

Today I divided my attention between necessary hand-tasks & the four-hour Starr grand jury anti-Clinton released-today **porn wallow** video.

My conclusion on the Starr Report & sequels (including this video):

A \$40,000,000 mountain has labored & brought forth a mouse--a dead mouse.

Adulterers lie; C. was an adulterer; therefore, C. lied (whether or not under oath).

Leaders are sexual targets; C. was/is a leader; therefore, C. has been / is a sexual target.

The Starr method of criminalizing sin: press the sinner to deny, under oath, the sin. I think Starr failed to criminalize C.'s sin. Thus, a dead mouse (not a lame duck forced into being a dead duck).

The Information Age hypertrophied: C. was caught first in Monica's web, now in the WWW (World-Wide Web).

Was he caught in Starr's web? Whether so or not, I'm more outraged by Starr's use of the media (leaks, interviews, etc.) for saturation exposure (information overload) on the tawdry details of C.'s sexual stupidity than I am by C.'s reckless priapism. M.L.King,Jr.'s extensive recreational sex with multiple partners has had no perceptible ill effects on America's chn.: any ill effects from C.'s comparatively minor illicit sex must be laid not at his door but at the door of Starr + media in sex-feeding-frenzy (Nielsen ratings always giving salacious sex top billing; in contrast to the Bible, which rates sins of the spirit higher than sins of the flesh).

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**"WHAT ARE GOD & THE DEVIL DOING?"** To the astonishment of secular reporters, these were the two top questions of Kenyans (Kenya being 70% Christian) about the terrorist bombing of the American embassy, in which many Kenyans died (our embassy being in a crowded area of their capital). Anyone thinking biblically will give high priority to these questions (have you?). You would be right not to expect our media, which are secular-minded, to raise these questions (have you heard them raised?): biblical thinking, still not uncommon in the populace, has disappeared from the mentality of the cultural elite, which control the media.

I'll limit my response here to an attentional analysis: (1) The devil, always seeking to divert humans' attention from God, the good, & humans' responsibility to both, & focus humans' attention as myopically as possible, has succeeded in riveting almost everybody's attention on the President's fly; (2) God has penetrated the present pervasive permissivism, narcissism (hedonism), & relativism (multicultural blurring of right/wrong)--penetrations necessary to deepening dialog of consequentials in human relations & in domestic & foreign affairs.

In a "Conversation of Consequence" in our church after worship last Sunday, I asked that we use a three-stage process in practicing, on Clintongate, **thinking as Christians**. The three-act play (Clinton's folly, Monica's blabbing, Starr's pursuit) was looked at first thus:

*What one word best expresses your personal feeling about each one of the three?*

BILL: disgusted, disappointed, dissatisfied, furious, sad, distraught, let down, waste, puzzled, outraged

MONICA: sorry, pity, disgusted, scornful, sad, betrayed

KEN: disgusted, angry, sorry, satisfied

We found it difficult to stay with the question: it was so easy to slip out of ("I feel...") into ("He/she is..."--in the Starr case, we got "jerk, mean-minded, stupid, vindictive, un/professional"). Why did I put feelings first in the conversational process? Isn't our culture too feeling-oriented as it is? Yes is my answer to the second question. To the first, my answer was that human beings act on their feelings, which are informed by factors most of which we are responsible for. In letting our Faith inform our feelings, we must first get a good fix on what our feelings in each situation actually are. Think of our acts as ships on the sea, our feelings as conditions on the sea surface, & all else--the whole invisible ocean!--as our drives, un/conscious motives, sanctions (incentives). Climate conditions? That's all that's happening to us from the outside.

Second stage: *Please, each of you, craft a single sentence conveying your considered response to the tragedy.* Again, difficult, a difficult exercise in listening. We are all so feeling-ful about the mess that when anybody says anything, everybody "wants in."\*

Third stage: *Open discussion*, ending in the delightful chaos of everybody talking at the same time....Total time, 3½ hours (worship, church meeting on capital-fund planning, only 40" for the "Conversation of Consequence."

\* Some of the sentences: Don't kick a man when he's down. What does this do to (& reveal about) our national morals? How restore the dignity & prestige of the office? It helps us look at ourselves & our country. ...glass houses (sayings biblical & otherwise). C. needs help, but the gospel preaches it (redemption through

Jesus). ...cast the first stone. All governments are by & for sinners.

Surprised! Somebody suggested that we consider the Oval Office a fourth in the *dramatis personae*, so I asked for *one word about the tragedy's effect on the Office of President*: degraded, corrupted, unsettled, tarnished, desecrated, besmirched, diminished, battle-scared. Most of these express the sanction of purity: the Office should be a pure place, a temple, the President being chief priest (*pontifex maximus*) --whereas I see it primarily as not temple (purity place) but as palace (power place) & so added "unaffected" (sexual corruption being normal [though "unacceptable"] in power places). After C.'s world-economy speech Monday, 20 heads of states phoned to express agreement: his international influence has not been diminished. Another normative generalization: power persons cannot be trusted, but they should be (as I think C. is) trustable to do a good job in office. (When electing a pope or a pastor, character matters; when electing a president, character matters only indirectly. It's good to be reminded that we can't elect an ideal emperor ["the imperial presidency"] or a model child/sibling/spouse/parent/deity. The White House from time to time needs shrinking, embarrassment, even humiliation--as does the nation, in political rhetoric "the greatest nation on earth" [a phrase that embarrasses & even frightens me]...God, to cure excessive self-esteem in rulers & nations, laughs at us sinners [Ps.2.4]. But the president is a model, not a scapegoat carrying his & our national sins into the wilderness of Lethe [forgetfulness]. Rather, his repentance models repentance for the rest of us & for our sinful nation "under God." For one thing, as a nation we need to repent of expecting too much of a president as [Wm.Penn warned] a God-replacement [the sacred space being not the House of God but the White House, whose Oval Office is the Clinton-sex-desecrated holy of holies].)

And another thing God is doing in Clintongate is exploding the illusion that if a little knowledge is good, more knowledge is better & unlimited knowledge ("the Information Age/Superhighway") is best. The great traditions (the Garden of Eden, Pandora's Box, etc.) warn humanity against **knowing too much**. How old were you when you stopped wanting to know the details of your parents' sex-life? Except for addicts, it doesn't take long for new computer-owners to tire of the flood of info (so much data, so little depth). How come the more public-school sex education, the more pregnancies? And do you know more than you want to about Monica's dress? Fosdick's great hymn prays not increase our knowledge but "Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days."

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