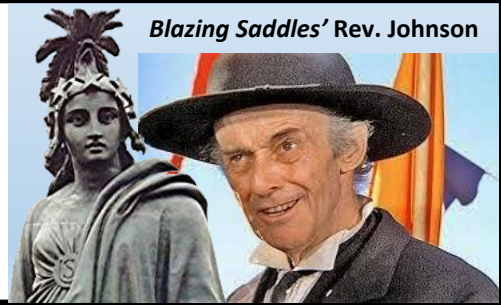


# Freedom's View

A COMMENTARY ON GOVERNMENT FROM ATOP THE CAPITOL

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Page 1

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## TRUMP STUMPS, HIS TWITTER DUMPS, THE MARKET SLUMPS. YEP, HE'S MAKING AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!

August 10, 2019

WASHINGTON, DC ~ *Armed Freedom*

El Paso. Dayton. Numbers 254 and 255 of the mass shootings (in which 3 or more have been killed excluding the shooter) so far this year. More mass shootings than days. 31 more deaths due to incidents of mass murder gun violence. That doubles the number this year up until last weekend.

Then, against the stated wishes of community leaders in El Paso and Dayton, the Comforter-in-Chief visited those grieving cities anyway. If only he could have risen to the level of Job's "comforters."<sup>1</sup> Instead, true to form, he made the visit all about *him*, bragging to all about the size of the crowds and how the hospital staff was so glad to see him. He neglected to say that numerous wounded patients refused a visit from the person whose rhetoric contributed so mightily to these (domestic) terrorist attacks.

Already, this is a week when we're tempted to deny the awfulness by singing *Monty Python's* song from

<sup>1</sup> According to Merriam-Webster, this is "a person who discourages or depresses while seemingly giving comfort and consolation."

*The Life of Brian*: "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life":

Some things in life are bad  
They can really make you mad  
Other things just make you swear and curse

When you're chewing on life's gristle  
Don't grumble, give a whistle  
And this'll help things turn out for the best

And...

Always look on the bright side of life  
(*Whistle*) Come on!

Always look on the right side of life!



But not even those with the sunniest of dispositions could actually sing *that*. Words from Mel Brooks' 1967 satirical movie, *Blazing Saddles*, may be more apt. In the out-law-infested, beleaguered town of Rock Ridge, Rev. Johnson's congregation sings from their hymnals:

"Now it's a time of great decision.  
Are we to stay or up and quit?  
There's no avoiding this conclusion,  
Our town is turning into shit."

Rev. Johnson then addresses his congregation:

"Now I don't have to tell you good folks what's been happening in our beloved little town. Sheriff murdered, crops burned, stores looted, people stampeded, and cattle raped. The time has come to act and act fast . . . I'm leaving."

After *this* week, you could hardly be blamed for joining the good reverend and packing your bags for Canada.

The week's only bright spot was Texas representative John Ratcliffe withdrawing his name from consideration for confirmation as Director of National Intelligence. His decision to withdraw showed more intelligence than President ("I'm a very stable genius") Trump, who nominated the uber-partisan, hyper-conservative Republican who has almost no experience in national intelligence.

*Blazing Saddles* again shows us what's going on. When it comes to nominating people, Trump takes a page from the movie villain's script: scheming politician, Hedley Lamarr.

NITWITS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I want (to nominate) rustlers, cut throats, murderers, bounty hunters, desperados, mugs, pugs, thugs, nitwits, halfwits, dimwits, vipers, snipers, con men, Indian agents, Mexican bandits, muggers, buggerers, bushwhackers, hornswogglers, horse thieves, bull dykes, train robbers, bank robbers, ass-kickers, shit-kickers . . . *and Methodists!*"

Other members of Trump's gang are even worse. Like William Perry Pendley, tapped to lead the Bureau of Land Management, and who believes the Federal Government has no business owning any land. Instead, he wants oil drilling and fracking interests to have their lucrative way. But wait, there's more.

Working with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, acting Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney gave the scientists and staff of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture 33 days to decide to move with their agency to Kansas City or resign. Unsurprisingly, this week hundreds refused to move their families half-way across the country on such short notice and for purely partisan political ends.

When more than half of them resigned, Mulvaney crowed, "What a wonderful way to sort of streamline government and do what we haven't been able to do for a long time . . ."

*It's even more political than just shrinking government!* These two agencies, produce valuable agricultural research that policymakers and

the private sector rely on. Their scientific research frequently challenges the narrative insisted upon by Trump.

That's why, according to *Politico*, "Lewis Ziska, a plant physiologist with more than two decades of experience at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, quit after department officials tried to bury a paper he wrote on how rice is losing nutrients because of rising levels of



carbon dioxide in the atmosphere."

On Wednesday, seeing "no political appetite" for banning assault weapons, Trump also dismissed his critics for suggesting that his rhetoric on race and immigration is partly to blame for a rise in hate-inspired violence such as that in El Paso, saying, "I think my rhetoric brings people together."

He then said his critics are "people who are looking for political gain." Afterward, he tweeted that the Dayton shooter had supported liberal political figures. Cue the "doublethink" <sup>2</sup> of novelist George Orwell's *1984*.

