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Racing Towards Theocracy
at an Accelerating Pace**

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In his 2017 speech *The Problem, the Solution, and the Challenges Before Us*, Bob Avakian analyzed the importance and nature of the “deal” that had been struck between Donald Trump and the Christian fascists. He said:

Trump, I think it’s fair to say, could not have won the election if the Christian Fascists ... not only if they had opposed him, but if they’d been unenthusiastic about him.... And ... even when the ... pussy-grabbing thing came out, they didn’t turn against him (...Jerry Falwell, Jr. and all these others)—because they recognized: “Here is somebody who is going outside of the whole rules and the way this is done in the ‘swamp of Washington,’ who will actually carry through on this stuff [like outlawing abortion and suppressing gay people]”... And Trump, for his part, recognized that if he didn’t get this force behind him, he was not going to be able to do it....

Pence is obviously a critical linchpin in this ... uniting of what’s represented by Trump ... and the Christian Fascists.... [T]he regular bourgeois institutions, ... like CNN, the Democratic Party and so on, ... they keep saying: “He can’t do that, that’s not the way things are done.” But then [Trump] does it, because he’s not playing by those rules. He’s not working within the norms as they’ve been. He is going directly up against them, precisely as an important part of what he’s doing.

The force of this alliance has been intensified by the current impeachment attempt launched by the Democrats and will likely grow even sharper, particularly if the regime is able to fully consolidate fascism as the outcome of this crisis. On October 11, Attorney General William Barr—who is supposed to be the highest law enforcement officer in the land and as such an impartial enforcer of the Constitution—trampled all over the constitutional separation of church and state in a speech. Barr said that “secularism”—that is, again, what is *supposed* by constitutional mandate to be the basic principle of governance in the U.S.—is the source of vast social problems, whereas “Judeo-Christian moral standards are ... God’s instruction manual in the best running of man and the best operation of human society.” (See “At Notre Dame, William Barr Lays Out A Christian Fascist Nightmare,” by Coco Das, from RefuseFascism.org.)

Yet this is still either outside the notice of, or being denied by, way too many people. The following chart gives a sense of how this has been playing out. It is likely that Trump will rely even more strongly on this section of society, with yet more moves toward outright theocracy (rule by religion), as the conflict intensifies.

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I. Hard-Core Christian Fascists Have Been Given Control of Key Levers of Power

Under the radar, Christian fascists have been consolidating power in key branches of government.

The Cabinet—The vice president and the heads of powerful departments of the government. At least eight of the 15 members are Christian fascists.

Vice President Mike Pence

Pence describes himself as “a Christian, a conservative and a Republican, in that order.” As governor of Indiana he was known for his hostility to LGBTQ rights (even supporting barbaric “conversion therapy” at one point). Trump has joked that Pence “wants to hang them all”—“them” being gay people. Governor Pence was equally hostile to women’s reproductive and abortion rights. Gripped by the biblical view of women as “temptresses,” Pence won’t even be alone in a room with a woman other than his wife.

Pence also believes that the creation of the state of Israel was a “miracle,” the fulfillment of a millennia-old “prophecy,” that it showed “the hand of heaven” at work, and that *for that reason*, “President Trump stands without apology for Israel, and he always will.”

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

Pompeo expressed his world-view in remarks to a church group in 2014: “The threat to America is from people who deeply believe that Islam is the way and the light and the only answer. They abhor Christians ... we pray and stand and fight and make sure we know that Jesus Christ as our savior is truly the only solution for our world.” At a “God and Country” rally in 2015, he declared that “To worship our lord and celebrate our nation at the same place is not only our right, it is our duty.” He quoted a fellow fanatic¹: “America had worshipped other Gods and called it multiculturalism. We’d endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.” And Pompeo went on: “We will continue to fight these battles...” because there is a “never-ending struggle” until “the rapture.” [For more on “the Rapture,” see “Applying ‘End-Times’ Theology as a Guide to U.S. Foreign Policy,” below]. Pompeo has also said that it was “possible” that Trump has been “raised” by God “to help save the Jewish people from the Iranian menace.”

¹ The Reverend Joe Wright, in the Opening Prayer to the Kansas House of Representatives, January 1996.

