

Theocracy Alert

Unscrupulous American theocrats aim to destroy our Constitution

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The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.—Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1785.

April 29, 2005—America is *not* a Christian nation. It is a nation many of whose citizens are Christians. That's not just a subtle turn of phrase. Understanding the difference is essential to understanding America's constitutional principles.

Christianity itself is not monolithic, as is evident by the many Christian denominations that exist in the USA. But there are certain politicians, and backers of certain politicians, who insist that America is a Christian nation . . . their brand of Christianity, of course. And they aim to destroy our constitutional republic in order to establish a Bible-based America—their interpretation of the Bible, of course—that is as much a theocracy as is the Islamic Republic of Iran. They are part of a political movement called Dominionism or [Christian Reconstructionism](#).

I doubt Jesus would recognize these Dominionists, Christian Reconstructionists, or to put it more clearly, American Theocrats, as his followers. They don't believe in separation of church and state. The Gospels of Mark and Luke suggest that Jesus did. "Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." —Mark 13:17 and Luke 20:25.

And, as for moral behavior, the plank in their political platform second only to tax breaks for the rich, a.k.a. God's Elect, considers Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX), the American Theocrats' standard-bearer in the U.S. House. In an April 12, 2002, speech at a gathering called [Worldview Weekend](#), DeLay said: "He [God] has been walking me through an incredible journey, and it all comes down to worldview, He is using me, all the time, everywhere, to stand up for biblical worldview in everything that I do and everywhere I am. He is training me, He is working with me."

Either DeLay is not listening to his God all the time, or his God has a very morally questionable agenda. DeLay is so [scandal-ridden](#), that he has purged Republicans on the House Ethics Committee, including the chairman, Joel Hefley of Colorado, who were unwilling to let him slide. DeLay replaced them with loyalists who changed the rules to make it harder to start an investigation—rules which the House overturned yesterday. He's also trying to take the heat off himself by raising the decibel level of his [attack on the courts](#). I suppose anything goes when you're working for Christian domination, though I don't think Jesus would agree with that:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. —Matthew 7:21–23

Last Sunday was called “Justice Sunday” by American Theocrats. On that day, these alleged Christians operating from a church in Louisville, Kentucky, simulcast to fundamentalist churches across the nation their diatribes against Senate Democrats, who are allegedly “filibustering people of faith.” The Democrats have filibustered 10 of George W. Bush’s judicial nominations . . . out of a total so far of 215. An editorial in the Sunday Louisville Courier-Journal titled “[Holy War Sunday](#)” described five of the rejected nominees:

“There’s Priscilla Owen, . . . whose eagerness to substitute her own values for the rule of law was too much for even Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, who rebuked her for it when both served on the same court.

“There’s Janice Rogers Brown, . . . who believes that our vibrant nation of free-market capitalism . . . has actually been crushed by the boot of collectivism ever since what she calls the 1937 ‘triumph of our own socialist revolution.’

“There’s Brett Kavanaugh, who has never tried a case, but rose from Ken Starr’s impeachment crusade to become a White House operative.

“There’s William G. Meyers III, who also lacks trial experience but who has put in plenty of time rabidly fighting against environmental laws and in favor of mining interests.

“And there’s William Haynes II, whose meager courtroom work is offset by his considerable contribution, as the Defense Department’s counsel, . . . regarding the treatment and rights of prisoners of war and detainees.”

American theocrats are also on the offensive against what they call “activist judges.” i.e., judges who don’t rule as the American theocrats want them to. These judges are called “activists” even when they don’t act. According to the American theocrats, judges, all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, were being “activists” when they refused a congressional invitation, in the form of a private relief bill, to disturb earlier rulings in the years-long litigation surrounding Terri Schiavo. Not to decide is to decide, and the American theocrats did not like the non-decision.

So now they want to bring the courts to heel by stripping them of funds and jurisdiction. They claim power to do so on the basis of Art. III Sec. 1, of the U.S. Constitution, which states: “The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish.”

Or, [as Tom DeLay has put it](#), “We set up the courts. We can unset the courts.”

