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Religious Thoughts From “The West Wing”

Congratulations for Many Masterly Moments on Television

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Introduction

Religion and politics, do they belong together? Could they harmonize and match?

Christianity and "The West Wing" are brought together in this book.

Concerning small talk, it is said, politics and religion should be avoided.

And here, I'm writing about both of them.

I searched for books and articles about Christianity and "The West Wing", but I found only a few.

Was it my mistake?

I like "The West Wing".

Many of its episodes show Christians as politicians or mocking superstition.

I wonder what Christians think about that and how they react when they watch "The West Wing"?

Here and now are my thoughts, after reviewing many episodes and transcripts.

If some Christians have the image of "The West Wing" as an anti-Christian-TV-series, I would be glad if I could convince them otherwise.

At least there are no acoustic signals necessary to block bad language and no blinds to buy for the eyes to prevent from watching obscene scenes because there are no such things.

Or some people ... whoever ... are against Catholic presidents and Jewish senior staff?

I'm a Methodist. Going to a Methodist church in Hannover, Germany, as a child and a youth, I was blessed! I am convinced that John Wesley's thinking would be a good thing for the German Methodist church these days. Then I lived in a German city called Gießen without a Methodist congregation. I went to a church for American soldiers which was affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. I was blessed! Then I moved to Frankfurt, Germany. I looked for an international church and as a Methodist joined an Anglican Congregation. Really good Christians in the pews! For many years I belonged to a local global Lutheran Church in Frankfurt led by American pastors. I was blessed again! The sermons, the music, many members, just great. This congregation was affiliated with ELCA and LCMS (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod). When ELCA withdrew, things changed.

In American politics, religious references, Christian ideas, and political arguments based on Bible verses are common inspire of the American heritage as a nation - not only under God - which offers freedom to worship: To end a speech with a "God bless you and God bless ..." would surprise an audience in Germany and many other countries.

Journalists ask politicians about topics, in which many religious people are especially interested. Such questions can be found in "The West Wing". But it is extraordinary how these TV-movies mock superstition. And they are right: Superstition is slavery and stupid. God has set us free.

Explanation

The best way to find out what happens on "The West Wing" and what they say: just watch it. If you use your DVD-player or a device capable of playing them, you may enjoy all seven seasons with it, all 155 episodes from one DVD-box.

In this book you find under the heading of each short chapter the title of the episode, its number and times of the scenes.

My ideas and comments are based on quotes, which can for the most part be found on westwingtranscripts.com and in small parts on westwing.bewarne.com, springfieldspringfield.co.uk, westwing.wiki.com, homepage.eircom.net, and others in the internet. I'm offering some hints for a search on westwingtranscripts.com after the dates. (Westwingtranscripts.com is an independently-operated fansite and it is not affiliated with The West Wing, Warner Bros. or NBC, and has its own copyright. They say that the transcripts for seasons one to four are complete, season five is lacking some episodes (10, 11, 18), season six has only a few transcripts (1-3), and season seven has some episodes (1-13). But their transcripts - as others - have a few mistakes.)

A Tempting fate

SIX MEETINGS BEFORE LUNCH - 1/18 (0:45 - 1:52; 4:30 - 4:49) – ("Congratulations everybody")

Bonnie wants to celebrate. She is in a party-mood and Toby stops her. He stops everyone. He acts as Mr. Killjoy. Why?

Out of fear. Severe fear.

Something could happen. Something terrible.

His victory could change into defeat. Suddenly, he would be the loser.

What's his enemy?

He calls it tempting fate.

The weapon of fate is bad luck, very bad luck.

What can cause fate to be tempted?

To celebrate? To drink wine? To be sure to win? Too sure?

But, what is fate? Does it exist? Is it a person or some kind of power?

Is fate all-knowing? Why can fate be offended? And how? Does it make a difference, if I acted deliberately or accidentally?

Is fate scientifically proved? Is fate a hypothesis, based on what?

Are there different concepts of fate over the course of history and among different cultures?

Fate is superstition. The fear of fate is the modern version of being terrified of the goddess Nemesis.

This fear is deeply rooted. This fear is nerve-wrecking.

Therefore, the White House communications director, a powerful man, who wants to put someone on the bench of the Supreme Court, stops a party.

Until the decision.

B Concession speech

ELECTION NIGHT - 4/7 (5:10 - 6:03) – (“a speech if he wins”)

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. So, what, if you have such power? Or your boss has such power and you can use it now and then? And your boss has to fight for it, did it superbly, and it is now 99% sure that he will win this fight – and you will profit from it, again. It only needs the official affirmation. Wouldn't you be fearless? Even conceited? Perhaps arrogant? Being corrupted by power?

How could the President's communications director, Toby Ziegler, be so full of fear? About something he hasn't exact knowledge of it? Some “whatever”? Some “whatever”, for which he has only a vague idea of where it is located? Namely “high atop”. “The thing” – what is it? But “the thing”, better yet, the fear of “the thing” forces Toby to write a concession speech, just in case the very unlikely event happens and the President would lose his re-election.

And Toby asks the man, who directly reports to him, Sam Seaborn, the deputy communications director and main speech writer of the President, if he would do such thing and he answers “no”.

But Sam has answered “no”, without understanding what Toby said. Therefore he asks the Deputy Chief of Staff:

So, another senior adviser has the same terrible fear.

And Toby was still not able to characterize this object of fear. He is changing from a singular to plural: “These things”. And this idea becomes weird with the “half-life”.

“The West Wing”'s mocking description of fear is a precise picture.

And it is topped by the remedy, which is applied: Go outside, turn around three times and curse. And spit.

In addition, both men are shouting their orders to their colleague. Unbelievable. But that is what they believe in. And they forced another person to do stupid things – in the freezing winter cold outside.