Attorney General William Barr

The man overseeing law enforcement in the U.S. gave a major speech to Notre Dame law students on October 11, railing against laws and judicial decisions that do not “reflect traditional moral [i.e., biblical] norms,” specifying “the decision legalizing abortion” and laws that prohibit Christian bigots from discriminating against LGBTQ people.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos

In a 2001 interview, after referring to battles between biblical Israel and enemy tribes, DeVos said that her goal was “to impact our culture in ways that are not the traditional funding-the-Christian-organization route, but that really may have greater Kingdom gain in the long run by changing the way we approach things—in this case, the system of education in the country.” In the same interview, her husband Dick complained that the church has been “displaced by the public school” as the center of community, and said that “Our job is to figure out ... how to get the pig bones [i.e., non-Judeo-Christian ideas] out of our culture.” Toward that end, DeVos sees herself spearheading an “education revolution”—in the guise of “encouraging choice.” In February 2019 she pitched a five billion dollar “school choice” tax credit that would provide federal funds for parents to send their children to private (particularly Christian) schools. This is part of a program to further *starve* public schools of resources while building up religious schools as well as home schooling. It is a program for putting Christianity at the center of “education”—as it was in the Dark Ages!

The Federal Courts

Among other things, the federal courts decide which state and federal laws are constitutional and which should be overturned. The rights to birth control and abortion, the right of gay people to marry, the right of Black people to attend public schools with white people, *all* rest on decisions in the federal court system, *and it is just as possible to sweep all of that away through court decisions.*

The Supreme Court

Although the political situation in the U.S. is not yet such that someone who *openly* based his judicial decisions on biblical law and morality could be confirmed, Trump



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has openly made opposition to abortion a litmus test for his nominees to the Supreme Court. Both of Trump’s appointees (Justices Gorsuch and Kavanaugh) are hostile to abortion rights. Gorsuch has also spoken against the courts being used to expand civil rights, specifically mentioning gay marriage. Kavanaugh has upheld legal theories that would *also* lead to banning contraception.²

Together with the three right-wing justices already on the Court (Alito, Roberts, and Thomas), they constitute a fascist majority that is now poised to gut or completely strip away abortion rights, which would almost certainly be an opening salvo in far more sweeping re-imposition of “Judeo-Christian morals.”

Lower Court Judges

As of September 19, 2019, 150 Trump nominees had been appointed to the federal courts—that is more than one in six of all federal judges. Overwhelmingly white and male, dozens of them have refused to say whether they support the 1954 decision (*Brown v. Board of Education*) that desegregated public schools. Lambda Legal (an LGBTQ rights organization) examined the records of all these judges and concluded that about one-third were overtly hostile to LGBTQ rights. One Trump appointee to the Court of Appeals—Judge John Bush—has equated abortion with slavery, strongly opposes same-sex marriage, and mocks climate change. Another—Amy Coney Barrett—belongs to “People of Praise,” a cult-like Christian group where women are told that husbands are heads of their wives and the authority in the family. Each female member is assigned an advisor who were long known as “handmaids” (but more recently changed to “women leaders”).

² Both the *Roe v. Wade* decision recognizing the right to abortion, and the *Griswold v. Connecticut* decision recognizing the right to birth control, rest on a common foundation, the view that the U.S. Constitution recognizes a right to privacy with which the state should not interfere. Kavanaugh is on record as thinking that no such right exists in the Constitution and that judicial decisions based on this are thus erroneous.

II. Breaking Down the Separation of Church and State

While the U.S. is officially secular, it has always had a semi-official Christian identity, with “In God We Trust” on the dollar bill, presidents ending speeches with “God Bless the USA,” and so on. And conservative Christian preachers like Billy Graham always had a certain access to and influence on the government. But this has leapt to a whole other level under Trump and Pence, with a complex network of fundamentalist Christian preachers, teachers and “advisors” ensconced in the halls of power, and high government officials openly identifying as “Christian leaders” and advocates.

Christian Fundamentalists Pervading the Halls of Power

Capitol Ministries: Headed by Ralph Drollinger, Capitol Ministries organizes weekly Bible study classes for top administration officials, as well as for congresspeople, and at the state government level. Belief in the “Rapture” and the End-Times are part of their core beliefs. Their “Bible lesson” when Trump was pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal was “The Bible on When War Is Justifiable”: this “lesson” also argued the obedience to the state is divine will: “Submit yourself for the Lord’s sake to every institution; whether to a king as the one in authority; or to governors as sent by Him...”! Drollinger has also called for Trump to set up a “benevolent dictatorship.”

At least seven cabinet-level officials, including Pence, Pompeo, and DeVos, are sponsors of Capitol Ministries.

