

Why we don't like Donald Trump and what that means for the church

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So, I realize I'm using the Royal "We" here. Obviously, some people like Donald Trump, because he's polling quite well. As the days go on, he keeps managing to be resilient through one political disaster after another, and it's getting a little scary. After we stop styling our [cat's hair with his coif](#), the looming question remains: Could Trump actually become president?

The prophet of *Charisma Magazine* has decided that [Trump will become the Lord's Trumpet](#). He will expose our nation's perversion. (I'm not sure what the magazine assumes is perversion. Do they mean the fact that thousands of people are now have sex inside a loving covenant blessed by God and community? Are they referring to marriage equality, which could have the dastardly effect of making LGBTQ unions as boring as straight ones?)

Anyways, this prophecy aside, I think most of the dear readers here at the venerable *Christian Century* are probably rather horrified by the idea of Donald Trump as president.

But why? I'd like to explore that question a bit more.

Trump is a businessman. He radiates success. But unlike Mitt Romney, it's not a hobnobbing snootiness that would buy a good haircut. It's the straight-shooting sort of success that wears its hair *any way he pleases*. It's the sort of success that looks people straight in the eye and tells them, "You're fired!" And, isn't that what we need? Wouldn't a successful businessman make a successful politician?

Um. No.

According to our constitution, our government has six goals. Remember those, from eighth grade history class? The government is to **form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide a common defense,**

promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty.

Businesses have one goal: to make money. They also provide goods and services, but they do it to make money. Sure, some people have hobby businesses that don't make money, but they're not really successful. Successful businessmen and women will eschew the good or service if it is not profitable.

When making money is our goal in government, it corrupts. I do not agree with Michael Walzer on everything, but he did teach us that there are certain spheres that should not influence each other. There are certain goods that money should not buy. In our hyper-capitalist society, we have gotten thoroughly confused about this. Even in the church. But, let me repeat, there are things that money should not buy.

- Government should establish justice, even when a person does not have money. He or she should have the right to a fair trial and legal representation. We have seen this break down with the privatization of prisons. When prisons became a business, we made money off of those who were incarcerated. Now we have unjust sentencing, the New Jim Crow, and the world's highest prison population.
- Government should ensure domestic tranquility, free from money's coercion. But we have seen this fall apart, as the Black Lives Matter movement rips the blinders off of the larger society. When money gets involved, one group is protected over and against another group, and there is another place where racism thrives.
- We generally understand that love should be free of money's influence. A person should not buy love, nor should women be objectified (which brings me to Trump's "slob to supermodel" designations, but I can't even....).
- We ideally believe that power should be free of money's influence. When money buys power, it is bribery and establishes corruption. Though this ideal has been almost completely demolished in our country, with the rights of "corporate personhood."

We have seen a lot of this break down in our society, as it seems the government is working harder to protect corporations over citizens. That's why our stomachs turn a bit when someone with the primary goal of making money wants to run our government, because **the primary goal of the government is not making money.**

What does all of this have to do with the church? Many of you know that I serve as a Senior Consultant for the Center for Progressive Renewal. In that capacity, I have been working with churches to prepare for stewardship campaigns. I've been reading a lot, and I've been pretty shocked by the stewardship stuff out there. One book flatly says that we should spend more time with bigger donors.

Members *hate* this. And there's a reason. Religion is in a different sphere than designer jeans. We don't pay more for better religious services.

If you have read that we should spend more time with bigger donors, let me be clear. This is unjust. Plainly. Unjust. When money buys religious favors or positions that has the smell of simony and indulgences. And we had a Reformation over that. We're supposed to be doing things differently.

There's a good reason that we cringe when we remember that Donald Trump is running for president. It's because his goal is making money, and that should not be the goal of government. Likewise, church is not a business. We can use the wisdom and tools of business, but our goal is different. Our goal cannot be to make money and to imagine church in this manner is wrong.