What is interesting, too, Sam didn't say anything, which Toby later referred to: “He up and said we were gonna ...” No, Sam didn't. At least not verbally. He was just questioning an unnecessary work.

This fear has distorted Toby's mind.

Therefore, not one step away, but a million miles.

Conclusion:

It is not Sam that has to act, but Toby and Josh should change their stupid imaginations.

Congratulations to the screenplay-writer, who mocks perfectly this superstition.

C Better angels

THE CRACKPOTS AND THESE WOMEN - 1/5 (1:22 - 1:24; 34:48 – 35:30) - (“Let the poets”)

What is the fastest way to loose your job? No, it is not in starting a conflict with your boss. The fastest way to loose your job is to tell your boss that he is a detestable bad guy and he will never become a great man. And even worse – if that is possible – to be a sore loser in being critical of your boss.

So, could there be any person so stupid as to do just that? Yes. In “The West Wing” it is the second smartest person – after, of course, the President himself. His name is Toby Ziegler.

We got to know him in our first chapter.

Therefore one can wonder, if this event exposes the same fear in Toby?

It happened at the beginning of this episode and found its conclusion at the end of it.

They were playing basketball. There your goal is high and small. The endless ring and the sticky net.

You must be precise and fast, calm and collected and full of energy.

“The West Wing” shows the president as a highly intelligent, reflective person.

But here he was criticized by one of his lieutenants.

A senior adviser was speaking bravely to his boss.

Because his boss was – to speak plain and simple – cheating. He had in his team a professional basketball player.

But who knows if Toby was insulted that he was not the first choice for his position or that he was rightly not considered first because he was not the best, but only the best possible person?

Toby Ziegler changed almost from prose to lyrics with a pompous: “Let the poets write ...” Accordingly he added to the poets and a president a plural. Long lives the pluralis maiestatis. The US-president has definitely not one, but many “better angels”, as he has many “demons”. When Lincoln wanted to emphasize the Union and harmony among Americans, he spoke of the “better angels of our nature”. Better angels might be something between conscience, angel, demon and mind. It is something I don’t know. Perhaps just that. And it is what everybody wants to understand.

This idea, that the desire to win stems from evil forces, is part of the ideological world of superstition. It belongs to the concept a human being should stay in the boundaries of one’s destiny.

The biblical understanding is contrary to that. It is that of a guardian angel.

And Toby ended his thoughts that “we” have a chance to win the battle between the demons and better angels of “a President”, when the Presidents doesn’t want to win. What’s the meaning of “we”? And how is it possible to win when it is no longer the objective?

And, by the way, how important are “these women” to become great? What about Fortuna and about Nemesis?

D Fingers crossed

THE SHORT LIST - 1/9 (1:20 - 1:22); AND IT’S SHURELY TO THEIR CREDIT - 2/5 (4:25-4:32; 9:32 - 9:34); DUCK AND COVER - 7/12 (20:55 - 21:00)

“I want it right now!”

The easy way, with perfect results, is what we as human beings prefer. We want things right now, and we want them easy to get.

And we are a happy generation, which changed from instant coffee to coffee capsules now. Just to press the button and then ...

But, things are always complicated. No one understands how and why. What is behind all this? Who – or what – is in charge? And how can he – maybe “she”? – be convinced to be on our side?

And, how astonishingly, it is so easy to manipulate it – is “it” a whatever “from high atop the thing”? A tiny little move of two small parts of the human body is enough.

One couldn't see it as a deferential signal. It is not throwing a whole body to the ground in front of a mighty ruler or a god as we know the picture of catholic priests, when they are being consecrated.

In an important moment it seems to be enough that the press secretary, C.J. Cregg, is supporting the Presidents' deputy chief of staff, Josh Lyman, in crossing two fingers. Of course it should be two specific fingers. Does it? What, if the person is lacking one or two of these fingers? Or using the other hand? What is the “other” hand, because what is the “right” hand for it?

Or is it better to use both hands?

It is something he is doing so often: As President he is speaking and speaking. And now he had started to record a short radio address. But it won't work. Even if he is trying to boost his self-confidence.

Does this President - “Jed” Bartlet -, a devout catholic man, believe in a lucky number? Really? How can he change it instantly?

Was it a wise act of the secretary of the deputy chief of staff to correct him in saying it is take 5? Donnatella Moss describes herself in the same episode as “deputy deputy chief of staff”. Probably it wasn't smart. Otherwise she might have been the deputy chief of staff herself.

Was it smart of the President to use the word lucky number?

People sometimes think irrational behavior is rational behavior. In politics, as in private life. When sad or celebrating.

But it is not. “The West Wing” puts premium emphasis on a rational, caring behavior of intelligent politicians.

E Election day good-luck routines

Election Day Part I - 7/16 (1:23 - 1:27; 25:23 - 25:33)

To express an opinion or give some advice might get difficult, if the topic is connected to insight. Because the knowledge will hinder to say something funny or to say anything at all.

One campaigner says he would like to become a White House speechwriter after the election. Two women forbid him to say it and a colleague calls it bad karma.

Karma is some kind of religious thought without a god, more like a universal order, and it is about human deeds and their motives, which – because of that universal causal law - will decide about future births.

In this dialogue it is nothing else as Nemesis.

But at least it is an Eastern religious idea, geographically situated east to the dominant culture, during ancient times, as the Greeks saw it in Asia minor, at the end of the 20th century and as Americans saw India on its sub-continent.

At 4 a.m. Bruno goes into the Campaign Headquarters, with a very young and attractive woman called Carrie. They are kissing each other. When Jane, a political consultant, comes, he makes the introductions.

Later on during the day Bruno puts his wristwatch on his right hand. He obviously is switching where he is wearing it. Jane is watching.

Bruno confesses it to Jane as superstitious and sees it as one of his Election Day good-luck routines. The other is Carrie.