Art. III Sec. 2, creates the jurisdiction of the courts and constrains Congress’ power to limit that jurisdiction to determining the appellate jurisdiction of the U.S. Supreme Court:

The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made, under their Authority;—to all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public ministers and Consuls;—to all Cases of admiralty and maritime Jurisdiction;—to Controversies to which the United States shall be a Party;—to Controversies between two or more States;—between a State and Citizens of another State;—between Citizens of different States;—between Citizens of the same State claiming Lands under Grants of different States, and between a State, or the Citizens thereof, and foreign States, Citizens or Subjects.

In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

The American theocrats are working on creating exceptions and regulations. On February 11, 2004, during the 108th Congress, Rep. Robert Aderholt of Alabama introduced HR 3799, co-sponsored by Rep. Mike Pence of Indiana. It was a bill "To limit the jurisdiction of Federal courts in certain cases and promote federalism."

You remember federalism. My online dictionary defines it as "[a] system of government in which power is divided between a central authority and constituent political units." The Republican Party, where the American theocrats are dug in, loves to say federalism means "states' rights." And the Republicans love "states' rights" when it comes to states cutting social programs, or putting the Ten Commandments on public property. They abhor "states' rights" when it comes to re-counting votes in an excruciatingly tight presidential election, or keeping the federal government out of a painful family decision.

Ironically, the bill's short title was [The Constitution Restoration Act of 2004](#). Among other things, this bill said:

TITLE I—JURISDICTION

SEC. 101. APPELLATE JURISDICTION. . . .

Sec. 1260. Matters not reviewable

Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the Supreme Court shall not have jurisdiction to review, by appeal, writ of certiorari, or otherwise, any matter to the extent that relief is sought against an element of Federal, State, or local government, or against an officer of Federal, State, or local government (whether or not acting in official personal capacity), by reason of that element's or officer's acknowledgement of God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government.'

The bill also contained the following:

TITLE III—ENFORCEMENT

SEC. 302. IMPEACHMENT, CONVICTION, AND REMOVAL OF JUDGES FOR CERTAIN EXTRAJURISDICTIONAL ACTIVITIES.

To the extent that a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States or any judge of any Federal court engages in any activity that exceeds the jurisdiction of the court of that justice or judge, as the case may be, by reason of section 1260 or 1370 of title 28, United States Code, as added by this Act, engaging in that activity shall be deemed to constitute the commission of—

- (1) an offense for which the judge may be removed upon impeachment and conviction; and
- (2) a breach of the standard of good behavior required by article III, section 1 of the Constitution.

If this bill had been law when Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore decided to place a Ten Commandments monument in the rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Court Building, the federal judges and justices who ruled that his act was unconstitutional could have been impeached for taking the case.

The "Constitution Restoration Act of 2004" died in the Judiciary Committee. In the 109th Congress, Aderholt reintroduced the bill, now numbered HR 1070, and called "The Constitution Restoration Act of 2005," on March 3, 2005. This time he has two dozen co-sponsors. It has been referred again to the Judiciary Committee.

Thus, the American theocrats are attempting to subordinate the Judicial Branch to the Legislative Branch. But by having Congress "ordain and establish" inferior courts, the Founders were merely anticipating that growth in geography and population would require more courts. The three branches of government have always been considered co-equal, as evidenced by the fact that the Founders gave each branch its own

Article in the Constitution. The Executive Branch is not considered inferior to Congress because Art. II Sec. 2 subjects certain presidential appointments to the “advice and consent” of the Senate. In fact, the “advice and consent” provision is a rubber stamp these days, with senators willing to approve nominees they think unfit on the grounds that the president has the right to pick his own advisors.

The lifetime appointments during “good behavior” are meant to keep judges above the political fray. And “good behavior” means not committing crimes. It does not mean only making decisions agreeable to certain members of Congress. Even Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN), who contributed a six-minute video to the “Justice Sunday” telecast, [has appeared to disassociate himself](#) from Tom DeLay’s extremism by stating in his videotaped address to the “Justice Sunday” event, “Our judiciary must be independent, impartial and fair. When we think judicial decisions are outside mainstream American values, we will say so. But we must also be clear that the balance of power among all three branches requires respect—not retaliation.”

