

Donald J. Trump
~~JESUS CHRIST~~
SUPERSTAR



Freedom's View

A COMMENTARY ON GOVERNMENT FROM ATOP THE CAPITOL

www.FreedomsView.org

"All the other alternative facts you need to know"



Vol. 4 No. 4 April 10, 2020 Special Limited Covid-19 Edition – No. 2

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IT'S HOLY WEEK: TIME TO REDO A BIBLICAL DRAMA

This second Special Covid-19 Limited Edition has as its theme, I suppose, the role of our egos: how very weak ones get super-inflated to compensate for their actual fragility. It's about how that unfortunate pneumatic puffedupness often applies to faith communities and their leaders. (Yes, "puffedupness" is a word, because I just made it up. I could care less that the Word program isn't as well-informed, grand, and competent as I am. I simply don't care if Word underlines it in red.)

As I was saying before Word so rudely dared to interrupt *me*, this issue is largely about egotism and its many dangers!

Following this introduction, a somewhat altered, partial *libretto* from Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's rock musical which, while recorded earlier, made its Broadway debut in 1971.

PBS aired a new version on its television stations on November 30, 2019. Starring John Legend, Sara Bareilles, Ben Daniels, and Alice Cooper among many others, clips from it can be found on the web.

It recounts the familiar biblical story of the final weeks of Jesus' life. That was the time when Jesus was himself existentially challenged by his own teachings about humility and service to the forgotten – central traits of those who would claim citizenship in Jesus Kin-dom (usually rendered as "Kingdom.")

It draws the starkest contrast between Jesus and the story's central, ego-inflated, political manipulators: Pontius Pilate, the Roman's governor in Judea; and Caiaphas, the chief priest. The slight alterations we've made preserve this contrast and render it in a style that is as current as today's news.

~ Armed Freedom

AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY

THE SMALLISH CROWD OF TRUMP'S SUPPORTERS SING

Hosanna

Hey Sanna, Sanna ,Sanna Ho - sanna

Hey Sanna Hosanna

D.J.T., D.J.T. won't you smile at me?

Sanna Ho - sanna

Hey, Superstar!

D.J.T, D.J.T.,

Are you chosen, meant to be?

Are you the One who's come at last to set us free?...

D.J.T.?

Every time I look at you, I don't understand

How folks like us chose you – yes, *you!* - to lead our once fine land.

Where'd you ever get the balls, your entourage to bring?

Surely, such a stable genius's fit to be our king!

D.J.T, D.J.T., have you come to me as a wise man traveling from afar,

Or are you the One – the One who was no fun, stable-born while underneath that star?

D.J.T, D.J.T.,

Do you think you're all we say you are?

You couldn't have done better if you'd had it all planned!

It fits neatly on a napkin writ by your tiny hand!

With a little help from folks at Fox, you've reached our whole wide nation!

Like bots, you Tweet cofefe thoughts: your great communication!

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Hosanna
 Hey Sanna, Sanna ,Sanna Ho - sanna
 Hey Sanna Hosanna
 Hey D.J.T., D.J.T. will you fight for me?
 Sanna Hosanna
 Hey, Superstar!

TRUMP – AFTER AN UNCERTAIN, LATE-SEASON
 RALLY - LOOKS DOWN FROM HIS PLANE

Every time I look at them, I don't understand
 Why Sessions let what Comey did get so far out
 of hand.

I could have managed better if *he'd* had it nicely
 planned!

Why did I choose the most stupid twit
 In this God-forsaken land?

I'm no longer sure how to snow them.

What to do, how to fool them.

No, I've not been changed, I'm *never* changed!
 But in these past few days when they've seen *myself*,
They seem like someone else.

I don't know how to understand them.

Don't see why some of them should hate me.

God knows I've tried; I've really tried!

But the fake news press repeats all day that, one
 more time, I've lied!

If so, what's a few more bodies piled-up, side by side?

I hate them so. I'm going to go. Where the hell's my
 ride?