The Evangelical Advisory Board: A somewhat loose group including many powerful Christian fascists.³ One member brags that the board “pays regular visits to the White House, which can start with policy briefings from West Wing staff and agency officials and end with impromptu visits to the Oval Office.” Policy matters are often discussed—Trump’s decision to bar transgender soldiers from the U.S. military grew out of such a discussion in July 2017, and some analysts have tracked a timeline linking these meetings and other Christian fascist policy moves. Some visits from evangelicals have involved “laying on of hands” on Trump, and in the words of one participant, “praying for our President—Supernatural Wisdom,

³ Key members as of September 2017 include Jerry Falwell Jr. of Liberty University; Ralph Reed, founder of the Faith and Freedom Coalition; Tony Perkins, head of the Family Research Council; Gary Bauer, president of American Values; and Robert Jeffress and Richard Land, both prominent reactionary leaders in the Southern Baptist Church, the largest evangelical denomination—all of these are virulently anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ rights.

Guidance and Protection—...wow—we are going to see another great spiritual awakening.”

Major Government Leaders at War With “Secularism”

Barr’s speech at Notre Dame: As noted in the section on “The Cabinet” above, Attorney General Barr—whose official role theoretically includes *enforcing* the separation of church and state—openly argued that only placing “Judeo-Christian morals” on center stage can save America from a secular hell on earth.

Mike Pompeo’s speech: On the same day as Barr’s Notre Dame speech, Pompeo spoke to the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) on “Being a Christian Leader,” *the text of which was then posted at the top of the State Department’s website* as if developing “Christian leaders” was part of the mission of the State Department. (AACC is a conservative Christian group that until recently supported “conversion therapy” for gay people, but now has to settle for “counseling” them to be “celibate.”)

Betsy DeVos’s Drive to Privatize and Christianize Education (see section I above) is another crucial aspect of breaking down the barriers between church and state.

Unbelievable as it may seem, in the 21st century there are still people — including people in positions of power and authority — who are determined to force women to bear children, regardless of the situation, the feelings, and the better judgment of those women themselves. That is a way of enslaving women to the dictates of an oppressive male supremacist, patriarchal system; and that is what the cruel fanatics who are determined to deny women the right to abortion are really all about.

Bob Avakian
from ON “PRINCIPLED COMPROMISES,”
AND OTHER CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

III. Applying “End-Times” Theology as a Guide to U.S. Foreign Policy

Many or most of the Christian fascists in the Trump/Pence regime share with their Christian fascist “advisors” (see section II above) “End-Times” theology—the view that the “second coming of Christ” prophesized in the Bible is coming *soon*, and when that happens, all the “true” *Christians* will be “Raptured” up to heaven (*everyone else* is destined for Hell!), and from there will watch as Jesus Christ inflicts seven years of “Tribulation” on the remaining inhabitants, after which he will lead an epic battle with the “antichrist” and establish a 1,000-year Kingdom of God on Earth. (Note: “End-Timers” may disagree on the *order* in which these events will occur, but agree on the basic scenario.)

Believers in this lunacy *welcome this, are looking forward* to being “Raptured,” and in many cases believe that it is their *responsibility* to prepare the ground for and hasten these events (which, again, involve the total annihilation and eternal damnation of the vast majority of human beings!). Remember Mike Pompeo’s statement that “We will continue to fight these battles...” because there is a “never-ending struggle” until “the Rapture.”

This theology frames and helps shape administration policy on matters of enormous importance. Two examples:

The End-Times and Israel

Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem: In May 2018, the Trump/Pence regime moved the U.S. embassy from the Israeli city of Tel Aviv (where almost all other countries have their embassies) to Jerusalem—a city considered holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Robert Jeffress, an End-Times fundamentalist mega-church preacher from Dallas (and member of Trump’s Evangelical Advisory Board), delivered the opening prayer: “We thank you every day that you have given us a president who boldly stands on the right side of history, and more importantly on the right side of you, oh, God, when it comes to Israel.”

Jeffress was thanking “God” because these fanatics believe that the return of all the “biblical” land of Israel (including much or all of the modern countries of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) to Jewish control *is a precondition for the Second Coming of Christ, and that the struggle in the Middle East is literally one between “God”*

and “*Satan*”! U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and opening the embassy there was a dramatic break with longstanding U.S. policy, and was opposed by most secular experts—including pro-Israel/pro-imperialist experts—as dooming any prospect of peace with the Palestinians and ushering in new violence and instability. But that was precisely the point—the move was symbolic of U.S. support for an aggressive and expansive Israel militarily dominating and seizing territory from the Arab peoples and countries in the region... clearing a path for the coming Rapture. As John Hagee, yet another Christian fascist preacher, put it in his closing blessing: “The Messiah will come and establish a Kingdom that will never end.”

