

## Heart and Soul

Ken Olson

The phrase alludes to our basic identity and character, our spirit. Words fail, but perhaps we can say it's who we are in the intangible inner core that gives rise to our dispositions and deeds. When a leader minimizes self and works for what is best for everyone, that doesn't come from nowhere: it springs from a good heart. And when a leader does terrible things, those result from a hollowness on the inside. As Scripture says, a good tree bears good fruit, a bad one bad fruit. Franklin Roosevelt once said, "The presidency is not merely an administrative office; it is pre-eminently a place of moral leadership." At the last election, tens of millions thought such ideals were irrelevant. George Will, longtime conservative Republican writer, doesn't hold back about the result, saying this administration is "a moral slum."

Thus, like flies to flypaper, morally bankrupt politicians, attorneys, clergy, sports figures, etc. gravitated to a deeply corrupt leader who has no moral compass to pledge allegiance, not "to the flag and the republic for which it stands," but to him. Martin Sheen, who was never president but played one on TV (*The West Wing*), said, "This group of people at the roundtable in the White House ... every one of them look across the table and they do not see anyone who is better than they are. They generally see a reflection of their worst selves. There are no heroes there. There's no music. There's no laughter. There's no self-effacement. There's no joy in that room. It smells of ego and fear and false worship."

Republican Ty Cobb was Trump's first-term White House Lawyer; this position gave him first-hand knowledge of presidential character. In a *Newsweek* article in November, Cobb said, "The Constitution, really, is not adequate to deal with a president as evil as Trump is --somebody who desires to accumulate and abuse power."

As with other demagogues, it is Trump's emptiness of heart and soul that drives him. When first asked why he wanted the presidency, he replied, "To be the most famous person in the world!" Seeking high office was simply another means to egotistical ends, regardless of the damage to the nation. This is why Plato wrote, some 24 centuries ago, that power should be given only to those who do not want it.

Trump, while flaunting his billions, his gold, and his mega-properties, presents himself as a populist, "a man of the people." --He is anything but. As new immigrant Thomas Paine wrote in his pamphlet *Common Sense* in 1776, "Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent. Selected from the rest of mankind, their minds are early poisoned by importance, and the world they act in differs so materially from the world at large that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interests and, when they succeed to the government, they are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any." Some things never change.

For a look at the black hole where Trump's heart and soul should be, recall his social media post reacting to the murder of Rob and Michelle Reiner, this by their mentally ill and chronically addicted son. Trump immediately projectile-vomited hate and lies, somehow blaming the couple for their own killing. His "go-to," as always, was that because they were his critics, they had

“Trump Derangement Syndrome.” He has no clue that such accusations are, instead, confessions, that his reflexive tantrums document his own derangement and are equivalent to his screaming “I’m not crazy –You’re crazy!” which the most deranged in asylums hurl at their doctors. (For superb analysis, find Thom Hartman’s article that tells it like it is: “Something is deeply wrong with Donald Trump.”) Only those with a similar vacancy of heart and soul defend words and actions that issue from Trump’s moral abyss.

Bill King, a columnist in Texas, sums up what most people know: “Trump reminds us daily that there is no bottom --none at all-- to his willingness to inflict more pain onto an already painful situation. When you think you’ve reached the floor, he shows you the shovel. ...I swear there’s no place left on this planet where Trump could walk in public for a snow cone or a bag of grapes without being met by open contempt. This isn’t partisan dislike. This is global revulsion. ...Humanity still knows bad from good, and Trump stands as a textbook example of moral rot. He ranks with the outcasts that history warns us about, the ones studied later, so we don’t repeat the damage.”

Ken Olson lives in Lewistown. He has a B.A. in Philosophy and a four-year M.Div. in Theology. He is the author of *Lens to the Natural World: Reflections on Dinosaurs, Galaxies, and God* (Foreword by Jack Horner).