F Mr. Keith and the Great Depression

20 HOURS IN AMERICA PART II - 4/2 (2:06 - 4:15) - ("Uh, gentlemen")

Who doesn't know a situation, when everything is fine, you are in control of what you have to do in your job, and suddenly: Your boss is acting weird.

It changes from sunny to foggy in a split second.

What in the world is she – or he – thinking? What went wrong?

You have already worked for your boss a long time, but never heard anything from her or about her that would help to understand her motives right now.

The "body man" of the President, the guy who carries his bags etc., should cancel a photo event a second before the photographer will press the button. And for whatever reason, the body man gives a truthful answer, when the other person, who should be on the photo, asks why. But his boss gives a different reason at the same moment: How embarrassing.

This whole story is a great ridicule about superstition:

At the center is a former Nobel laureate in economics – now President -, who is talking to a man, who shook hands with President Hoover one day before the Great Depression started. Part of meeting the President is to take a picture. But the highly intelligent Professor-President fears to be seen on a picture with a man. Why? Because the other man met himself another person many decades ago and then the next day something terrible happened. And when the smart President talked to his smart body man, who was able to study – and finish successfully his studies – besides working fulltime for the most powerful man in the world – it became clear that Charlie had no photos on his desk. And Charlie starts mentioning tribes in South America and their fear of photographs. He doesn't relate it to the prohibitions against images as Jews or Muslims believe.

Is it only because the US-economy isn't in good shape and the stock exchange in Tokyo opens in a couple of hours?

The President knows why he said: Let's not tell anybody that.

And tomorrow, everything will be fine.

At least for the President.

Charlie, the body man, will probably still have no pictures on his desk.

The President will still have pictures on his desk, as he has had all the time.

And how about you?

G Franklin Hollis and C.J.'s new job

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY - 7/21 (08:51 - 08:59)

Most people would like to be as rich as a Rothschild. Or as Bill Gates.

Isn't it nice to buy a private island and "most of Montana"?

But what has to be done to become rich? How much have human beings to suffer that one individual could become a billionaire?

Is it possible that a mind, which was creative and aggressive enough to make billions, would change dramatically to invest ten billion dollars to help other people?

Could it be as simple as this? That a movie character called Franklin Hollis would like to establish a foundation because to keep his money might be seen as impolite.

How nice. Franklin Hollis doesn't want to look "impolite".

So, in addition to open a door or to help in the coat, he is willing to give a fortune away, starting with ten billion.

I would like to ask him a question: "You never used a shortcut or even illegal methods before you made your profits?"

Why now this?

And why so drastically?

In trying to understand him, I'm asking:

When and why did men spend a lot of money?

Was it not for graves such as the Great Pyramid of Giza or the Taj Mahal?

Franklin Hollis is quite likely not interested or concerned about his image for his contemporaries to wear for example the wrong bow tie to his tuxedo. The best interpretation is his fear for this future life and that of his family.

He wanted to create a balance between his bad deeds and good deeds, a balance, which is accepted by a power, who in the first instance gave him his enormous business success.

He most likely doesn't know what power that might be. Perhaps it might be a personalized power?

He doesn't know how that power can influence his life and the lives of the persons he loves.

He doesn't know, if that power can decide his situation after his death.

About these thoughts, he will not be influenced by a knowledge of Roman mythology.

But it is worthwhile to notice that the goddess Nemesis and her punishment of a person, who thinks too highly of himself, does give a clue about concepts such as those he is acting upon.

The question remains how and when this understanding jumped over a time span of 2000 years and over the gap of an ocean, from the Old to the New World?

Since the days of the Renaissance, the European elites took ancient believes, thoughts, insignia, sculptures, architecture, etc. pp. as a model. And the elites were copied and imitated by the general public. It is very reasonable that some superstitions and their rituals were not folksy superstitions, developed on the countryside by "wise women", but in fact some kind of "reincarnations" of beliefs, which survived Christianity either in subcultural circles or in Greek and Roman texts and gained new influence many centuries later. Therefore, it very likely stems from a feeling of dependency on unknown forces and might be enhanced by some remnants of Christian guilty conscience.

H I beheld a pale horse

LORD JOHN MARBURY - 1/11 (37:17 - 37:48; 38:43 - 38:53; 39:55 - 40:33) - ("never read Revelations"); ("Western society")

Human beings love catastrophes, which happen far away.

A shudder – but in fact irrelevant - makes life easier because it give the impression that our burdens are not too bad.

What really grabs our interest are real troubles. I mean: big trouble.

A new plague, perhaps stemming from military laboratories, or a couple of nuclear bombs thrown on large cities.

This is the fear in one episode.

To circumvent a deathly crisis, one needs good advice.

The President himself is looking for a solution and is thinking as an intellectual about something he had once read.

But he couldn't recall it and he is asking his body man. One wonders why not one of his very smart senior advisers?

Charlie had never read that part of that book. The last chapter of the Bible: The book of Revelations. With the message: Jesus wins

The President asked his body man again. It had the affect to stir up the curiosity of the TV-audience. And he asked him to look it up for him, but he – normally a faithful servant – never did.

At the end, the President will come back to his intellectual source.

And he gets the answer from a man one wouldn't assume to be familiar with the Bible, but this man instantly quotes it.

Apocalyptic times.

Pale is the color of death.

The 4th seal was broken to eventually open the scroll.

It is about the 4th horseman.

It is irrational, symbolic.

Why does the President want to know it?

A lunatic adviser, specially asked for by the President, a flamboyant Englishman and "an Indian expert", too. But an eminent observer, as one can expect from a longtime ambassador. One internet-commentator described the expert as a "man with serious opinions about serious issues".

He is quite different from the President and his inner circle: He loves alcohol, cigarettes, and women. The chief of staff is thinking that even his British accent is fake.

