

Two Doctors of Theology Comment on Jim Smith's Sept. 22 Column on Trumpism & Religion

Comments by Jim Smith's minister, who has a Doctorate in Theology:

For me, the assertion that "God will work it all out," is the height of irresponsibility and spiritual immaturity. You are absolutely spot on when you write that God's great gift to humankind is our free will, our ability to be self-reflective and to choose creatively. These are vital components of every person's spiritual nature. To apathetically claim that God will fix our messes is like a spoiled, egocentric child waiting for Mommy or Daddy to make everything okay. No good parent would put up with that for long but would instead seek to teach them that there are consequences for their chosen thoughts and actions, and that they are fully responsible for them and for embracing the lessons generated by the situation. Wise and appropriate action to remedy things indicates that the lesson is learned and that there has been genuine growth in the child.

It's been said that much of current fundamentalist Christianity is "kindergarten religion." I so agree with this, not in a judgmental sense but because fundamentalism bases its theology on unexamined and unevolved notions. In *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield writes of the difference between art (humanism) and fundamentalism, and it applies to what you're calling out. Here is a sampling of some of his assertions about fundamentalism: For the fundamentalist, humanity has fallen from a higher state, and that it is "the philosophy of the powerless, the conquered, the displaced and the dispossessed." The fundamentalist "cannot find his way into the future, so he retreats into the past." "The fundamentalist hates and fears women." "When fundamentalism wins, the world enters a dark age."

In contrast here's what Pressfield writes about the humanist: "The humanist believes that humankind, as individuals, is called upon to co-create the world with God. This is why he values human life so highly. In his view, things do pro-

gress, life does evolve; each individual has value, at least potentially, in advancing this cause. The fundamentalist cannot conceive of this. In his society, dissent is not just crime but apostasy; it is heresy, transgression against God himself.... It may be that the human race is not ready for freedom. The air of liberty may be too rarified for us to breathe.... The paradox seems to be, as Socrates demonstrated long ago, that the truly free individual is free only to the extent of his own self-mastery. While those who will not govern themselves are condemned to find masters to govern them."

I would add that *fundamentalists don't like to engage in deep and demanding questions. They like pat answers, black and white dogma that allows them to villainize their detractors and celebrate their bombastic spokespeople.* They easily fall prey to hero worship to assuage their pervasive sense of inadequacy and insecurity. They whip up a false sense of power by loudly proclaiming the party line with little or no evidence or reasoning. In many respects, in the human development spectrum, fundamentalists are like self-centered out-of-control teens. The problem is that there are so many who are irresponsible and steeped in a sense of entitlement rather than responsibility.

I could go on and on but will just add these thoughts for now.

It would thrill me if the preponderance of humanity could accept and live the declaration of II Timothy 1:7: "*For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*"

Comments by retired Lutheran pastor Don Marxhausen:

In the best of Roman Catholicism and the best of Protestantism, God's word is done by our

hands. For one wing of Lutheranism, that is one of their mottos: "*God's Work, Our Hands.*"

The whole theology from John I is called "Incarnational Theology." Briefly, *God works through people. God was in Jesus. We follow Jesus. Therefore we care about the poor, those in prison, those who are sick, the weak, etc.*

We are to tend to the earth as it were a garden. We are to tend to our neighbors and strangers as we would want to be treated.

The great debate of the Holocaust was the absence of God. Or absence of God's people? Where were all those German Christians? I can't remember who said it, but *Christianity is a nice religion but too bad so few have tried it.*

My cynicism is that the more churches you see in the south (giant Southern Baptist churches) the less the Christianity. They were the home of slavery, Jim Crow, Confederate flags, subjugation of women, etc.

Bottom line: God works through us. God is not a fairy godmother in the sky. My wife scrubbing pots for 14 years in a soup kitchen in Denver is God working. Salvation Army is God working. People trying to save the planet is God working. Totalitarianism or Fascism is *NOT* God working. It is some humans having power over others of their own self-gratification. (The argument here is does one fight evil with more evil as with violence or pacifism?)

My favorite text in the bible is John 13: Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and calling us to be servants of one another. This is also the best of Judaism and Islam.

Sitting by and hoping God is going to just do something is absurd from every angle. WE ARE GOD'S HANDS.