

Andrews University
Leadership Program

DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT ELECT; A POLITICAL CRISIS OF MORAL
RELATIVISM IN A POSTMODERN AMERICA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to Beckwith & Koukl (1998), we are arriving to a reality where all people (especially leaders) not only have the right to their opinion, but they make their statements soundly strong even though they may sound fake, untruth, racial, bigot, misogynist and divisive. However, when the opinions of opponents of these leaders point out their fallacies and questionable moral decisions, they argue that all opinions are relative, that they did not lie about emails and destroyed servers, income taxes and foundations, that the media is rigged, or that we need to tell it like it is. For millions of Americans that was the message they liked, hated, opposed or supported and voted for or against. We will explore in this paper why this crisis of a moral relativistic nature in a postmodern America may drive crucial decisions not only in politics, but also in religion, education and sports under the presidency of Donald J. Trump.

Donald Trump; the Better of Two Morally Questionable Options?

The presidential race this year certainly revealed realities in our country most people knew were there but now apparently nobody is afraid of publicly expressing them. There were questions of misuse of power, lies about destroyed emails and other electronic devices, lack of integrity, humility, abundant hate, racism, bigotry and a general apathy toward political establishment and traditional government leadership. Distrust was spread everywhere to not only the candidates, but especially their followers. The results of the election also proved that some virtues and character traits and strengths

like integrity and humility are not a priority for voters anymore. As a part of integrity, Johnson, (2015) argues that leaders with integrity will speak and act the same way in public and in private. They also live the values they teach their followers and keep their promises. “Nothing undermines a leader’s moral authority more quickly than lack of integrity. Followers watch the behavior of leaders closely, and one untrustworthy act can undermine a pattern of credible behavior. Trust is broken, and cynicism spreads” (Johnson, 2015, p. 85). That is probably what voters thought about Hillary Clinton, Donald Trumps’ presidential race competitor. Now some followers are also having serious questions about Donald Trump after the choices of leaders to govern with him he is making and the changes in his promises and plans.

Humility, says Johnson (2015) is also considered a weakness for some leaders and CEOs who apparently are more concern in looking like rock stars than corporate executives. They are more concern about being in television shows, magazines and considered celebrities. However, humility does not consist in low self-esteem (Johnson, 2015), by the contrary, it allows a leader to be open about what needs improvement, to new ideas and growth as well as knowledge. “Humble leaders are less likely to be corrupted by power, claim excessive privileges, engage in fraud, abuse followers, and pursue selfish goals. They are more willing to serve others instead putting the needs of followers first while acting as role models” (Johnson, 2015, p. 86). On this topic we have heard both sides criticizing each other and blaming the opponent for a lack of humility and acknowledgment of errors, weaknesses and failures in the past. Some consider Trump to be the opposite of having humility since he openly says he never apologizes for anything he says or does, while at the same time his followers consider him a role model

since he chose to serve the country instead of staying as a business man who was making a lot of money. Others also consider that now with his political connections his businesses will be even more profitable, and that the conflict of interest especially with his choice of Secretary of State and other cabinet members is jeopardizing this perception of servant leadership through government.

In other words, are there any moral universally objective bounds to determine if our world is getting morally better or worse besides the media? Are Gandhi, Trump, Mother Teresa and Adolf Hitler and Osama Bin Laden just humans like anybody else when it comes to their moral views, actions and message? Beckwith & Koukl (1998) argue that this Moral Relativism has been gaining the minds and souls of our postmodern society, says Sire (2009), where nothing we think we know can be tested against certainty as such.

The American Mind Compared to Past Crisis in Moral Relativism History

Furthermore, Bloom (2008), when analyzing what he calls “the closing of the American mind”, compares the current status of our society with the Greek Athenian atmosphere, where educated men who considered each other equal, came together to express what they thought was the true meaning of life and moral boundaries, as well as the risks of denigrating the opinions of others. He elaborates even more about the current state of our higher education environment, where most students and faculty believe that “truth is relative” (Bloom, 2008). Probably what we have lost today is the capacity of listening and adopting something different to what we initially thought was the truth. Moral Relativism pushes the idea that anything is true as long as it is true for me, and that I should not doubt my own opinions, that is better to be a doubter than a believer of

someone else's teachings. That is when Ethics become also relative, where there is no specific right or wrong. Pleasure becomes the Moral Ethic bar to measure actions, no matter how far they may be from social and religious beliefs, as long as we can find a way to rationalize it, argues Beckwith & Koukl (1998). Are we really more open to dialogue seeking commonalities and constructing new moral and ethical guides for our society just because we have more access to food technology and shelter?

On the contrary, it appears that instead of Aristophanes and Socrates and many other Greek thinkers and philosophers of the past who openly developed their teachings as well as their moral values, we cruised through almost twenty centuries of intolerance and what some call moral objectivism (Beckwith & Koukl, 1998), with the belief that impartial moral ethics exist that apply in every dwelling, in every period, to every individual. This declining of the era of open dialogue caused the decadence of not only Greece but most of the western society and the growth of philosophical, religious, political and moral advancement for our society, says Bloom, (2008). The insertion of traditions and taboos mostly in the name of Christianity over open analysis of moral detrimental behaviors and practices shut down the introspective acknowledgment of what was wrong at the time. Any disagreement with the teachings of the Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, were usually punished with death.

Are Political and Religious Leaders Getting Better or Worse? What About Educational Leadership?

