



Something has gone terribly wrong

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In my post-2016 election homily, I indicated that I have found myself at a crossroads in the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. election, and that, after exploring the paths before me, I have chosen to travel a path unfamiliar and uncomfortable to me. It is a path in which I adopt a more confrontational voice against what the 2016 elections seem to suggest we have become as a nation, and, more narrowly, as American Christians. My voice will, at times, be sharp, strident and uncompromising. In being so, I am reminded of something William Lloyd Garrison, a 19th century abolitionist, once wrote,

“I am aware that many object to the severity of my language, but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject [slavery], I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.”¹

Nations, like individuals, face crossroads. I dare say that all of us who witnessed the attacks of 911 realized very quickly that the world had changed. America was at a crossroads. Two paths

¹ From *Liberator 1* (Jan. 1, 1831) as found in Daniel Walker Howe’s *What Hath God Wrought*, Chapter 11

lay before her—understanding or blind and self-righteous vengeance. Unfortunately, the nation’s leaders, with a large plurality of the American people, chose the wrong path. It may have felt good to some—self-righteous vengeance can be euphoric in the short term, but it is also contagious—but we are paying for it now. We will likely pay for it well into the future. This is part of the sin that is in us... But that is for another time.

Most recently, America came to another crossroads with the 2016 elections. In the election’s nomination phase, Americans belonging to the two dominate political parties had a number of candidates from which to choose (one party had over a dozen of them!). After some intense, and at times disgusting debate—often more insane rant than reasoned discussion—the two parties made their flawed choices.

With the general election, the American electorate found itself staring down two unattractive paths. As usual, Americans complained long and loud about the choices presented them in the general election—as if the two candidates were foisted upon them by some mysterious otherworldly force! Is it rude to remind them that it was they, themselves—Americans—that were responsible for nominating the two candidates to begin with?! And if some, many even, sat on the sidelines and abstained during those nomination proceedings, well, they too are responsible.

And what was the choice which those involved and uninvolved during the nomination phase presented the American electorate during the general election phase?

On one path, Americans found a woman who was, apparently, morally challenged (and just to be clear, when we speak of “morality,” we are speaking of much, much more than how one uses their body for sex or its aftermath). Of course, while the female part of the equation was unique (no one can truly say for sure what role this aspect played in the election’s results), the immoral aspect was common—business as usual. She was, in fact, just like all the others.

The sad truth is that the American electorate had repeatedly faced this path, often with no or minimal complaint (depending upon one’s politics), voting for this or that morally challenged candidate. Most Americans have never known any other choice but to choose between morally compromised candidates. There really are few, if any, political operatives who are not morally compromised. It comes with the territory. This is so, almost, by definition. It is one of the sins that is in and among us—part of our national depravity. One cannot engage in the American

political process and remain untainted by immorality—“no not one.” It is just a dirty business.² Always has been. Always will be.

It is for this and other reasons that the loud and passionate complaints about the democratic candidate’s “crookedness” rang hollow. Something else was at play. This is confirmed by the fact that those same voters who complained of her immorality, ended up electing a far, far more morally challenged candidate!

So, on the other path, the electorate was confronted with a man who was, unquestionably morally challenged (in his case we must definitely add the sexual element to the ethical), and who looks, for all the world, like a sociopath to boot. This is not me being angry. This is just me telling it like I see it. Go ahead. Look up the character traits of a sociopath.

While the morally challenged aspect of his character was not unique (just far more pronounced and brazen than usual), the second was. While we had elected immoral politician after immoral politician, we had never elected a sociopath—at least not in our modern era. Whether the electorate identified and voiced this particular diagnosis or not, nearly everyone agreed, including many of those who would end up voting for him, that he was unfit for the office.

But, after all their complaining, the people made their shameful choice. And what a choice it was!

The man himself comes with all the disadvantages and evils that one would expect from a sociopath. In addition, he is a vile and disgusting and insecure man; his values perverted, twisted, and dangerous; his principles... well, does he have any? Any that might be called virtuous or praiseworthy?

Nada.

Among the flaws too numerous to innumerate, it became clear that the man was a false prophet,

² I will have more to say about this later, but for now I will just say that the complaint of so many Christians concerning the infringement of their “religious liberties” is simply the result of not understanding just how dirty, how rough and tumble the world of politics is. As Christians have become more engaged in political debate—from abortion to the latest buggy man, gay marriage—they have experienced push back, and then cried foul. Well, they climbed onto the political stage and should expect aggressive and committed push back. That’s not infringement of liberties, that politics. A nasty, cut-throat business. If you can’t take the heat, stay out of the kitchen!

who, like the demagogue he is, simply itched the ears,³ and channeled whatever attitudes and mood a portion of the American people possessed at any given moment (It is cold comfort knowing that he not only did he not win a majority of the votes, but that not even one in three Americans voted for him.⁴ I will explain below why this is such cold comfort). As a demagogue and false prophet, he is a ventriloquist's puppet. The puppet master is the 28% of Americans who voted for him. They pulled his strings, and he put on a performance. Tap dancing in front of the mirror, he was, in the end, simply a mirror image of the 28%—blinded by rage (perhaps not unjustified rage, but rage targeting the wrong villain).

I could go on and on and not plumb the ugly depths of that man. But I will forebear.