They all fear the use of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan during a conflict about Kashmir — still a conflict zone.

Why isn't the President looking for a Bible verse to sooth but to get horrified?

The best way for it is a storm, which didn't happen and the next day the TV-reporter said: "We expected the storm to hit this part of the coast, but it didn't. The storm had lost its strength before."

But everyone knows one day the big storm will come and hit at "the wrong spot" – the spot where we are.

I Praying for

DUCK AND COVER - 7/12 (21:15 - 21:17; 21:36 - 21:38) - ("Praying for")

The bigger the decision, the less time we take to think about it.

It is true sometimes, too, we feel the pressure of a big decision weighing on us.

A decision about life and death of ourselves is the biggest one.

The no. 2 is probably about life and death of a family member or friend.

And no. 3 is risking the life of someone we don't know.

And the President is facing this challenge: To endanger specialists, he has to send into a nuclear power plant to stop a super-gau, or risking the lives of the people in San Andreo.

I like that name, even though it is fictional: It sounds so very California-esque.

It is egotistical, but it is important to ask for a prayer because the President rightfully knows he needs it.

For both men on the telephone, a Christian life is not a talk, but a walk.

This story is intertwined with an election campaign, in which the front-runner did everything to boost this fatal nuclear power plant. And he is from the opposite party of the President. Ergo: The crisis is very good for the party of the President. A blow up would be a win, definitively. They could stay in the White House and would be busy in its West Wing.

J Inauguration

TOMORROW - 7/22 (23:08 - 23.21)

It's a fantasy world, in which two Catholic Presidents of the United States are talking to each other. Both believe in God and take their faith seriously. Actually, one isn't a President, but rather only a President-elect. But he is on his way to his inauguration and is accompanied by the outgoing President.

They are from the same political party, which doesn't mean they must be friends. More the opposite. In this case they are getting along quite well.

As I said, this is not real and most likely will never become reality.

Many politicians might claim they are religious persons. But this is only for show, to lure voters.

Back to our Presidents who are sitting together in the back of their limousine.

What are they talking about?

What could make sense in such a situation?

The retiring President asks the President-to-be a theolo-political question: his biblical quotation for the oath.

Would you expect such a question from your predecessor?

Whom of us knew before that there is such a thing as a "biblical quotation for the oath"? I mean it is not a wedding.

The President-elect is smart or has a good memory.

Therefore he gave the Bible-verse, in fact something more than one verse in length (1 Kings 3:9-11).

The retiring President, with his super smart mind, knows that verse and quotes it: "Grant thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people."

And he likes it and approves that choice like a teacher to a student.

It was not their first talk about religion.

And not the shortest.

Perhaps the President recited the quote with a different word at the beginning, instead of "give", as in the King James version. He might have wanted for it to sound more ancient and greater, and therefore used "grant"?

Solomon asked for wisdom.

Nevertheless he made mistakes:
 His many women and their hostile religions.
 To oppress his own people and steal their money using taxation.
 He had high goals and achieved a lot.
 His mistakes led to the downfall of his kingdom, which split in two parts, under the reign of his son Rehoboam.

The quote, which the President-elect chose, sounds good.
 But the story of his original author offers no example to follow.

Who knows, the new President might try to achieve a lot, if he doesn't fail, which is the alternative and more likely outcome.

K The Lord's Prayer

THE DOVER TEST - 6/6 (38:37 - 39:22)

I applied for a different job: Is that what you think about or say to yourself now and then?

There are many things many people try to avoid most of the time:
 One is visiting a really sick person in a hospital.

Nowadays a political leader must show empathy.
 He has to give the impression he is a caring person.
 Therefore, the President visits injured soldiers in a hospital.

And his aid has the challenge – by the way: why? – to pronounce a Spanish name correctly.
 The President circumvents this and just calls him by his rank.

The soldier tries to make a joke.
 He didn't ask for a special favor from the most powerful man in the world, a man, who could really help him in his difficult situation. He asked for more: He asked for the help of the one who created him.
 And the man, who is so good with words, starts a prayer, which billions before him prayed because that is the prayer they were taught by God himself.
 And the President, the boss of the party of change, uses the traditional version of that prayer: Our Father, who art ...

L Prayer breakfast

INAUGURATION PART I - 4/14 (10:25 - 11:27) - ("Heavenly Father")

When a cardinal prays and can see no power to change things, without going through the use of force by soldiers, what is wrong?

It happens at a prayer breakfast in the White House. And the President is among the high-ranking clergymen, whose dresses signal Christians, Jews and Muslims. And only a handful of women.

Is it all show? See and be seen? Expensive garments for self-aggrandizement?

But to solve a problem, the holy men demand help from the President, not from God.
 One might point out the fact that they are meeting in the house of the President, not in God's house.
 And it is at the time, when the President is starting his second term. Some kind of a new beginning.

Or is it all about the suffering and death of children which emphasizes a humanitarian crisis and put pressure and politics together?

Is it right or only short-sighted that the cardinal thinks and prays mainly about the children of his country, and adds a few words of prayer about other people there, who are in danger?

The archbishop at his table interestingly changes the focus.
He asks for military intervention from the superpower – not God – of the U.S.

And when the President admits to the archbishop that his intelligence report is poor because it's about an African country, and not a European one, the holy man finally says that he will join in with his colleagues in their prayers for the Americans. And that didn't stem from a Christian motive, but was a benevolent act from the winner of an argument.

In a country, where one can hear often phrases like "I'm praying for you" or "God bless America", the question is: Who has what kind of understanding of God's power? And what does it mean, when this question is raised in an episode about the second inauguration of a President?

M Bobby Zane

TAKE THIS SABBATH DAY - 1/14 (11:51 - 12:38; 14:44 - 14:54 24:08 - 26:50; 29:20 - 30:32; 37:01 - 41:09) - ("sing not only")

So we have a plot, where a smart strategist lobbies against the death penalty in, while using a couple of persons to put pressure on the President through senior advisers. The result is a dramatic episode.

