

# THE BIBLE & "JUDGMENT DAY AT THE WHITE HOUSE"

A perceptive reviewer who "four times over" read my review (Thinksheet #2943) of this book has asked me to comment further, especially on....

1 Was mine a review, or an essay occasioned by the book? In the Random House Dictionary<sup>2</sup> the 1st meaning of a review is "a critical article or report...on a book...; critique; evaluation." Not a précis, an uncritical transcript in briefer form (such as a publisher might like). "Critical" means that the reviewer makes a judicious evaluation from a POV (point of view). My title clearly reveals my POV, which is that the book suffers from misfocus (on "the White House" rather than on the three-fold lack of judicial restraint) & myopia (a situation-definition in which the visual frame is filled by an up-close observation of only one person [as in moralistic individualism] rather than by a filled-in, multifaceted, multicontexted Event, which I take pains to detail as "the Starr-Clinton Event").

In short, my POV is in this Thinksheet's title's first three words.\* We need a book titled something like JUDGMENT DAY ON TOO-LOOSE FEDERAL JURISPRUDENCE: The Starr-Clinton Event.

"Too-loose": (1) Widespread agreement, after "Starr," that Congress should pare down special-prosecutor powers (write the statute tight enough to present, in future, Starr's excesses (which his own ethics specialist Dash called "immoral & unethical"); (2) Beguiled by the prevailing egalitarianism (specifically, "every citizen equal before the law"), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (for the 1st time!) that the Codex Juris Civilis (civil laws) are applicable to a sitting President (rather than after his/her presidency); (3) U.S. Attn'y Gen. Janet Reno let Starr loose to root around in a federal officer's past sexlife (a barndoor opening for [ex-designated Speaker of the House Bob Livingstone's phrase] "government by Larry Flynt").

"Past": Clinton, a man of Southern Baptist conscience, had broken off physical contacts with "that Lewinsky woman" after nine episodes, disgusted with himself (especially for yielding to her begging [as she testified under oath] him to ejaculate into her mouth--an experience her "friends" had had--& which led to the DNA/dress evidence). Not an immoral man,\*\* but a weak moral man who'd permitted himself to be seduced (of which Monica bragged, again under oath)...None of the 20 authors in the book was gracious, grace-ful, enough (1) to present Clinton/Monica sex as in the past or (2) to credit him, as a man of conscience, with breaking off a relationship he was experiencing as more painful than pleasurable. This failure of love is not unrelated to an unwillingness to believe him truly penitent & a willingness (as in the book's subtitle) to accuse him of "the Political Use and Abuse of Religion." Here, I think, the book, while claiming the moral high-ground, itself falls short of being moral (in the Christian-ethical sense).

2 Why didn't I answer the NT scholars (2 of the 20 authors) on the **biblical texts** they adduced (in effect) against my position? Short answer: In their uses of the Bible, they didn't address the Situation (as I saw/see it, & defined it in #2943 & [here] above). Here's the long answer:

....**Robert Jewett** (53-71) is slashingly judgmental (& uses scriptures in support of that 'tude): C. has "discredit[ed] some of the most delicate and precious aspects of the American religious heritage: compassion, the willingness to forgive, and the inclination to hope for redemption....the abuse of power....redemption is touted for political advantages....turned repentance into propaganda....assault on moral and religious integrity...." What scriptural warrants does he adduce for his unrelieved condemnation? First, "the priority of honor in biblical and early American discourse" (56, after citing 7 reff.). He quotes Pastor Weems (who fibbed about the "little hatchet"): "every body honoured" Washington (who, worse than C., had a mistress, but was not [as C. was] legally pressed to choose between lying or truth-telling about it). Surely J. knows that in Scripture, God used a pack of dishonorable characters (Noah the drunk, Abraham the wife-sacrificer [in his lie to Pharaoh], Jacob the cheat, Moses the murderer, David who wrecked a home by adultery & murder,....). Honor/shame are indeed powerful biblical sanctions, esp. as heightened in the NT by Stoicism (largely through Hellenistic Judaism). But J. exceeds the NT ethos here in bringing down the full weight of these sanctions on the pate of a guy who formerly (again, in his past) was guilty of genital wandering

\* #2943: "Law on Trial:....."  
 \*\* "Immoral": committed to long-term immoral behavior--as, eg, Martin Luther King, Jr., blameworthy for his spectacular (though unexposed) promiscuity, praiseworthy for his public contribution (proving there's no cause/effect relation of private & public life).

which he (conscience-stricken) did everything he could (as would almost everybody) to cover up. From this oh-so-human double failing on C.'s part, J. draws the out-sized conclusion that there's now "no way to restore public trust in his leadership....the integrity of our governmental system is now in jeopardy." But if the sky is really falling, how come the people (& the leaders of nations, who in the U.N. General Assembly gave him a five-minute standing ovation recently) continue to trust him to do a good job (though of course we can't trust him to be a saint, or even always "decent": he's a weak man with strong commitment & courage & ability to serve the public good--&, in biblical light, in this life-dimension, honorable). Jewett is under the simplistic illusion that there's a straight line between private, private-public, & public virtue (& thus dis/honor)....Again, J. accuses C. of violating the biblical proscription against public display of piety. But would he have C., the country's most public citizen, conceal his piety (not carry his Bible to church, repent only in private, etc.)? And what are we to say of his accusing certain fellow-clergy of being "exploited" by C.? (I'll not mention other instances of intemperate language driven by his rage against C. the Sinner.)

....**Klyne Snodgrass** (72-83) draws our attention to three texts: (1) **2Sam.11**, which C. defenders use to point out that D. was not impeached. S. says but he was punished. But S. fails to mention that D. was not punished by government (but by God). S. doesn't get it: the text is useless for his purpose. (2) **John 8.3-11**: "an attempt to test Jesus, to trap him....Jesus' answer is an effort to avoid a trap...." S. fails to see the irony of the David/C. parallel, viz Jesus' & C.'s slippery answers to questions that shouldn't have been asked. In effect, S. throws out this text as (1) of dubious canonical status & (2) dangerous ("I do not think we should form guidelines for responding to wrongdoing from this text"). How convenient! (3) **Matt. 18.23-35**. "Forgiveness from God requires change and right action," including "show[ing] forgiveness to others." True. And so is this: C. "needs to find a way to avoid leaving a negative moral legacy in the final years of his administration."

3 **Troy W. Martin** (84-89) gives a competent exposition of biblical forgiveness. And this: "For many [including himself?], President Clinton's actions following his request for forgiveness do not [give] evidence of genuine repentance." C. has given more evidence since M. wrote this.

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