My contention that he channeled the attitudes of a sizable portion of the American people is the far uglier depth that must be plumbed. Of all the revelations this man has brought to light, this is one of the more troubling—America is ugly, as they say in the south. The man is a reflection of “we the people.” We have grown increasingly coarse and fearful and angry and irrational and self-absorbed. We have demonstrated, as the Christian message witnesses, a depraved indifference to decency. A madness has settle upon our nation.

But *most* troubling, harrowing really, is the light that ‘that man’s’ election has shed on American Christianity. This is the revelation to which I will give the most attention. In doing so, I will pull no punches. As I said in my previous homily, ‘that man’ is pretty much what scripture tells us to expect from Babylon. But from “the City of God”? Good God, something has gone terribly wrong in American Christianity!

I hesitate to break up my thought pattern, but this is important. A few facts and statistics are in order. First, and most obviously, the Republican party predominately represents the “conservative” movement in America. Second, the base of the Republican party is made up of a

³ See 2 Timothy 4.³

⁴ As of November 18, the losing democratic candidate had 64,225,534 votes. The winning republican candidate, 62,209,804—the numbers are still adjusting, but they do not change the general picture.

Simple math tells us, then, that 126,435,338 Americans cast a vote for one of these two presidential candidates (many additional voters casted votes in the election, but either did not cast a vote for president, or voted for a third party candidate).

Estimates are that there are 219,000,000 eligible voters in America. This means that 57% of eligible voters, voted for one of the two candidate—29% for the democratic candidate and 28% for the republican.

So, how in God’s name does anyone get elected to “the most powerful office on the planet” when not even 1 in 3 of their own countrymen who are eligible to vote, vote for them?

sizeable, vocal, and influential group that identifies itself as “Christian” (many of them so narrowly defining what it means to be Christian that they exclude everyone but themselves). It is this conservative population, dominated by “Christians,” that were responsible for nominating that man.

While, over time, there are likely to be slight adjustments to the figures presented here, those adjustments are unlikely to change the overall impression. According to initial polling conducted by the Pew Research Center, 58% of Protestants (81% of white evangelicals) and 52% of white Catholics voted for that man in the general election. These figures are the same as or slightly higher than those representing the voting habits of Christians over the past five presidential voting cycles. Only among the Mormons, who voted for that man at an astonishing 61%, did the voting habit drop in any significant way—they have usually voted at a reliable 75-80% Republican rate. In fact, the more consistent Christians were in attending worship services, the more likely they were to vote for that man!

What the h&!! are these people being taught at church?! Something has gone terribly wrong.

What all of this means, of course, is that American Christians—particularly white American Christians—played a significant, if not decisive role in electing that man as President of the United States (one Christian vote for that man is too many, but a plurality?!). This, in spite of the fact that they know who and what he is. But they do not care. As the great Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah, declared,

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?

Nay, they were not at all ashamed,

neither could they blush”⁵

Perhaps we could forgive them if, as they so often disingenuously lament, they simply chose between two flawed candidates “thrust upon them against their will.” But, as we have said, the problem is that they were also responsible for nominating that man when they had other reasonable and rational candidates from which to choose—candidates flawed, as always, but far

⁵ Jeremiah 6.¹⁵

less flawed than their ultimate choice.

Nope, that man's election was made possible, in no small part with the support of the American "Christian" church. Something has gone terribly wrong. Christianity's watchmen have clearly been asleep on the tower, neglecting their duty to sound the alarm when evil approaches.

Now, as I said in my earlier homily, the evils that have crept into American Christianity have not caught me entirely by surprise. I have seen the signs for some time, but I shamefully choose to be silent concerning them, and act as if "all is well in Zion"—o.k., maybe too much sex going on, but outside of that everything is just hunky-dory.

Indeed, in the months leading up to the election I often said to friends,

"He could be elected, you know."

"Noooo," they replied, shaking their head, stupefied at my wild imagination. "Such a man? President? Not a chance."

"You don't understand, I said, "it isn't about him, it's about the electorate. They're mad, and I don't mean angry. I mean crazy. I'm afraid that he fits them to a T."

"No...., the American people are good. They are rational and logical. They will come to their senses."

"In what alternate universe do you live!!??" I responded. "When did a people, American or otherwise, ever act rationally and logically? Besides, have you been watching them lately? Have you observed their warmongering ways—even with a supposedly "liberal" president at the helm? Have you seen the way they treat those who look, think, act differently than they? Have you seen the way they.... Oh, never mind. It is all too depressing."

"But what about our being a city on a hill? What about our American exceptionalism?"

"Dead. Always has been. Total myth. Never happened."⁶

"Oh, this is just too much!"

"Oh, I'm just getting warmed up!!"

⁶ By the way, in speaking of American democracy as "exceptional," Tocqueville—one of suggested originators of the phrase—was speaking as much of America's vices as its virtues.

And, indeed I am. I quoted from the great Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, earlier. You'll be hearing much more from him in following posts. As mentioned in the introduction to this page, this page's title comes from his 6th century B.C. work.

“For my people have committed two evils;
they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters,
and hewed them out cisterns,
broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”⁷

America has voted for a broken cistern. What little stagnate water gurgles at the bottom of the pit is rancid and putrid—poisonous to the body politic.

There. You can mark that down as my first unmuted attempt to act the part of a faithful and clear-voiced watchman on the tower.

⁷ Jeremiah 2:13