Who is responsible for the execution of a death penalty?

Don't forget that question, but listen for a moment and know that I'm against the death penalty:

You can't undo that decision, which you have to do, if it were wrong.

And it is astonishing how many times such decisions were wrong.

In the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed, said during Sunday worship services, two human beings are named. The good one is a young lady and the bad one is a judge: Pontius Pilate. We all know – especially Pontius Pilate himself – that the death penalty for Jesus Christ was wrong. He was innocent. But out of bad reasoning, for example fear, the judge knowingly decided against the lack of evidence of guilt.

If it is done in a way to secure justice, it just costs too much.

And it is not a real deterrent.

For human beings, it is a horrifying thought to be in prison until one dies. Therefore a life sentence, without parole and no chance of ever leaving, is a deterrent.

In coming back to the question, who is responsible for the execution of a death penalty, we are manipulated by the author of that episode of "The West Wing".

Let's begin with the President. Even if the U.S.-President has the power to pardon a person, this would mean - in case it is the rule and not an exemption - a disrespectful act against the political and legal decisions of many other people. Because voters voted for persons or parties, which favored capital punishment. Judges who were installed by people, with such authority, decided after trials. Definitely the voters have some responsibility.

And not to forget the criminal. I assume that in many cases, small criminal acts were part of the criminals' life and who knows also of the life of the judge?

Why do I think that question is a manipulation by the author of the script to that TV-movie?
Because to find a dramatic topic, the argument at the heart of the plot focuses on a single act. It shifts our attention away from structures and processes.

If the President, after long and careful consideration, had given a pardon, he would have saved one life of a person, who might be blamed for other really bad things.

But if the President would take time to convince Congress to make a law, which reduced air pollution in inner cities very slightly, that alone would save the lives of many people, including some innocent babies with weak lungs and serious asthma. One law, which forbids automatic rifles, will save the lives of many and I could go on and on. What negative effects have the privatization of prisons in the U.S. had on criminal justice?

Voters and politicians face tough questions about life and death every day. And all the time, even when they won't see it, such questions exist nevertheless. What about the use of antibiotics in food production, especially the few antibiotics which are still, more or less, effective against multi resistance bacteria? Antibiotics, which should only be used against infections following surgery etc.?

N Hallelujah

POSSE COMITATUS - 3/22 (31:04 - 32:35; 33:39 - 34:06) - ("David played")

Every death is a loss. Every death – literally - is the strongest proof that something went wrong.

Every loss of a loved one is a tragedy.

And for a woman,
who is successful at her job,
who spends too much time at her job,
who now finds the right man
and suddenly has to hear the horrible news ...
The man, who should protect her, became the victim of a stupid act of crime by accident.

The head of the Presidential Detail for the Secret Service, Ron Butterfield, brings her the bad news.

And another woman talks to the man she loves – in a bumpy love affair.
For her it is a necessity to leave her job.

Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

O A deo iusto?

TWO CATHEDRALS - 2/22 (21:30 - 24:00; 35:00-35:25) - ("She bought her")

Is it the hubris of the man with the job, it is said to be the most powerful in the world that he dares to insult God in a blunt manner?

Definitely not, because he complains about his losses, which shows that God is in control, not he.

Is it the frustration of a little boy that the President feels his weakness?

How about the film director, who had the plan for such a plot? Did he understand what he was doing?

To reduce the insult, the film director had the President speak in fluent Latin.
On the other hand, it attracts some curiosity.

A simple mind would see this scene as anti-religious, anti-Christian or even anti-Roman-Catholicism.
But, of course, mine is not a "simple mind". Is yours?

It is biblical, what the President is doing. Yes, he is struggling with God. He is arguing with God.
He doesn't leave God. He is not creating his own personal god, which would be more convenient to him.

At that moment, the President is not warm and most importantly he is not lukewarm, he is cold – with a burning heart towards God.

Or is he saying to God, what I am doing with each of my sins against God?

"Jed" Bartlet is also fighting against his own father again.

The grinding of a cigarette butt on the floor is a kind of repetition, of what he did as a young man: In the same episode his father, the headmaster, had asked him about a cigarette butt, which was found in the school chapel.

In this episode the President changes his mind about not running for a second term and let Vice-President Hoynes take over, but will signal that he will fight again. This indicates that he is still following God, too. And the President knows that he should have given notice to the public about his severe illness, which he had hidden all the time. In this he admitted implicitly his sin of omitting it from his communications for many years.

And he finally admitted it to the public: his sin of concealing his illness.

At the end, he is at one accord with God again.

P Funeral

REQUIEM - 7/18 (12:43 - 12:50)

How boring sometimes human beings are talking. Perhaps, not only sometimes.
We've learnt to avoid subjects, which might lead to an argument, such as politics or religion.
And there are moments, when we have no idea what to say.
A funeral is such a moment.

A saying became popular on such a day: to declare a funeral as a celebration.

And the speaker added that he would like to have such a funeral one day.

What marvelous insight.

The funeral of a Christian is a celebration and should be celebrated in a joyous way.
The way of a Christian here on earth leads to God.
And when a Christian is finally home, what a wonderful reason to celebrate.
The mourners should not think and cry about their own loss, but get into a festive mood about the ultimate gift the loved one has received from God: to see Jesus.

Q Ice cream at the White House kitchen

IN GOD WE TRUST - 6/20 (35:50-39:25)

The President has almost finished his second term and the contender of the opposite party is in the White House. They went down to the kitchen and are sitting near a tall refrigerator, which has glass doors and is filled with many big ice cream-boxes, an ultimate dream of every little child.

And the President and the man, who could succeed him, are eating ice cream directly out of large tubs.

This is paradise on earth.