The End-Times and Climate Change

The Trump/Pence regime is infamous for its wanton disregard for the planet we live on and its refusal to recognize, much less do anything about, the unfolding climate disaster: withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord, stepping up oil drilling in the Arctic Sea as the ice caps melt, stripping away the pitiful regulations that once sought to mitigate capitalism’s rampant destruction of the environment. While this approach is mainly grounded in the workings of capitalism-imperialism and its economic and strategic interests, it also converges with and is reinforced by the Christian fascists and their theology.

Defending the Earth Is None of Humanity’s Business: One view among them is that even if there is climate change, it’s God’s will, so stay out of it. As Michigan Congressman Tim Wahlberg put it: “I’m confident that if there’s a problem [with climate change], he [i.e., “God”] will take care of it.” Ralph Drollinger (of Capitol Ministries) says that it is “hubristic” [arrogant] for humans to try to do anything about it, because “God remains omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent in the current affairs of mankind” and that “To allow fish to govern the construction of dams, endangered species to govern power plants, flies to govern hospitals, or kangaroo rats, homes, is to miss the clear proclamation of God in Genesis.” (Drollinger also warns that the tendency of environmentalists to have only one child “is akin to ethnic suicide”!) After Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez issued a call for action on climate change, then-Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told Sean Hannity of Fox News that “I don’t think we’re going to listen to her on much of anything, particularly not on matters that we’re going to leave in the hands of a much, much higher authority...” [The fate of the earth is in] “... the hands of something and someone much more powerful than any of us.”

Welcoming the Devastation of the Environment: Other fundamentalists interpret climate change as another one of the signs of the Second Coming, which will be heralded by wars, famine, and so forth. As one former evangelical put it: “after these plagues, Jesus will return again. This time he will crash through the heavens on a white horse, drenched in the blood of his enemies and followed by the armies of his raptured and martyred saints. I not only believed this would happen, I was excited about it. I, like many evangelical Christians, longed for the day that Jesus would return.”



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IV. Building Up the Armed Forces for a Christian Holy War

The Christian fascists are going at this from two directions—on the one hand, working to “Christianize” the U.S. military, and on the other, developing private armies cohered around militant Christianity.

Christianizing the U.S. Military: Building Up a Fundamentalist Hard Core

Mass Conversions of Military Personnel into Christian Fundamentalism: The U.S. military is theoretically secular, and part of the official code of conduct even today is that officers “at all levels must ensure their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed to be officially endorsing or disapproving of, or extending preferential treatment for any faith.” The U.S. military has a system of chaplains who are *part of* the military but have mainly religious duties—but again, this has been presented as addressing the spiritual and moral needs of religious individuals, and not proselytizing or pushing any religious viewpoint.

But operating within this framework, the Christian fascists are moving effectively to build up a fundamentalist hard core. For instance, only 3% of members of the military belong to evangelical Christian churches, but between 33% and 75% of chaplains are evangelicals! (One reason for this is that the evangelical churches are aggressively recruiting people to be trained as military chaplains; Falwell’s Liberty University is even giving online degrees.)

And these evangelical chaplains are *not* just “ministering to people’s spiritual needs”—they are on a recruiting drive. Seizing on the vulnerability of young soldiers who are going through the military’s brutal basic training (the object of which is to “tear down” the old person and “rebuild” them as ruthless “warriors”), the fact that many are away from home for the first time in their lives, and so on, evangelical pastors are doing mass baptisms. *Baptist News* brags about how just one chaplain baptized 519 soldiers into the evangelical church in one year at Fort Jackson, including 170 in a single day. This “accomplishment” was promoted by the base itself in an Instagram post from their Public Affairs office which said that “Soldiers of all faiths are welcome to be baptized.” In other words, if you come to Fort Jackson an atheist, a Buddhist, a Catholic, a Jew, a Hindu, a Muslim, or a non-evangelical Protestant, the military “welcomes” you to cast that aside and become an evangelical Christian.

And this is not just one chaplain—the Southern Baptists alone have a network of 3,700 chaplains, and the director of chaplain services in the church—who is also a retired army major general—says that “Southern Baptist military chaplains are seeing a spiritual awakening of historic proportions in the Armed Services with record numbers of professions of faith, baptism, chapel attendance and disciple-making programs.”

Christianizing the U.S. Military: Promoting Hatred of Islam

Fanatical anti-Islamic sentiment and a “holy war” mentality are being whipped up among both enlisted troops and higher ranks. For instance, in August 2019, the important Navy publication *Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician* recommended three books by virulent anti-Muslim writers. One of these authors, Brigitte Gabriel, spoke in 2007 at the Joint Forces Staff College; during the Q&A she argued that a “practicing Muslim, who believes in the teaching of the Koran, cannot be a loyal citizen to the United States of America” and should not be allowed to run for political office.