TRUMP – APPROACHING THE PEAK OF THE PANDEMIC

I try not to get worried, try not to turn on to
 Problems that upset me, oh, don't you know:
 Everything's alright, yes, everything's fine,
 And I'm going to sleep well tonight.

I Had Fauci's plan in mind when first I went to bed,
 But I woke up and forgot it, so lets do my plan, instead:
 I'll send them back to work next week, the economy
 will shine! Now,

everything's alright, everything's fine,

And I'm going to sleep well tonight.

The hospitals can wring their hands and fume, but I'll
 be outta sight.

If I try, I'll get by, and forget all about them tonight.

NEWLY NERVOUS CROWDS AT A LATE-NIGHT TRUMP RALLY

D.J.T, D.J.T,
 The Chosen One – Oh, could it be?
 The Son, who's here to rescue me?
 D.J.T, D..J.T.,
 Are you the promised One for me,
 Come here now to finally set us free?

TRUMP ON ELECTION NIGHT, AFTER LOSING TO BIDEN

(For the first time in his life, Trump is drinking – heavily.)

Look at all my trials and tribulations

Sinking in this wretched glass of wine.

Don't disturb me now, I saw all the where and how:

'Till yesterday became is this morning, life was fine.

Always hoped I'd have a second really great term -

I'd surpass even Andrew Jackson if I tried -

Then, when I retired I'd write *tremendous* memoirs

So they'd all bow down and bless me 'fore I died.

Yes, they'd finally worship me until I died.

POST-ELECTION FORMER TRUMP VOTERS

(A Single Voice Speaks)

I think, I know I've seen you 'round somewhere . . .

Your well-coifed look and thin blond hair

Remind me of the day

That voting booths sent evil crooks packing on
 their way.

Wait! You're the guy that drove the country nuts!

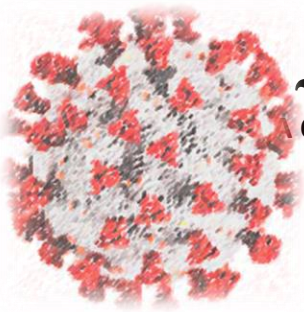
I recognized you by your terrible orange-dyed skin.

My God, but you're a *Putz!*

By All Now, Chanting in Unison:

Poor old Donald So long Donald





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ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES?

For a moment, let's take seriously President Trump's apt metaphor for combating the spread of Covid-19 infections as the "War on Coronavirus." Federal, state, and local governments are - sometimes belatedly and insufficiently - beginning to take the lead in combating the "enemy." (New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo is setting the gold standard.) Businesses will soon join in. While not yet the mobilization of the nation in World War II, this "war effort" is the largest national response since 1945. Eerily, WWII and this war also began with an attack on us for which we were ill-prepared despite reliable advance warnings.

In each war, war materiel appropriate to the conflict was (and is) being manufactured and sent to the front although often at a maddening, tragic, and criminally slow pace.

How did Americans in WWII fortify themselves for what lay ahead: the long, deadly slog; reports of increasing numbers of wounded, and the dead - all who perished without the comfort of hovering, loving faces, encouragement, and tearful, familial goodbyes? How did they endure this, and all the other privations of life on the home front? The resources of faith and religion became a significant part of that war effort in the trenches and at home. *But in this time and this war, will these resources prove adequate? Will many now, particularly the young, even seek them out?*

In this and the next issue of *Freedom's View*, we'll examine these questions. Good spiritual/faith/religious resources are essential to our physical/emotional/spiritual survival.

I've asked the Washington National Cathedral's Rev. Newel Post and the Franciscan Monastery's Fr. Levo Ceterizini to speak to the loss of faith in religion itself that is so prevalent among a good many of our citizens. *In the next issue*, we'll join the ranks of others and suggest some *good* resources.

~ *Armed Freedom*

According to the legendary WWII cartoonist, Bill Mauldin, "There are no atheists in foxholes." That was based on his experience that war.

scary hell is, Mauldin turning to ten for the



covering Being the that war saw men God, of-first time.

