

“Damn” is Not a Dirty Word

Colleagues,

The text below went to the editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, our home-town newspaper, last week. It has not yet made the cut to be published. I’m not holding my breath. But one of you out there did see the text and recommended wider distribution. So here it is. And short too. Doubtless the shortest ever ThTh posting. The Post-Dispatch “Letters” department sets strict limits. For today’s post to the listserve I overstep those boundaries just a tad.

Peace and Joy!
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“Damn” is not a Dirty Word

How awful are Jeremiah Wright’s words about God damning America?

In the Bible “damn” is not a dirty word. It’s a hospital word, a clinical term, a diagnosis, a grim diagnosis: “patient is terminal.” Why? Because God won’t be the doctor anymore. That’s “damn” in Biblical God-talk. God gives up and says: “Since you won’t say ‘THY will be done,’ I say to you, ‘OK, then THY will be done.’ I’m out of here.”

Those ancient ten plagues afflicting Egypt were God giving up on Egypt—aka damnation. When Egypt protected the Abrahamic newcomers, God blessed Egypt. Big time! But when Egypt started enslaving them, God pulled the protection-plug. “Let nature take its course. I’ll not intervene. Your will be done.” A damn

diagnosis—also big time—glub, glub, glub in the Red Sea.

Everybody's got a list of America's plagues. For starters: Iraq quagmire, health care chaos, crumbling capitalism, gas prices, Wall Street hanky-panky, drug-dealers, drug prices, melting glaciers, super-bacteria, multi-trillion national debt, and more. Does that signal God abandoning (surely not blessing) America, or what?

Let's get the presidential hopefuls to talk about this. All three claim a faith with Biblical roots. Let's hold their feet to the fire. Is Wright's proposed Biblical diagnosis madness or matter-of-fact, nonsense or truth? And does it matter?

Response so far is: "If you don't like the message, kill the messenger." Sadly, by Obama too. Which, of course, is stupidity, though it happens all the time. Clinton and McCain too patently deny Wright's "damn diagnosis." But denial of a grim diagnosis, without bothering to check it out, is dumb, dumb, dumb. Who wants (another) dumb president? What if the diagnosis is true? What if then the prognosis really is glub, glub, glub?

Most Americans don't know that Abraham Lincoln once diagnosed America in similar fashion, midstream in the Civil War. He claimed that God had abandoned both north and south, that that was the deep root of our killing each other. Wright is talking like Lincoln—and Lincoln was the first ever Republican president! Not dumb, dumb, dumb at all.

[I didn't put this in the original letter to the editor, but I will add it here at the end: Jeremiah Wright for President! Why not another one with a Biblical name? Even better, with a Biblical theology.]

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