She added that “What is worrisome about that is when we are faced with a war [note “when,” not “if”] and a Muslim political official in office” has to choose between serving the U.S. or serving the Islamic country the U.S. is at war with, inevitably “that Muslim in office will always have his loyalty to Islam.” In other words, Muslims are by definition traitors. And she went on to refer contemptuously to a Michigan city with a large Muslim population as “Dearbornistan.”

The U.S. Army War College also got in the act, inviting Raymond Ibrahim, the author of *Sword and Scimitar: Fourteen Centuries of War between Islam and the West*, to speak at the College’s prestigious 50th Annual Lecture Series. Ibrahim also wrote an article “Why Western Nations Should Accept Only Christian Refugees.”

Building Up Private Christian Armed Forces

Christian Militias: Christian fascism is also influential among some of the tens of thousands of heavily armed reactionary militia members organized in the U.S. For instance, the Hutaree militia consists of only Christian “soldiers” “who are arming themselves and training in anticipation of the coming of the Anti-Christ, which they believe is imminent.” They are part of the broader “Christian Patriot” branch of the militia movement.

Christian Mercenaries: Another area of influence is among mercenaries. Eric Prince is Betsy DeVos’s brother and is also a Christian fascist. A former Navy

SEAL, he organized the notorious Blackwater, a private army of thousands of mercenaries with their own training base, which was deployed by the U.S. government in the occupation of Iraq and after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. After three of its soldiers were convicted of murdering civilians in Iraq, Prince left the company and it changed its name, but Prince now operates a mercenary company called Frontier Services Group (which apparently oversees another firm called Lancaster⁶), which has its own air force, including attack helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and drones. Prince reportedly has been supplying mercenaries for Saudi Arabia's genocidal war in Yemen, and seeking a wider role serving the Trump/Pence regime. This is another powerful component of military forces potentially at the command of Christian fascism.

For the full understanding of why we need and could actually make revolution, WATCH the film of a speech by Bob Avakian:

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—Bob Avakian

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V. Attacks on Women's Reproductive Rights

A central part of the Christian fascist program is stripping women of all reproductive rights. This is not about “protecting fetal life”—it is about reducing women to incubators, fundamentally depriving them of control of their own lives, and in many cases, forcing them into situations of dependence on men, and opens the way to attacks on the right of divorce and other key elements of women's ability to function as full human beings (which is even now *highly* constrained). At this point, the right to abortion is “hanging by a thread” (see below) as a result of the decades-long Christian fascist assault.

State Laws Against Abortion

As of March 20, 2019, state legislatures had introduced 304 laws restricting abortion. Ohio, Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia, and Missouri have each signed into law bills banning abortion as early as six weeks after conception, which is often before women even know they are pregnant. Eleven other states had similar bills in the works at that time. Alabama enacted a law that would ban virtually all abortions, even in cases of rape or incest, and make abortion punishable by up to 99 years in jail.

These laws are in clear violation of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion and are not being put into effect. But they serve two functions for the Christian fascist assault—providing possible “test cases” that can go to the Supreme Court and be used to overturn *Roe*, and, once *Roe* is gone, these states will already have laws on the books to halt abortions.

Other state laws place extreme restrictions on clinics that perform abortions—such as requiring doctors to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals (even though it is extremely rare for abortions to require hospitalization, and when such emergencies occur, hospitals are obliged to admit patients regardless of the privileges of the doctor), or requiring hallways to be wide enough for hospital gurneys. The goal of these laws is to shut these clinics down without officially making abortion illegal, thus in practice denying women in those areas any access to abortion.

Attacks on clinics in Missouri have included the *monitoring of the menstrual cycles of women who have had abortions* at the Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis, the only remaining clinic in the state that still provides abortions. The state health director admitted that the department created a spreadsheet to identify “failed

abortions,” meaning patients who had to return to the clinic for an additional procedure. The spreadsheet did not identify women by name, but did include medical ID numbers, procedure dates, and the day of the patient’s last period. The state claims this was in order to supposedly find evidence of health problems resulting from abortions. But given the reality that abortion is a routine and safe medical procedure, the spreadsheet was clearly part of the attempt to shut down the clinic.

Missouri has also tried to impose a medically unnecessary pelvic exam on patients three days before their abortion. (This is *in addition to* the exam that is performed on the day of the procedure.) Clinic staff said that this unnecessary physical violation was tantamount to “rape”—yet another way to turn this simple and needed medical procedure into an impossible nightmare for women.

On October 4, 2019, the Supreme Court announced that it would rule on a highly restrictive law in Louisiana. The acting president of Planned Parenthood said that the implications of this could be enormous: “Access to abortion is hanging by a thread in this country, and this case is what could snap that thread.”