And what are they doing?

They are talking religion.

And they get into personal matters and are asking questions an American should not. For example, was Lincoln an atheist and only making references to God after he started running for office?

In reading the Bible, we should not look only for the passages we like to devour. And not to get angry about those we are just reading to get angry. As one politician in Frankfurt, Germany, liked to say: "Everyday I need to get upset three times".

The key in understanding the Bible is to stand under God. Not above him and not above the Bible. Using the Bible for our own purposes even – or especially – if they sound very pious, is standing on top of the Bible. The Bible definitely has many chapters or parts, which we can't grasp or they are not longer appropriate. When we read passages, we can understand that God will give us direction for our lives and comfort for our souls. When we go step by step on His way, there is more than enough to think about for our limited minds. One important aspect is to love our neighbors and not to dictate their life-styles.

R Religious test

IN GOD WE TRUST - 6/20 (40:03 - 41:00)

Not easy to do, for an American politician, is to avoid answering questions about his religious beliefs and practices. But sometimes things are changing and the general public, as some groups, are not interested in it, whatever the reasons may be.

But for this fictional contender for the presidency, it is difficult to refuse such answers.

Nevertheless he explains his future behavior.

One can separate church from state.

One cannot separate, whatever institution one might think of, from influencing politicians.

Is there any clear separation between religion and law? Definitely not.

A good rule of thumb for Christians: Don't try to be politically influential, if it includes personal attacks.

There is another: Does the political activity follow Jesus as a role model?

S What's the First Commandment?

PILOT - 1/1 (23:29 - 24:24; 34:22 – 37:25) - ("a deeply religious man")

A walk, a talk, and another walk.

All about one topic.

The theme is anger.

And what comes out of anger: hate and injuries.

One can assume that politics has a lot to do with anger.
But Christianity? It shouldn't.

How to calm down?
How to solve the problem of anger itself?
The answer is easy: Trust God.

When people in an organization think they need demons for their political muscle, this is the beginning of their end, even if they have no clue about it.

And in any case, where a church or Christian organization is doing it, they choose power over faith, which is the end of their faith-based-activities and therefore the end as a group of Christians. Christians, who are theologically trained, should recognize the difference between faith and power in any case.
Good Christians: Trust God.

Three parts for one beginning.
The end of the start is the will to become better.
How? Good Christians: Think about it. Who is stronger: God or the smartest politician?

T Sitting Ph.D.

THE MIDTERMS - 2/3 (32:27 - 35:08) - ("the awesome impact")

Oh, how wonderful it is to win an argument.

Sometimes the person who wins, is just more powerful.
A teacher, a parent, the President.
Then it is not the quality of the argument, but the power of the position decides, who is the winner.

Yes, how wonderful to win an argument.

It is much more tricky to make the world a better place.
It is the most tricky thing to make oneself better.
The good news is that is exactly what God wants to do.
That is exactly what God wants to do with his children.
And his children should change this globe.
Because God's kingdom has already started.
It happened about 2000 years ago.

So, when the President became the winner, he most likely used Bible verses, which the loser used before, as she had become the winner - when she used some higher authority. Context is king.

But does that make the earth a better place?
How to make our small personal universe better is to prioritize love for our neighbors over hate of people, who are weaker.

And why, because we are here on this planet to live as sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ: "Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. For this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

U Senator Sam Wilkinson

FAITH BASED INITIATIVE - 6/10 (17:46 - 17:52)

Short, to the point, toxic.

Impossible to wriggle out of it: Is the Bible literally true?

How do you answer such a question?

Good for you, if you are very smart.

Otherwise you won't find a safe response.

Toby, such a movie character, answers with an affirmative reply that both are not smart enough to understand it.

V Congressman Skinner

THE PORTLAND TRIP - 2/7 (22:40 - 23:35) - ("to quote the Bible")

The fancy alloy wheels are swinging around, getting slower and slower.

The car stops.

What does move a heart? And what stops a heart?

Why is a politician in favor of something against his personality? In this case he is homosexual.

What are the reasons he gives in public and what are the ones he shares in private, with a friend?

The friend doesn't relate that topic to love or lust, instead he mentions money.

The hidden truth is speaking volumes about votes.

How nice to discuss biblical questions.

Why do we ask them? Because we want to make a point. We want to win an argument.

But foremost: We want to figure out who stands where. We want to have clear understanding about the setting. Where do the dangers come from in our surroundings? Who is an enemy and who is a friend? We need an overview of our vicinity.

For that purpose, we like to put people into boxes.

And we chose specific biblical topics to discuss, in order to order our environment.

The fact that the facts are de facto quite different and eventually irrelevant, doesn't matter.

How nice ...

W Marriage

FAITH BASED INITIATIVE - 6/10 (34:40 - 35:30)

I'm secure.

Am I?

Is he?

To get something done one common way is in politics to attack, where the opponent is most vulnerable.

Right now the President needs an approval for his budget. Otherwise the government is in a mess and his presidency, too.

The senator amended the budget with something he really wanted.

And the senator takes some of the topics in the American civic culture literally as he does with the Scriptures.

Interesting about this conversation is how little political debating points and conflict issues are changing in the U.S.

In this regard it only gets more complicated with all the other technically possible civil unions and related occurrences.

X Husbands, love your wives

WAR CRIMES - 3/6 (4:35 - 6:42) - ("How was church?")

The episode is called "War Crimes".

The saying goes: The rules of fair play do not apply in love and war.

We have a couple with 3 grown daughters and they still are in love.
Are they?

Could their discussion be a proof?

A discussion after church service about the sermon is quite normal.

With these two people the difference is not only one is the most powerful man in the world, it is also the good memory of both of them. And when she seemingly forgot one word, which fits to the stereotype about women, this impression is only increased.

