

Search for Purpose

I've been getting "back to basics" lately—a phrase which despite its quaint alliteration and trite commonality holds a wealth of meaning for any of us on Planet Terra. I recommend it for anyone.

I'll tell you how it happened for me. Dissatisfied with my "Contemporary English Version" paperback Bible, I dug out my old, brown, leatherbound, King James edition to read. It's the best choice I could have ever made.

The tough old leather cover feels like a Bible in my hands. The two yellow ribbons bound in for bookmarks make it look like a piece of my upbringing.

Opening it, I find a treasury: old, worn pages printed in an archaic tongue with an outdated typesetting. The inner margin is packed with footnotes and cross-references, and sermon notes scribbled by my father (perhaps before I was born), are scattered throughout. There are concordances and maps in the back. I am holding in my hands a Bible.

Here is a real, tangible connection to my heritage, of Baptist churches and prayers and sermons and the childhood of a pastor's son. I begin to remember a time when church was more than a weekend club meeting, God was something sacred, and reading His Word was a hushed and mysterious thing.

Reading, I start from the book of Jude (no problem; it's only one chapter), but soon find myself tossed about through New Testament and Old, courtesy of those wonderful margin notes and cross-references.

My mind is racing through the heady draught of doctrine, the struggles of angelic beings, and prophecies given through men long dead. My reason is engaged to a far greater degree than it has been by all the philosophers, theologians, and commentators that have been my intellectual diet of late. I start to comprehend a little

more the strength of the Protestant tenet, *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture Alone.

In recent months, my focus has

THE ALTAR OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

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blurred. Caught up in the duel of words, struggling to find the best argument, the right quote, and the perfect defense, I have forgotten what I am about. I have forgotten my purpose. I have forgotten who I am.

It's high time I came up for air.

I am Joel Patrick Shempert. I am a musician, a writer, a poet, a thinker, and a servant of the Most High God. I have a weekly voice in this newspaper, and a responsibility to use it with intelligence and wisdom.

So what is my purpose? I have had to reevaluate this. Is it to present complex, rational arguments in defense of my belief? Is it to expose an ordinary readership to the world of philosophy and metaphysics? Is it to quote St. Paul at least once a week?

My answer: all of them and none of them. Those things are good and true, but they are not my mission. Love is.

It's right there in Jude—"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

So, thus ends my quest. I have stripped the layers of my belief and found love at the center. The true journey begins now. For it is not enough. I must now journey further up and further in, to discover if love is at the center of my life. Then, perhaps, I will have earned the right to say: *I show you a more excellent way.*



Clinton Conundrum: why should we care?

LEE EBY
Contributing Writer

Our country is partaking in a process that is both historical and momentous. That process is, of course, the impeachment and trial of the current President.

Whether one believes the action is politically motivated or the result of criminal actions taken by a public servant, the whole process is one that affects a government that theoretically serves the people. But why should we care? In order to answer this it is helpful to examine popular conceptions:

"The charges fall far short of the standards of an impeachable and removable offense."

To be convicted of most crimes two things must be present: 1) *Mens Rea* (bad state of mind); and 2) *Actus Reus* (bad act). There are, of course, specific crimes that do not require these two points (e.g. strict liability laws), but the crimes the President is accused of are not classified under those laws.

In the case of the President, he is

accused of Perjury and Obstruction of Justice, both of which are criminal acts (*actus reus*) and require intentional and knowing commission of the crimes (*mens rea*). Thus, on the surface it would appear both crimes are, if committed, convictable offenses.

However, to remove a President from office the crime must be "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors." (Article II, Sec. 4 of the U.S. Constitution) Since Perjury and Obstruction of Justice are neither treason or bribery, do the crimes classify under "high crimes and misdemeanors?" Like most of the Constitution, "high crimes and misdemeanors" is, and in most likelihood intentionally, vague. Yet, if one was to take the Constitution literally, "high crimes and misdemeanors" would mean any crime the congress so believed rose to the level of an impeachable and convictable offense.

In fact, the State of Oregon believes perjury to be so destructive to the justice system that it is classified as a felony (ORS 162.065). Thus, a charge of perjury alone could rise to a level sufficient for removal of a President of the United States if congress believes it so does.

"The President can't be removed for an offense that does not arise from his official duties."

The Constitution does not expressly state that the offense must arise in the course of the official duties of a President to be a convictable and removable offense. The Senate has actually set precedent for conviction and removal of public officials for offenses that do not arise directly from official duties.

For example, during the 1980s the Senate convicted and removed three federal judges for committing perjury. Of the three judges, two judges were removed because of perjury that in no way was connected to their official duties: In fact, one of the judges, Judge Nixon, was removed for perjury before a grand jury the same offense of which the President is currently accused. It must be

noted, judges are removed under the same standards that apply to Presidents. In essence, the Senate has established that crimes committed by a public official need not arise from official duties.

"It's a personal matter, and a President shouldn't be held to a higher standard than the general public."

The Office of the President is a position that is more symbolic than substantive; however, the President holds the position of Chief Executive, and technically, oversees those institutions that enforce federal laws. And allegations of the Chief Law Enforcement Officer breaking any laws are grave statements and warrant concern by the public.

In other words, if the highest law enforcement officer does not follow the law, why should any individual follow the law? The question is one of fundamental fairness, and respect for the rule of law. In Oregon, law enforcement officers, or any public official for that matter, are held to higher standard of conduct (e.g. ORS 162.415). Should not a President be held to the same standard?

"Why should I care?"

It may sound trite, but it's your country and your president. Our republican form of government is grounded on the notion of its public servants adhering to a high standard of conduct. If those standards are compromised in any way, the system fails to work the way it should.

In fact, James Madison, one of the architects of the Constitution, realizing the importance and sanctity of the Presidency, supported applying impeachment to political offenses and not merely criminal acts. It is conceivable that Madison would find lying to the American public a more destructive offense, and thus, more impeachable than perjury or obstruction of justice. But the fact remains, we as Americans should be concerned and involved in all matters of governing, because it affects every aspect of our lives.

The Print asked Lee Eby, political science student and graduate of Clackamas' Criminal Justice program, to write this article.

THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

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