctive pseudo-knowledge of God. Contemporary Gnostics think that the perennial philosophy of Western Civilization is worthless, and so they invent their own distinctive pseudo-knowledge which must be defended by lies and intimidation.

The Catholic view of reality is that God is transcendent to man; the Gnostic thinks that man can be God. Going back to Voegelin, he thought that there are three primary modes of drawing divinity into oneself: 1) by intellectual knowledge of the hidden truth (whether the hidden truth of the "true" god, as in ancient Gnosticism, or the hidden truth of the shape and end of history, as in modern Gnosticism or Marxism); 2) through mystical participation in the hidden truth, in which the divine enters fully into the person (a trip to the local witchcraft store will suffice for this); 3) through activist seizure of power over the world (everything funded by George Soros).