Federal Attacks on Reproductive Healthcare for Women

Defunding Planned Parenthood: Trump vowed to completely “defund” Planned Parenthood, and is well on his way to achieving this. Planned Parenthood is the leading sexual and reproductive healthcare provider in the U.S., providing birth control, cancer screening, sex education, and other services for about 2.5 million patients annually. It *already* receives no federal funds for the abortions it provides, but does get federal funds through Medicaid and in other ways for family planning and other healthcare services. In May 2019, the Department of Health and Human Services (headed by Alex Azar, yet another Christian fascist) issued new rules that would cut off all funding to any family planning service that referred patients for abortions. In August (after losing a court battle around this), Planned Parenthood announced it would no longer accept federal money for family planning so that it could continue to provide women with the full range of options to unwanted pregnancies.

VI. Attacks on LGBTQ People

This is another key element of the Christian fascist program. This is not just about them being “uncomfortable” or “old fogeys.” The hammering of women into very strict gender roles—as bearers and rearers of children and as “helpmates” to men—with their lives organized around the home and the church—*also* demands that anyone who “deviates” from this strict definition of male and female roles must be demonized, criminalized, ostracized, and *punished*. Trump’s “joke” about Pence wanting to “hang” all the gay people is NO JOKE, and it is backed up by Bible scripture—revered by fundamentalists—that calls for death for homosexuals.

At the same time, the opening up of gay rights in the last few decades—including the fact that literally millions of LGBTQ people “came out of the closet” to their friends, family and co-workers—has created a situation where it is not now possible for the Christian fascists to fully and openly argue for gay people to be reviled or killed. But *they are working on it!* On the one hand, the Christian fundamentalists paint themselves as being *victimized* by the very *existence* of LGBTQ people, supposedly “flaunting” their “deviancy” in front of “good Christian men and women.” And on the other hand, the regime has—relatively quietly—stripped away existing government protections against discrimination and is now itself actively discriminating and fighting for the “right” of others to discriminate.

In that light, oppressive measures listed below take on even more ominous meaning as the *beginning* of potentially unimaginable crimes against LGBTQ people, if and as the Christian fascist program is allowed and able to be put in full effect.

2017

January: Two hours after the regime took power, all mentions of LGBTQ issues and people were scrubbed from the White House website.

February: The regime decided to stop fighting in the courts and in other realms to protect transgender students from discrimination.

March: The regime announced it would no longer insist that federally funded homeless shelters make clear that LGBTQ people had the right to safety and shelter.

July: The federal government filed a brief in federal court arguing that the 1964 Civil Rights Act did *not* prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity—this was a major move toward *legalizing* discrimination against LGBTQ people.

July: Trump announced via Twitter that transgender people would not be able to serve in the U.S. military. (After much resistance, the policy was eventually implemented in April 2019.) While NO ONE should want to serve in the U.S. imperialist military, this ban was a dangerous public statement that transgender people are not full human beings.

September: The Trump administration filed a legal brief in the Supreme Court arguing that businesses had a constitutional right to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

October: The Justice Department ruled that federal agencies, government contractors, government grantees, and even private businesses could engage in discrimination, *as long as they can cite religious reasons for doing so*. This was opening the door wide for all kinds of discrimination—including the growing practice of federally funded adoption agencies refusing to allow gay couples to adopt, shutting or driving gay youths out of homeless shelters; refusing to provide breast cancer screenings for transgender women, and on and on. And the broader effect is to marginalize and dehumanize LGBTQ people.

2018

February: The Department of Education announced that it would automatically dismiss any complaints from transgender students about being excluded from school facilities based on gender identification.

May: The Federal Bureau of Prisons announced a policy of (in almost all cases) housing transgender inmates according to their birth gender—in other words, transgender women will now be housed with men, raising the extreme danger of rape, assault or murder.

2019

July: The State Department issued new guidelines that the U.S. would no longer advocate for “human rights” if it did not believe these rights fit in the “natural law” views of social conservatives—clearly implying that LGBTQ rights would not be upheld.

September: The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) *canceled* a plan to prohibit hospitals receiving Medicare and Medicaid funds from discriminating against LGBTQ patients.

November: Health and Human Services announced it would abandon civil rights rules for all recipients of HHS grants, which will allow discrimination against transgender people in HIV and STI prevention programs, opioid treatment centers, youth homeless services, and other *life and death* services.

Also in November, the Trump administration proposed a new rule that would allow faith-based foster care and adoption agencies (which are often the *only* such agencies) to continue to receive federal funds even if they discriminate against LGBTQ people.