The Greatest Generation (those born between 1901 and 1927) were the ones that sheltered in their foxholes and prayed. Mauldin's aphorism was largely true then. But what about today?

In the midst of our quite different, but still terrifying "War on the Coronavirus," do people still turn to God for help? Certainly. Many do. But, according to the Pew Research Center, there has been a steady generational decline in reported religious affiliation from 85% for the "too-young-to-have-enlisted Silent Generation (1928-1945) to 35% for The Millennials (1982-1996), who have fought our wars in this new millennium. They are the "Nones," those who respond to religious affiliation surveys with "None."

Sometimes roundly criticized, especially by anxious clerics, the Nones may be "irreligious," but most are spiritual seekers looking for ways to help them: make sense of life, don't violate the best of science, give them purpose, point them in a worthwhile direction, and give help in navigating ethical minefields. Many of previous generations also seek. Mostly, they sit quietly in their pews hoping that something sensible and enduring will come of it. Sometimes, of course, it does. But very often, their continued attendance is testimony to their patience, hopefulness, or desperation.

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Or perhaps, as the poet Joseph Pintauro wrote, they have this appealing faith: "To believe in God is to have the very great faith that someone, somewhere, is not stupid."¹

(We probably right off the bat Christians, we can speak to our own Jews, Moslems, faith traditions, traditions at all ing those very stupid" resources make it through this "war." While we speak only of Christianity, we trust at least some of our comments will be of value to others.)



need to say that, as two rightly and best tradition. But people of other and of no faith are also seek-same "non- to help them

Someone, somewhere, must be working out a non-stupid understanding of Christianity. Someone, somewhere, must be grappling in responsible, informed ways with the aching questions this present "war" lays upon all our hearts. Questions such as: Why didn't God prevent (fill in the blank) from getting sick and dying? If prayer "works," how come the prayers of some are answered but those of others aren't? Does God even give a damn about the world "He" allegedly created? In fact, what does anyone even mean by "God?" How can we even know if God "exists?" What does healthy religion look like? What are some *good* spiritual practices? By whose authority do you make your "theological" assertions?

Whew! Those are some of the right questions and we'll barely scratch the surface here. But we'll give it a try.

First, we think it's important for people to know that some of the media-savvy preachers on television and the net simply do not represent the only option for those seeking Christian spiritual/faith resources. In fact, their teachings present the very worst sort of religious and spiritual resources for understanding the world and our life in it - both here and hereafter. Theirs is a massive contradiction of the central teachings and example of Jesus.

One of their distortions is to conflate Christianity with Empire. Put another way, seeking to aggrandize their own power by having the blessings of the powerful state, they collude with the state because it's always glad to have religion ratify its partisan political agenda. For example, Rev. Jerry Falwell, Jr. (who, among other things, is the President of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia) gave

his *imprimatur* to Trump on *Fox & Friends* after the violent "Unite The Right" rally by white supremacists in Charlottesville. Trump refused to condemn the white supremacists saying, instead, "there were good people on both sides." Only a day later, Falwell stood by Trump, declaring on *Fox & Friends* that "President Donald Trump does not have a racist bone in his body."² His and others' confident assertion that "God is on our side" is immensely arrogant and ego-centric. Jesus, the Jewish carpenter and rabbi, taught a kind of spirituality in which *taming the ego is central*.

