

Why South Carolina Was a Turning Point for Trump

“The shallow teapot does the most spouting and boils dry most quickly.”—Chinese proverb

“Mark well your habits—they will either make or mar you.”—American maxim

This ancient wisdom came to mind when I reflected on Saturday evening’s Republican debate in South Carolina. More specifically, Donald Trump’s ongoing rude and obnoxious behavior left many onlookers deeply disturbed and embarrassed. The location of the debate in the heart of the Bible Belt—where decorum, southern hospitality and good manners still count for something—made it all the more unsavory. It may also prove to be a turning point in Mr. Trump’s pursuit of the presidency.

In case you missed the experience, when moderators, candidates and the audience expressed disagreement with the billionaire businessman’s statements, he reacted angrily and engaged in childlike temper tantrums. He mocked the audience. He blasted other candidates as “liars.” He endlessly interrupted others trying to express their views. He was obnoxious and belligerent and went beyond the pale. At one point, I honestly feared that he might haul off and slug Ted Cruz while “Gentle Ben” Carson looked on.

Some believe that he is lowering the bar for presidential qualifications and can no longer give him a pass hoping he’ll show statesmanship in pursuing the most important job on the face of the earth. My own wife finally left the room Saturday, saying she’d had enough of Donald Trump’s juvenile antics and arrogance. A man told me the next morning that his wife had been a Trump supporter but after observing his disrespect and

bravado, she said she was done with him.

2 Different Perspectives

Some maintain we should excuse Trump's rashness and reckless behavior as it makes for good theater and the circus atmosphere he brings results in higher ratings and more voter interest. "Hey, he's a straight shooter who takes no guff and if he wants to use cuss words, belittle women and opponents plus lash out at politically correct media, bring it on, baby! I'm as mad as (expletive) about Obama's destructive transformation of our country and I'm not going to take it anymore! It's time to make America great again and I'm willing to give Trump a shot!"

Others believe that Donald Trump is dangerous and he's lowering the bar for presidential qualifications at a critical tipping point in America's history. "Think about the masses epic miscalculation with Barack Obama and the devastation he's brought! We can't afford to do it again. This guy isn't running for celebrity apprentice but the president of United States! We desperately need another Great Communicator like Ronald Reagan not a Great Disruptor! It's one thing to tap into people's angst and anger and bring constructive solutions. It's another thing to make a mockery of our political process and exhibit childish, contentious conduct as a substitute for robust and civil debate."

Peggy Noonan, who writes a brilliant column each week in the *Wall Street Journal*, said the following regarding Donald Trump in his pursuit of the presidency: "Mr. Trump is a clever man with his finger on the pulse, but his political future depends on two big questions. The first is: Is he at all a good man? Underneath the foul-mouthed flamboyance, is he in it for America? The second: Is he fully stable? He acts like a nut, calling people bimbos, flying off the handle with grievances. Is he mature, reliable? Is he at all a steady hand?"

After Mr. Trump departed his reality TV show and declared his candidacy for the Republican nomination, Politifact, a nonpartisan fact-checking organization, examined 77 of his statements from last year and found three-quarters to be wrong! He was awarded the "2015 Lie of the Year" award. When confronted or challenged as he was in Saturday's debate, his normal pattern is to discredit, deflect or denounce in tones lacking civility and any Christlike character. This is inexcusable because he himself says he's a Christian and the Bible is his favorite book!

Hillary Clinton is viewed by the majority as not trustworthy or authentic. I'm afraid Mr. Trump is increasingly being viewed as neither honest nor appealing. Unless there's a change, they both may eventually peel off and we'll not witness the "The Blob versus Brawler" showdown.

After watching numerous debates and TV interviews, scores have had the opportunity to discern if Donald Trump is ready to be the president of the United States. Imagine him handling world leaders and colleagues in tense, high-stakes meetings upon which the lives of countless millions rest. Would he be at all humble, self-controlled and circumspect or would he be domineering, dictatorial and driven by "the art of the deal"?

Chutzpah for Good or Bad?

In our lifetimes, most of us have had experiences with strong leaders. Some has been positive and some negative. Most of these leaders displayed "chutzpah" that quality, for good or bad, of audacity, insolence, gall to get something done. It's been described as the trait of someone who kills his parents then pleads for clemency because he's become an orphan!

In my recent reading of Winston Churchill's biography I once again encountered this towering figure of the 20th century. At a tipping point in history, he led courageously yet with

character to win the war against Hitler's socialistic Nazi regime. His classic commendation of the Royal Air Force still inspires us in the minority amid today's culture war. "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Mr. Churchill displayed chutzpah in a positive way to literally rescue Western civilization from destruction. He handled his critics (and there were many!) responsibly yet with civility. Like Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., this is what is absolutely necessary in America's next president. This may be our last chance and there really is no margin for error.

Here's the deal: For the Republican Party to redeem itself and reclaim the American Dream, it must have a presidential candidate with character and competence and be a party that is unified around him. It really is that simple and may people pray to that end.

This commentary began with quotes and ends in like manner with wisdom from an American hero, a former president and sacred Scripture.

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."—Babe Ruth

"Men trained in intellect but not in religion and morals will become a menace to the country."—Theodore Roosevelt

"A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart" (Prov. 18.2).