Y Rev. Don Butler

IN GOD WE TRUST - 6/20 (23:20 - 23:58)

For Senator Vinick it is a serious matter to choose his running mate after he announced his campaign for the presidency.

The press speculates about whether a pastor, who is politically active, might be his choice.

To be a pastor is a serious matter.

To be a politician is a serious matter.

To be both might not only get the audiences confused, but will primarily distort the preacher-politician.

There are many things that might lead to a misunderstanding.

There are many things, which everyone thinks that he is able to do, even if most people are not. One is to distinguish between what is said in irony and that which is not.

Let's take a simple test:

Would a reverend really let his forehead be tattooed? Isn't that the place where the mark of the beast will be seen according to Revelations? Was it only a joke from the preacher? A joke to get more attention from the reporter?

Could it be irony?

No. Only stupidity or careless speaking.

Z Life begins at conception

THE AL SMITH DINNER - 7/6 (6:19 - 6:34; 14:37 - 14:53; 26:11 - 26:18; 30:58 - 31:08; 35:03 - 35:14; 35:46 - 35:54; 36: 31 - 37:36) - ("hard to rebut")

Until 2016 it was a litmus test and an ever-present question in Christian political circles in the U.S., to ask politicians where they stand: pro-life or pro-choice? I'm sure the day will come when this is the case again.

Let's turn the clock backwards and see how it was discussed:

The Democratic aspirant to the throne of power in the U.S. is a devout Catholic.

The Republican candidate sees himself as vulnerable on this topic.

Finally, the Catholic contender is defending himself against the attacks of Becca, a lobbyist for abortion-rights.

By the way: That the Bible doesn't mention an abortion is not the same as accepting it. In general God forbids murder. For God, a human being is very precious. God knows every unborn human being. He made me. He knew me before I was born. Therefore: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalm 139:14).

AA Intelligent design

MR. FROST - 7/4 (4:17 - 4:36; 12:00 - 13:00; 23:26 - 23:30; 25:31 - 27:52; 36:25 - 37:05) - ("into classrooms")

A politician has to be a scientist, a teacher, a theologian, a wise and polite person ...

"He didn't say he didn't" is confronted with "he didn't say that he did".

So, what should I do?

And before I can decide upon it, what should I know?

Isn't that an hopeless endeavor?

And what makes it really difficult nobody was there, when God created the world. Sorry, I tried to be funny.

How much can a politician try to dodge a question, until it sounds hollow?

To what extent should a politician give insight into his beliefs?

Is a politician convincing, when he tells the truth, about what he believes or when he says what people like to hear or make a stringent story? Rara temporum felicitas ...

BB Men of faith

THE MIDTERMS - 2/3 (24:17 - 24:34) - ("Towering men")

What is behind the surface? Is there any skeleton in the closet?

Aren't the great women and men hidden from public praise? Aren't they the ones, who suffer or endure hardship and nevertheless be helpful and cheerful in their daily lives?

Is it possible that the President met them during his presidency or before?

How much do we underestimate the greatness of our fathers and mothers, our sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles? Even our grandmothers and grandfathers? - Besides on Mother's Day and Father's Day, of course.

Let's change that, start today and try it – at least – for this day.

CC Study on remote prayer

GUNS NOT BUTTER - 4/12 (18:24 - 19:49; 30:41 - 30:48; 33:23 - 34:40) - ("You meant million");

JEFFERSON LIVES - 5/3 (17:35 - 17:52)

This proposal is – what? – a trap, isn't it?

How about the President?

And now we catch a glimpse into the special humor of some people at the fictional White House.

What about a prayer for a politician, right now?

And now a prayer for a screenplay-writer.

A loving Father is listening.

DD Faith and friendship

EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN - 4/20 (26:50 - 27:30) - ("shot at twice")

The definition of faith from the New Testament became a title of an episode from "The West Wing".

Why? I don't know.

Was it necessary?

No, I don't think so.

This definition of faith, given by C.J., is a quote from a biblical book called "Letter to the Hebrews". Now, it is interesting that C.J. is discussing Jewish rituals with a Jew, and at the same time uses a Christian definition for an understanding of faith. C.J. claims to know Jewish rituals and be able to practice these rituals. She answers Toby's second "faith"-question:

C.J. grasp of faith is neither according to the definition – see Hebrews 11:1 - nor the title of that episode, which C.J. as a fictional character couldn't know, but for the trust in her friends. One must admit that it is sometimes not obvious, whether or not we can trust a friend. When we look closer, we can see that C.J. seems not to trust one single friend, but more their joint friendship. It is a trust in "us".
 OK. "Us" stands in the midst of "trust".
 What does the rest of the word, the "trt", tells us? I don't know.
 Perhaps how weak either "us" or "trt" in themselves are?

At least her faith gives her the strength to be successful in her demanding task as a White House press secretary and later on as the President's chief of staff. Or is she, as a person so powerful, and her trust in her friendship is only her explanation for it?

What concept of Jewish faith does she have? I don't know.
 Why does she know their rituals? Is she really able to perform them? Whoever might know that.

And why does she speak Spanish to her Jewish colleague?
 Does she know about the persecutions of Spanish Jews during the Late Middle Ages and their expulsion from Spain?