<sup>2</sup> "The acceptance of or mental capacity to accept contrary opinions or beliefs at the same time, especially as a result of political indoctrination."

Truly, as our opening hymn put it, thanks to Trump, "our (country's) turning into shit."

Prominent evangelical preachers of the religious right often assist the President in this digestive process.

For example, Franklin Graham echoed the position of the NRA, tweeting, "This hate doesn't come from the barrel of a gun or the blade of a knife, it comes from the human heart." Actually, it comes from *both* - *and* the political/economic power arrangements that wish to put responsibility *only* on the shoulders of the individual shooters.

But, as the Bible Graham loves to thump reminds us (Ephesians 6:12 NIV), "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil . . ."

We should remember – and the Democratic Party has long forgotten what it once knew back in the 1960s and 70s - *real* Christianity is something else entirely. Here's an example of a Christianity with prophetic sinew and zero pabulum. Rev. Wendell Griffen is pastor of New Millennium Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, a church associated with the progressive Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. His recent online piece offers a corrective, stark contrast to Graham's. We will quote him at length and urge you to read all of it.<sup>3</sup>

....

**"Meanwhile, we should remember that God is not an idiot.**

<sup>3</sup> [https://baptistnews.com/article/im-a-pastor-who-refuses-to-offer-thoughts-and-prayers-for-these-people/#.XU7U\\_3t7mUI](https://baptistnews.com/article/im-a-pastor-who-refuses-to-offer-thoughts-and-prayers-for-these-people/#.XU7U_3t7mUI)

## PRAYERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

"God knows that the massacres in El Paso, Dayton and other places across the country are occurring while 'evangelical Christian' pastors and congregations are idolizing gun ownership. Some churches even invite gun owners to bring their weapons into church sanctuaries to be 'blessed.'

"God knows that self-proclaimed 'evangelical Christians' have for years included opposition to gun control measures on 'voter guides' for congregations. They supported politicians who ended a national ban on sales of the type of assault weapons commonly used in mass murder incidents – the same politicians who openly courted favor from gun manufacturers and cowered before the National Rifle Association.

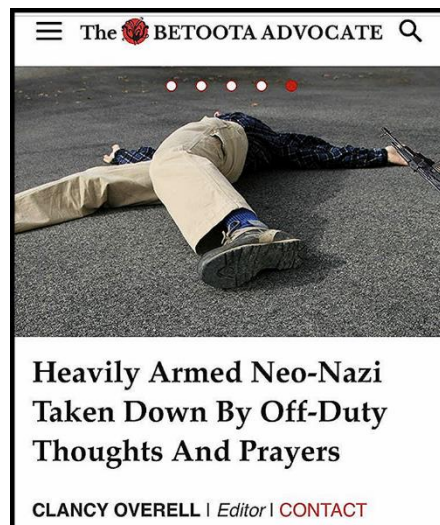
**"God knows that white 'Christians' in America have long tolerated and coddled white supremacy and nationalism.**

"God knows that 'evangelical Christian' leaders helped elect Trump in 2016 knowing that he courted support from and was supported by known advocates of white nationalism and white supremacy. These same pastors and religious leaders continue to refuse to denounce white supremacy, white nationalist anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric, and white nationalist militarism as sins against divine love and justice.

**"I will not be fooled, bossed, bullied, cajoled or otherwise persuaded to pray 'God bless the USA.' This society rejected appeals to repent.**

It murdered prophetic people and dismissed prophetic politicians. The sorrow, pain and other suffering of people in El Paso, Dayton and elsewhere are results of policies deliberately chosen and paths intentionally taken by this society, with active participation and leadership from 'evangelical Christians.'

"I'm praying that God will comfort suffering victims and afflict their political and religious victimizers. That's not a "God bless the USA" prayer. It's a 'Thy will be done' prayer. Amen."



I consulted with my two clergy friends about honest prayer. Rev. Newel Post of the National Cathedral told me that real, mature prayer is in no way an effort to change God's mind. Instead, its purpose is to change the mind and heart of the one who prays. Its goal is to transform our minds and bring our wills into line with God's will . . . as in "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

And what might God's will be? All the

Abrahamic faiths have plenty to say on the topic, so here's one from each.

In Judaism, the prophet Micah (6:8) says, "and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." Islam exhorts believers to "command the good and forbid the evil" in all of life. Christianity's central locus for ethical teachings can be found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5 – 7). See especially the Beatitudes (read: "Be Attitudes) of Matthew 5:3-11). Each faith has similar teachings about God's will and how we, therefore, should live.

Father Levo Cetirizini over at the Franciscan Monastery agreed with Rev. Post and quoted his fellow Franciscan Richard Rohr:

"Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us, choosing gratitude until we are grateful, and praising God until we ourselves are an act of praise. Mature prayer always breaks into gratitude."

So, what concluding response might we make to those so-called Christian preachers who send victims their "thoughts and prayers" but have forgotten the tenets of their faith, and allied themselves with Trump's racism, white supremacy, and sociopathy?

*Blazing Saddles'* Rev. Johnson is, again, most helpful. After a sermon in which he tries to rouse the Rock Ridge citizens to action, he offers up this prayer:

"Oh Lord! Do we have the strength to pull off this mighty task . . . or are we just jerking off?"

AMEN.

~ *Armed Freedom*