We face the challenge of "political correctness" (Beckwith, 1994), which is not a new concept brought by Donald Trump in the last few months. I just went about twenty five years back in my search for references and there were plenty of articles and books

written about those words. This concept is loosely defined as “a web of interconnected, though not mutually dependent, ideological beliefs that have intensified our cultural, gender, class, and racial differences in the name of diversity” (Beckwith & Koukl (1998, pp. 80, 81). Also, when we talk about educational leadership, the 47th Annual PDK Gallup/Poll about public attitudes toward public school clearly probes the differences and similarities among different ethnic groups, political parties and public school parents. It is clear that politicians know all these numbers and use them for their rhetoric during rallies knowing the response they may get by pointing out the risks of voting for the left or the right when it comes to education. They are both right but at the same time they are both wrong.

It is interesting to many experts in the field of education that there is vast research conducted in the United States about the failure of standardized testing and other issues in our educational system, however, countries in Europe, Asia and Australia are following the advice out of these research studies and learning theories discovered at Harvard, Stanford and other prestigious universities, but here in America we choose to keep shaping standardized minds instead of critical thinkers, argues Sacks (2009). Apparently some educational leaders consider that a mental standardized test determines the competency of an individual over other testing methods based on learners needs and characteristics. Other experts argue that we can judge the accomplishments and success through questions targeted to specific types of learners who are wired with multiple types of intelligence (Gardner, 2011). Can we actually frame the mind, predict achievements and potential with rigid rubrics? An average of almost 70% of all of those who

participated of that study agreed on one thing: we are having too much standardized testing and not actual assessments for potential entrepreneurs and free thinkers. (Q2)

Education as a Tool to Improve our Political Future

There is another reality of our society besides political correctness; the blaming game. We can improve teaching performance, of course, as well as other teaching-learning processes. Donald Trump is promising an Educational Revolution where teachers and students will achieve their maximum potential. Can we utilize more technology and innovation to reach out to all students based on their type of learning style and intelligence? Sure enough! But the reality goes beyond education. The sense that comfort and happiness are linked to less effort and more natural talents and skills is poisoning the minds of our world. More and more we see countries where the message from the leaders targets those who expect life to be free, including food, housing, health care and any other need.

Moreover, the message coming from home in many cases lacks the motivation, personal experience and positive hope based on hard work, effort, determination and time management. What and where is the solution? POLITICAL CRISIS. Sounds sad and cruel but it is true. Only deep political crisis, and the big economical, philosophical and religious crisis have historically waken up entire countries, continents and civilizations. Some civilizations learned from their mistakes, some disappeared from the face of the earth.

Political Areas Where Our World is Getting Better and Worse

What is getting better? We are several hours closer to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus than when I started writing this paper. Since the last suicide, cancer victim,

terrorist attack, mass shooting, starvation casualties and many other sad realities of our world, we are getting closer to the “end of the beginning”. The beginning of an era with no more pain, no more death, no more nights. It will not be pretty, comfortable or peaceful while we wait for this new chapter in history. The battle is intense, the challenges are bigger than ever before, but the championship trophy/gold medal/eternal life is the biggest award ever given to the human race. For some Donald Trump will bring the political and economic solutions America needs. For others, there are other political groups and organizations that will make possible to America to improve wages, lower taxes, and offer better education and health benefits for all Americans. The promise is on the table from the president elect and his team, time will tell if this will come a reality or not.

What is getting worst? The evil strength, negative willpower and low energy levels to hold on to what God says is morally right, ethically correct, and spiritually beneficial. Our human nature, our confused postmodern society encourages and embraces denial as the best therapy to deal with pain, sin and emptiness. Not recognizing we have problems will never solve them. America and the world is deeply divided when it comes to political beliefs. We can call it conservatives vs. liberals and many other ways, but the reality of inequality cannot be denied, and the solution to that and many other problems apparently will take more than just a change in government. Entire continents are struggling to keep the alliances and trade agreements signed to help those countries involved in those deals, (NAFTA, TPP, EU and others). Brexit started a movement of countries now thinking about becoming independent in Europe, and Donald Trump

promised to end TPP and NAFTA. We will see if that helps the countries involved in these separations or not.

Sports Ministries as a Tool to Help Politicians, Religions and Evangelism

How to survive to this? John 10:10 “Our enemy is only here to steal and kill and destroy. I came so YOU can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of”.

A growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), will always seek improvement and will also try to reach out to those in need. Sports and organized games in all its levels and kinds have been a tool to bring young and old people together through centuries of war, moral, political as well as religious crisis. After more than twenty five years working in Physical Education, Fitness and Sports organizations, I have seen the power this activities have to palliate the negative consequences of moral crisis in our postmodern world. Moreover, competitive Sports Ministries are one of “the most strategic and effective evangelistic and discipline methodology currently available to the church”, says Linville, (2012, p. 56). A Sports Ministry nurtures the participation in games with rules and some required levels of skills to build social and emotional bonds as a positive result.

Donald Trump wants to make America Great Again. I agree that there is also room for improvement and growth, since there are things that can be done better especially in education and in Sports Ministries. We need to include and bless as many members of our community and our world as we can. For that purpose working together is the key, even though the divisiveness is noticeable. Adding experts who are compassionate and servant leaders to our government will help Donald Trump to have a successful term. Adding more less competitive and recreational options to Sports

Ministries for those who may not have the skills or the desire to play interscholastic sports may be another solution for those involved in these Ministries.

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