Yes, life is difficult, religion seems to be difficult, to talk about religion is sometimes difficult, and this also could be said about Christianity. But sometimes it is so easy. The "gospel in the nutshell": John 3:16, i.e. the fourth book of the New Testament, called "Gospel of John", chapter 3, verse 16. Or Jesus giving the Great Commandment. It is so simple and direct, what he says, that one can understand it, even in using the old words of the King James version, an old English translation: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31) Who is God? Jesus shows us God in a parable. It is about a son, who declares his father as dead. Because he wants his money, his in two senses: a) The money which his father owns and b) which he will one day inherit. And his father gives him that money. The young man is going bankrupt and sees only a chance of survival in going back to his father to work for him as an employee. And he is prepared to take all the blame on himself. But then – and this is how Jesus shows us God: "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." (Luke 15:20). Obviously the father is waiting and looking for him. Otherwise he wouldn't have seen him in the far distance. And he is running. Can you image someone looking like a prince from Saudi Arabia, with all his dignity in his blazing white gown, running in his sandals on a dusty road, almost stumbling, loosening his scarf around his head, a hot, red face, sweating? And making a farce of himself? And then he hugs him and kisses him. Part of the story I didn't mention is that his son worked with pigs. He must have looked absolutely dirty, and is it not possible to imagine how much the son stinks. Nevertheless the father hugs him and kisses him. That is how Jesus shows us God. This is very easy to understand. Everyone can visualize that. And, to finish this thought, who is or neighbor? Jesus tells another story (see Luke 10:30-37). The conclusion is easy. It is every person, whom we encounter, especially one who needs our help.

EE Bartlet became President

IN THE SHADOW OF TWO GUNMEN PART I - 2/1 (39:06 - 39:44) - ("national chairman")

Leo is in Alcoholics Anonymous.
 And Leo wants someone to do the things he can't.
 He wants to motivate Bartlet to run – not away, but for the presidency.

Why is he saying it in the way he is saying it?

Is it really a matter of faith to fake the behavior of a President?

Why is he using words, which sound like Old English?

Because he wants to quote something from a movie?

Again: Is there any deeper meaning for the word faith?

Or does Leo's final answer give the explanation as a kind of positive thinking, with the purpose of self manipulation?

If this is really trust in someone, at least in oneself, wouldn't it put trust in God aside?

FF George Washington Bible

INAUGURATION PART I - 4/14 (2:13 - 2:36) - ("George Washington Bible")

What is the Bible?

An old, outdated book?

Something which signals to value traditions?

Isn't it important to use a translation, which the reader can understand and is as near to oldest existing versions? And the size, circumstances of printing and use are not important – unless for a book collector?

That leads to another question: What is at the heart of being sworn in? And what is the function of laying hands on something printed, when it is acceptable to use a sports magazine? Isn't it possible to conclude that it might be a misuse of a Bible, when the substitution with a fashion magazine is possible?

So, if: Who is wrong?

The actors and what they say in this movie?

The specific understanding of swearing in and of a president in particular?

The understanding of the value and purpose of a Bible, for example in the U.S.?

God decided that we can find Him in a Bible. And that is true regardless of what might distract, confuse or upset us. And despite what we are doing that God doesn't like at all.

GG Spies for Christ

ABU EL BANAT - 5/9 (24:14 - 25:06) - ("Spies for Christ")

It starts with a cliché and is becoming complicated and dirty.

A good intention: and things are getting out of control.

Who is in control, by the way?

HH Do you go to church, Vinick?

IN GOD WE TRUST - 6/20 (29:00 - 29:35; 30:00 - 31:14; 32:40 - 33:07)

The senior people on the candidate's staff are getting nervous.

His running mate has a case-hardened view.

Conclusion: Why not show transparency towards the general public in saying the truth?

Trust for trust.

Why should they vote for the candidate, anyway?

II Baptism

THE DEBATE (WEST COAST) - 7/7 (45:58 - 46:05) - ("he was baptized")

How important is baptism?

How important is baptism to you?

Are you baptized?

I am baptized.

JJ Non-denominational service

TWO CATHEDRALS - 2/22 (12:40 -13:00; 32:44 - 33:33) - ("Of course it was")

Who defines what?

Normally the victor does.

A father slaps his grown-up son.

Later, the son becomes President of the U.S.

Is this TV-movie encouraging fathers to beat their sons to guarantee their success?

(It's irony, of course.)

KK Jewish

THE BIRNAM WOOD - 6/2 (27:07 - 27:41) - ("seeing you at temple")

Most of the times a terrible time is terrible because people are acting terribly.

It is sad to say that in many cases religious people are part of it.

Other people are trying to prevent such terrible things from happening.

I like to say that in many cases religious people are part of it.

In this case both men work to stop racists:

one man goes to worship God, the other doesn't.

LL Shibboleth

SHIBBOLETH - 2/8 (15:08-15:25; 23:31 - 24:08; 24:12 - 24:18; 29:25 - 31:30) - ("Yes it is")

I wonder quite often if people really like to know or do they prefer to be ignorant?
I seldom think they might wonder about me too.

Immanuel Kant was thinking about what can we know.

What do I believe in?

What are we willing to do? Even when it costs a lot of money.

Think about it.

MM Compassion

UNDECIDEDS - 7/8 (36:30 - 40:00) - ("My prayers are with")

He is speaking in a church service. He is a Christian. His theme is compassion.
He is convinced that we all need more compassion.
Where is it to be found?
His answer is: dig down deep and find it in your heart.

He was wrong.

Only God can give us compassion.

Let us ask Jesus for compassion.

NN Little Drummer Boy

IN EXCELSIS DEO - 1/10 (37:18 - the end) - ("The President would like to see you")

In fact, a dignified burial for a poor veteran.
A Jewish man and a woman, who lost their boys.

And boys singing a song composed by a woman, names of men were added to it later.

OO O, Night Divine!

HOLY NIGHT - 4/11 (39:25 - the end) - ("singing here all day")

A Jew tries to reconcile his Jewish colleague with his father. The father who belonged to Murder Inc. has served his time and wants to have contact with his children and grand-children. He was invited to his son's work place, which is a surprise for the son. The son is acting rudely towards his father. Because of a blizzard everyone has to stay in town and there is no hotel room for the father. The utmost that the son is offering him is a couch at his place.

The Whiffenpoofs are singing at the White House. Both men are listening to it together:

"Fall on your knees ...

O, night, when Christ was born.

O, night divine."