Handmaid's Tale protest against Vice President Mike Pence, Philadelphia, July 24, 2019.
Photo: AP

VII. Putin's Russia as a "Model" for America's Theocrats

While the full and exact nature of the relationship between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin—the authoritarian leader of capitalist-imperialist Russia—is unclear, one thing that is clear is that a significant section of the Christian fascist forces look with admiration to Putin's Russia.⁴

Putin Is Implementing Many of the Key Elements of a Christian Theocracy

(Much of the following is drawn from Americans United for Separation of Church and State, July 18, 2018, "To Russia With Love: Why the Religious Right is Rootin' for Putin")

LGBTQ rights are under attack in Russia. A 2013 law that bans dissemination of "gay propaganda" to minors is worded so vaguely as to criminalize almost any LGBTQ-rights advocacy, and is now used to squelch public gatherings of gay people and detain gay-rights activists. Savage hate crimes against members of the LGBTQ community are soaring. Even health-related websites have been shut down. The mere act of displaying a rainbow flag can get you in trouble. The head of the Orthodox Church has said that same-sex couples are a "sign of the Apocalypse."

Religion classes are mandatory in Russian public schools. A 2012 law requires that Russian public schools teach a course called "Fundamentals of Religion" to elementary and secondary school students. (Courses are offered in four religions, but critics charge that many schools are steeped in Orthodoxy, the dominant religion in Russia). In addition, creationism is on the upswing—in 2010, an official with the Orthodox Church called for an end to the "monopoly of Darwinism" in Russian schools.

Women's rights are in a steady retreat. Last year, legislators in effect decriminalized many forms of domestic abuse. Starting in 2011, abortion rights have

⁴ In 1917, Russia was the birthplace of the first communist revolution, giving rise to the Soviet Union and carrying out many radical and liberating social transformations, including breaking with religion and other superstitions, and vastly expanding women's rights and their role in society. But by the mid-50s, capitalism had been restored, and in 1993, even the pretext of a socialist society was dropped, the Soviet Union collapsed, and the "new" Russia went into a profound economic and social crisis that lasted over a decade. In the wake of that, Putin took power and has been exercising and further consolidating a highly centralized, repressive and reactionary state... in close alliance with the Dark Ages apostles of the Russian Orthodox Church.

been under attack (including a law prohibiting doctors or clinics from advertising that they perform the procedure) and the government official in charge of “Family, Women and Children’s Affairs” was described by *The Nation* as viewing her “primary task” to be “to further restrict access to abortion and limit the availability of emergency contraception.” Orthodox Church officials are pressing for women to remain confined to “traditional” gender roles.

Putin is spearheading a return to “traditional values” and the moral authority of the Russian Orthodox Church.

According to *The Nation*, in September 2014, Putin presided over a meeting of journalists and academics and argued that “Europeans had strayed from their roots by legalizing gay marriage. He urged Russians to embrace the conservative values of the Orthodox Church and other traditional religions and issued a warning to those who might want to challenge those values. ... These are red lines that no one is allowed to cross.”

America’s Christian Fascists Admire and See This as a Positive Model.

Given the program and ideology of Putin’s Russia, is it any wonder that many Christian fascist forces in the U.S. gravitate toward and praise that model?

The World Congress of Families (WCF), a U.S.-based Christian fascist organization, has developed close ties with the Orthodox Church. Its website states that its 2011 summit “helped pass the first Russian laws restricting abortion in modern history” and the website proclaims that “Russia, with its historic commitment to deep spirituality and morality, can be a hope for the natural family supporters from all over the world.”

The Family Research Council (FRC)—a more “mainstream” Christian fascist organization with close ties to Vice President Mike Pence—has a formal partnership with WCF. In 2018, the WCF held a conference in Moldova (formerly part of the Soviet Union) under the theme of “The Natural Family: Uniting East and West” (i.e., opposition to gay marriage unites the American and Russian Christian fascists). Peter Sprigg of the FRC spoke on “Gender Ideology—The Latest Attack on the Family and the Legal Challenges It Poses.”

Scott Lively, founder and president of Defend the Family International and of Abiding Truth Ministries in Illinois, conducted a 50-city speaking tour in Russia in 2007 in order to “bring a warning about the homosexual political movement which has done much damage in my country.”

Peter LaBarbera, president of “**Americans for Truth About Homosexuality**,” wrote that “Russians do not want to follow America’s reckless and decadent promotion of gender confusion, sexual perversion, and anti-biblical ideologies to youth.”