By way of contrast, during the U. S. Civil War, Abraham Lincoln met with a group of ministers for a prayer breakfast. Lincoln was a man of deep, if at times unorthodox, faith. At one point, one of the ministers said, "Mr. President, let us pray that God is on our side." Lincoln's response showed far greater insight, "No, gentlemen, let us pray that we are on God's side."³

Another, related, distortion is to portray God as causing something dreadful to befall "guilty" people, all of which quite conveniently ratifies their own evil prejudices. For example, Falwell's clergyman father and his colleague, Pat Robertson, "asserted on television . . . that an angry God had allowed the terrorists to succeed in their deadly mission (on September 11, 2001) because the United States had become a nation of abortion, homosexuality, secular schools and courts, and the American Civil Liberties Union." President George W. Bush had his own Lincoln-esque moment, saying that their remarks were inappropriate and that he did not share them.⁴

When it comes to the thorny issue of why some prayers are answered in a happy way, while others seem to have gotten lost on God's desk - or worse - their answers are often cruel to humanity and God alike. Typically, they blame the victims, saying they didn't pray hard enough, or that their faith was lacking. At other times, they say that the illness, death, or tragedy was part of God's plan, etc. It's no wonder that some would rather be "atheists," hunkering down in their fox-holes, taking their own chances! (CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)



The outrageous statements of these “false prophets” are often “proven true” by an appeal to the Bible as their sole authority. “It’s in the Book!” they say. Typically, they maintain that the Bible: is their sole authority; that it contains divinely dictated words; that they should be taken literally; that it’s perfectly fine to take phrases and sentences out of their surrounding context, and; since the Bible contains no errors, its many contradictions only seem to be such; so the faithful should follow only and exactly what it alone “teaches.”

They *don’t*, therefore, take the Bible seriously-but-not-literally. Therefore, the practice of slavery was defended for generations. In its more “genteel” form, today, it still is.

As if their *infantile* approach to the faith were not bad enough on an intellectual basis, the mounting failures of so many churches to institutionally live out more fully the values of the one whom they profess to follow administer the final *coup de gras* to the hopes of many had for it.

The failure of too many churches to put more of their resources where their mouths are in order to better attend the poor and the “different,” as well as their so infrequently challenging of the power structures of institutionalized injustice, is not lost on seekers. The “suburban captivity” of so many congregations, in which the preponderance of ministry is far too often one of “massaging the souls of the saints.” It’s a contradiction too stark to be ignored.

As if this were not enough, there are the great clergy who sexually abused and still abuse those in their care, often abetted by church power structures engaged in self-preservation, rather than in repentance and a mending of ways.

The old saw, pulled out forever in self-justification by clergy and laity, just won’t do anymore. Comparing the church to Noah’s Ark, they have said, “If it weren’t for the storm without, you couldn’t stand the stench within.”



It’s *as if* they decided that, remaining inside, they might get used to the stench, and only contribute to the problem. So, they have chosen to brave the storm outside it. They have given up on the institutional church, having found the faith they’ve been taught:

“Well, thank God we made it out in time. ... inadequate at best; lacking a sensible intelligence; and, sometimes, even becoming a social evil itself.”
“Course, now we’re equally screwed.”

Surprisingly, and quite unbeknownst to most of them, their leaving in disgust actually bears witness to the triumph of the commitments and values that characterize a more evolved and (one hopes) Jesus-centered Christianity.

A *mature* Christianity teaches that the creation itself - including *all* the people, animals, forests, fields, and resources in it - is an expression and “incarnation” of a transcendent, intelligent, loving force: an Artist. A mysterious, creative Artist who apparently creates, as far as we can determine through our best ideas about evolution: employing the laws of chemistry, biology, classical and quantum physics, randomness, trial and error, accidental but inevitable losses, and lots and lots of time. For starters.

Having delivered ourselves of this (actually brief!) Jeremiah, we acknowledge that there are many, more conservative churches, that *don’t* fit this description. Many in their congregations, young and old alike, find direction, purpose, and reassurance from their participation in them.

Still, there are millions more of the Nones out there. It is mainly to them that we are addressing this essay. While there are many ways of describing a more mature, better, and evolving form of the faith, we’ve reached something of a consensus about its general characteristics. Doubtless, that consensus is easier for us to come by because of the similar ecclesiastical choices we have made.