The American theocrats may claim they want the Constitution to be “restored,” by forbidding judicial challenges to government recognition of the biblical God. But the Founders who wrote the Constitution, themselves believers in a higher power they often called Providence, made it clear that religious liberty, not religious tyranny, was one of the governing principles of the United States of America. Consider the presidential oath of office in Art. II, Sec. 1:

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:—“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

By allowing a president to affirm rather than swear, the Founders opened the presidency to those whose religious beliefs prohibit swearing and those with no religious beliefs. That would include Christians who follow the injunction of Jesus spelled out in Matthew 8: 34–37:

But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

The oath also makes clear that the president’s job is to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States,” not “preserve protect and defend the beliefs of _____ <fill in the name of a religious sect>.” The Constitution is for all Americans and the president is supposed to be the president of all Americans, not just those who adhere to a particular religious belief.

The traditional ending of the oath, the phrase “so help me God,” is not required by the Constitution. And though it is customary to take the oath on a bible, it is not constitutionally required. Indeed, if at some point we elect a president who does not profess Christianity or Judaism, it would be meaningless and wrong for him or her to swear (or affirm) by the scriptures of Christians and Jews. Taking the oath on a copy of the Constitution, or on nothing at all, would always be appropriate, even for Christians and Jews.

Of course, the American theocrats would strive to keep non-Christians (true non-Christians and those they define as such), from ever attaining the presidency. The very fact that they are theocrats shows that they have no use for Art. VI Cl. 3 of the Constitution, which says:

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but *no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.* (emphasis mine).

That's a clause that should be plain enough even to "[Originalist](#)" U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who says he reads the Constitution in a literal manner; his interpretations are based on what the Founders meant at the time they drafted the document.

So even before we get to the Bill of Rights, it's clear that our constitutional system of government does not uphold any form of Christianity as the supreme law of the land. Instead, the Founders wrote a constitution under which Americans of all beliefs or none could live and hold office.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion . . ." That's the very first clause of the First Amendment. NO ESTABLISHED RELIGION! The state of [Rhode Island](#) owes its very existence to the value of religious tolerance.

". . . or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." is the next clause. The Constitution's free exercise clause is not limited to the "Christianity" of the American theocrats.

Those who have not swallowed hook, line and sinker, the BushCorps' tale that terrorists who "hate our freedom" attacked the United States on Sept 11, 2001, have been deemed "conspiracy theorists." Those who have not agreed with the notion that we are in a generational global war on terrorism and that in war, Congress, the courts, the press and the people must defer to the president as commander-in-chief without question have had their patriotism put under suspicion. But the true enemies of America are the theocrats who would destroy our governing principles by replacing our constitutional republic with their "Christian Reconstruction."

No provision in our Constitution ought to be dearer to man than that which protects the rights of conscience against the power of its public functionaries, were it possible that any of these should consider a conquest over the conscience of men either attainable or applicable to any desirable purpose—President Thomas Jefferson. Letters to the Methodist Episcopal Church at New London, Connecticut, Feb. 4, 1809.

Christians are not being stopped from voting, holding office, owning property, or accessing the media to have their say, as "Justice Sunday" proves. No police or soldiers are coming to shut down their churches. Contrary to lies spread by the Republican National Committee in Arkansas and West Virginia in 2004, liberals are not planning to ban the bible. Book banning is a conservative tactic. In the post 9/11 era, FBI agents have entered mosques to question the politics of Muslims. Islam is being equated with terrorism. Young Muslim men, and young men who look like they could be Muslims, are "disappeared" off American streets. Note that after Timothy McVeigh's arrest for the Oklahoma City bombing, there was no harassment of young Christian men.

How far are we from the day the American theocrats will have the power to strip citizenship from those who do not profess their peculiar brand of Christianity?

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Journalist Kéllia Ramares is a natural-born American citizen and polytheist who is not picking anyone's pocket or breaking anyone's leg. Her web site is [Radio Internet Story Exchange](#).

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