Pat Buchanan (former speechwriter for Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan and a leading theoretician of American fascism) wrote that Putin was “entering a claim that Moscow is the Godly City of today,” and “In the culture war for the future of mankind, Putin is planting Russia’s flag firmly on the side of Christianity.”



Brave University of Virginia students stand up to the fascist mob in Charlottesville, VA, July 11, 2017. Photo: Twitter/@DailyProgress (Andrew Shurtleff/The Daily Progress)

VIII. Rallying the Christian Fascist Troops in the Face of the Impeachment Challenge

As the struggle at the top levels of the U.S. ruling class intensifies through the impeachment process, the Trump/Pence regime is increasingly reaching out to and rallying the Christian fundamentalists, who constitute the hard core of the hard core of their social base (81% of white Christian evangelical voters supported Trump in 2016). Although there was a bump in the road with Trump's decision to abandon the U.S.'s Kurdish allies to a Turkish invasion bent on ethnic cleansing (which the Christian evangelicals opposed for various reasons), in the main this alliance has not only held but is hardening.

Trump Rally at the Evangelical Base

Trump's speech to the Value Voter summit.

This summit is a major annual event organized by the FRC.

Trump was the main event. After praying with James Dobson (head of the FRC), Trump posed the impeachment battle as a war against Christians and Christianity, telling the crowd: "They're coming after me because I'm fighting for you. That's a big part of it ... They don't like you." And he went on to say: "They're trying to silence and punish the speech of Christians and religious believers of all faiths. They are trying to hound you from the workplace, expel you from the public square and weaken the American family and indoctrinate our children."

Christian Fascist Leaders Rally to Trump

Although at one point in the Syria crisis Christian fascist patriarch Pat Robertson did raise that Trump was "in danger of losing the Mandate of Heaven," in the main key leaders have rallied to Trump.

Rev. Robert Jeffress, a leading Southern Baptist, raised the threat of civil war if Trump is impeached, saying on *Fox & Friends* on September 30 that "it will cause a civil war-like fracture in this nation from which this country will never heal." Trump promptly re-tweeted this statement, and followed up by saying that "I am coming to the conclusion that what is taking place is not an impeachment, it is a COUP," aimed at further inflaming his base.

Ralph Reed, the founder of the Faith and Freedom Coalition and a major Christian fascist leader, announced on October 9 the publication of a new book, *For God and*

Country, The Christian Case for Trump. (The original title had been *Render to God and Trump*, but apparently that was a little too out there.)

Family Research Council: Trump's speech came on the heels of a day of speeches from other figures in the Christian fascist movement expressing support for Trump. Todd Stearnes, a prominent Christian broadcaster and author, denounced the attacks on Trump, saying, "We've got to take a stand. We cannot bow down. So, consider this your call to arms. Happy warriors, we are tasked with a defending a noble cause and a noble faith."

Franklin Graham: A leading evangelical who is notoriously anti-Muslim and anti-gay, Graham launched a major speaking tour through North Carolina in October, including speaking in Fayetteville, home to Fort Bragg, the largest military base in the U.S. While ostensibly a "nonpolitical" tour, Graham made a point of praying for Trump, asserting that Trump is doing a good job and that the Ukraine scandal is "a lot over nothing." Meanwhile, his audience did not need to be explicitly directed to support Trump—one woman told the *Los Angeles Times* that "I do believe that we are, as Christians, the first line of defense for the president." Another, asked about Jeffress's "civil war" comment, said: "Could have a war... you just don't know."

Conclusion

This regime has been steadily laying the foundations and erecting the infrastructure of theocracy. Fanatical Christian fascists with a shared vision of a “Christian” America hold key levers of power in multiple spheres of society—in education, foreign affairs, the legal and judicial structure, in housing, and of course in the White House and the presidency. The courts are poised to overturn women’s reproductive rights, the humanity of LGBTQ people is under attack, the Christian fascist social base is increasingly whipped up and Christian fascist military capacity built up.

And as pressure on Trump from his ruling class opponents intensifies, he is hewing more closely to his Christian fascist core, and the Christian fascists are barely even bothering to conceal their theocratic aims—note the speeches by Barr and Pompeo, both on the same night, both proceeding from a theocratic viewpoint.

It is *late*, but it is not *too* late to take this on and defeat it—to drive this whole regime from power on the basis of a mass nonviolent resistance that stands up for the basic humanity of all people, and to do this as part of preparing the ground for a revolutionary transformation of this whole society that gave rise to and in so many ways nourishes this Christian fascist barbaric lunacy. But the other possibility—the full consolidation of this fascist regime and the imposition of a Dark Ages mentality fused with modern weapons, surveillance, and propaganda apparatus—looms ever closer.

There is no time to lose.

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