One of us, Newel Post, is a priest in the Episcopal Church, serving at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. The Cathedral is “a unique place at the intersection of sacred and civic life. As the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, (it) strives to serve God and its neighbors as agents of reconciliation, (and to be) a trusted voice of moral leadership and a sacred space where the country gathers during moments of national significance.”⁵

The other, Levo Ceterizini, is attached to the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America in Northeast Washington, DC. As a Franciscan friar, Levo is schooled in the “alternative way” of following Jesus that was evolved by the 13th century Francis of Assisi. Francis founded an order that, in ways that are at once life-changing and radical, disregards power and privilege, instead holding fast to the narrow path of Jesus’ teachings and example.

Our personal and professional commitments lead us to affirm what is sometimes called Progressive Christianity.

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Progressive Christianity is generally characterized by certain theological and mission commitments. As Progressive Christians ourselves, *we believe*:

- that following the path of the teacher, Jesus, can lead to healing and wholeness, a mystical connection to “God,” as well as an awareness and experience of not only the Sacred, but the Oneness and Unity of all life;
- that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness, Oneness and Unity of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom, including the Earth, in our spiritual journeys;
- we must seek and create community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: conventional Christians and questioning skeptics; believers and agnostics; women and men; those of all races, cultures, and nationalities; those of all sexual orientations and all gender identities; those of all classes and abilities, and; all creatures and plant life;
- that the way we behave towards one another and Earth is the fullest expression of what we believe. Therefore, we vow to walk as Jesus might have walked in this world - with radical compassion, inclusion, and bravery to confront and positively change the injustices we experience as well as those we see others experiencing.
- we find grace in the search for understanding, and believe there is more value in questioning with an open mind and open heart, than in absolutes or dogma;
- we must work toward peace and justice among all people and all life on Earth;
- we must protect and restore the integrity of our Earth and all of Creation, and;
- we are called to gladly commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love on this journey toward a personally authentic and meaningful faith.⁶

In the midst of this terrible pandemic, when good spiritual and faith resources are more important than ever, we hope that those who long for a better expression of Christianity might find it in something like the above. Congregations are out there that have committed themselves to something very much like this. Typically, they are vibrant communities that provide much to those not only seeking to stabilize themselves, but who also seek to address the world of increasingly desperate needs all around us.

POSTSCRIPT

As this Good Friday (which marks 20,000 Covid-19 deaths) passes into Saturday . . . that familiar and most uncomfortable of days . . . the one between the certainty that all we had is now lost, and a new day yet to come . . . you know, the one when a promised wonderful-but-*clearly*-fanciful dream that, in our despair, even the best of us forgot had been made . . . that day when all we'd lost would again be found . . . and we ourselves would be transformed, butterfly-like, into new people . . . of new courage, renewed hope, and warm compassion.

All of us know now, if not before, what it is to be “Saturday’s Children.”⁷ We have lost so much. We will lose much more. Easter has not yet come.

And so, because the alternative is despair, and despair is fatal, we keep vigil . . . leaning into the darkness of today toward an impossible hope . . . that Easter Sunday . . . *whenever* it comes (why is it taking its good old time?) . . . nonetheless surely will come.

Until then

~ *Armed Freedom*
Good Friday, 11:59 PM

* * * * *

ENDNOTES

¹ Joseph H. Pintauro, illustrated by Sister Corita, *To Believe in God* (Harper and Row, 1968)

² “Billion-Dollar Blessings: How Jerry Falwell Jr. transformed Liberty University, one of the religious right’s most powerful institutions, into a wildly lucrative online empire,” Alec MacGillis (*ProPublica*, April 17, 2018)

³ Quoted in www.Family-Times.net

⁴ “Fault, Finger-pointing inappropriate, Bush says,” Laurie Goodstein (*New York Times*, September 15, 2001)

⁵ From the National Cathedral’s statement, “What We Do” on their website: cathedral.org

⁶ From www.ProgressiveChristianity.org

⁷ I am indebted to the Rev. W. Benjamin Pratt for using the phrase in this particular, poignant context.