

## *Theocracy Alert*

### **The religious right: An anti-American terrorist movement**

**By Carolyn Baker**

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May 13, 2005—When I was in college, I wrote a research paper that changed my life forever.

I had grown up in a fundamentalist Christian family living in the buckle of the Bible Belt where I was fed a steady diet of racism and Cold War anti-communism. My grandfather had been a member of the Klan in the 1920s, and as a high school student, I was saving money to join the John Birch Society.

Most personally detrimental to me, however, was the denigration by my high-school-educated parents of higher education. “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” they exhorted from the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. And, when I insisted on attending college, they reminded me incessantly that the wisdom of man is foolishness in the eyes of God. However, getting an education from a fundamentalist, Bob Jones University-like institution would be acceptable. I did not attend Bob Jones, but almost miraculously, given the fact that I was attending a similar institution, I started to think critically, and therefore, from their perspective, my parents’ caveat that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing” was validated.

In the second semester of my freshman year, I chose to write a research paper on race. It was 1964, and that summer, the Congress would pass the Civil Rights Act. Throughout my high school years, Martin Luther King was becoming a household word, and few people in my world held anything but contempt for the “colored communist sympathizer.”

As I reflect on my innocence at that age, but more importantly, my thirst for knowledge, I recall the hours of reading and research invested in the topic. Specifically, I set out to discover if African Americans were genuinely equal with whites. Pathetically, I was actually seeking evidence for the humanity of blacks. On the one hand, that I needed to research the topic in order to grasp that African Americans were my brothers and sisters was tragic, but on the other hand, that particular research project at that particular time in my life opened one door and closed another permanently, forever, and there was no turning back. I didn’t get an A on the paper, but it launched for me a journey of social justice that I have been on ever since.

Today, as I witness the possibility of losing the last shreds of liberty to a fundamentalist theocracy, I am reminded once again of my college research paper and how “dangerous” research, critical thinking, and asking the right questions can be. All those years ago, I extricated myself from the fundamentalist Christian programming of my family and subculture, and now I am watching it threaten to engulf my entire country.

To even attempt to understand the religious right, which many are now naming “Dominionism,” one must grasp the mental duress it holds on its followers. I should know; I was one of them. Axiomatic in the worldview of the fundamentalist, born-again Christian is: “I have the truth, I’m right; you don’t have the truth, you’re wrong.” As a result, critical thinking, research, or intellectual freedom of exploration are not only unnecessary, they are dangerous and potentially heretical.

[Paul Krugman noted in a recent article](#) that while the religious right bashes academia for its “liberal bias,” studies of the political persuasions of college and university professors indicate that persons who prefer academia as a lifelong career tend to be more liberal, just as those who prefer the military as a lifelong career tend to be more conservative.

The halls of academia do not spawn the likes of Tim LaHaye or Pat Robertson. Remember, “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

But simply shunning critical thinking does not make one a terrorist. What does, however, is the notion that because one “has the truth” and everyone else who believes differently is “wrong,” those individuals will be condemned to spend eternity in hell and must be incessantly reminded of their fate and their “inferior” status in the eyes of God. Moreover, because of one’s “superior” spiritual status, one has the so-called “divine authority” to subvert, by whatever means necessary, the very machinery of government in order to establish a theocracy in which one’s worldview is predominant.

When sufficiently pressed, Christian fundamentalists intractably argue that people are poor because they have not been born again. Like the Puritans of seventeenth-century America, wealth is a sign that one is following the will of God, and poverty indicates that one is not. People are poor because they are doing something to cause themselves to be poor, and whatever that may be, the underlying cause is that they do not have a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Increasingly, one sees many faces of color in fundamentalist congregations, but those individuals are almost without exception, born-again Christians who tow the Dominionist line with other people of color.

Dominionism deplores the mental health system. Like those who are poor, the mentally ill would not be so if they were born again Christians. After all, mental illness is a label given by the Dr. Phils of the world to people whose minds have been devoured by Satan. What they really need is Christian conversion and, of course, a great deal of medication from the pharmaceutical lobby. The only valid therapist is Jesus; down with Oprah, God bless Joyce Meyer. Obviously, according to Dominionism, government should not be financing mental health programs.

And what about addictions? In case you haven’t caught on to the drill yet, Jesus is the answer to that one as well. Who needs a Twelve-Step program? There’s only one step: Accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior as soon as possible, and your addictions will be erased faster than those 18 minutes on the Richard Nixon tapes. (Remind me to write another article on the religious right AS an addiction.)

Christian fundamentalism in “cafeteria style” has chosen which parts of Jesus’ teachings it chooses to honor and which not. Preference is always given to the “I am” passages such as those in the Gospel of John in which Jesus says, “I am the door; the bread of life; the way, the truth, and the life; the light of the world; the living water,” and so on, supposedly claiming to be God and commanding his listeners to accept him as the only way to live forever with God in heaven and escape eternity in hell. Little attention is given to the Sermon on the Mount and the many passages where Jesus condemns the wealthy and the religious leaders of his time for their callous, hypocritical, mean-spirited absence of compassion. In fact, theologians who pay much attention to Jesus’ teachings on compassion are viewed as bleeding hearts, unorthodox, and not really Christian. For this reason, Pat Robertson stated on his 700 Club Program, January 14, 1991: “You say you’re supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense. I don’ have to be nice to the spirit of the Antichrist.”

Let us not overlook the obvious: Dominionism is about dominion—over women, children, the poor, people of color, alternative sexual orientations, and the earth. It fits so nicely with fascist tyranny.

Christian fundamentalism is fundamentally UN-American. Dominionists clearly desire a revised United States Constitution that will institute a fundamentalist Christian theocracy. As [Katherine Yurica](#) has so assiduously reported, the Dominionist agenda would shred the Constitution and end the democratic republic our Deist founding fathers hammered out for five grueling months in 1787 in Philadelphia.

In fact, Pat Robertson believes that only Christian people should interpret and benefit from the Constitution. Again, on his 700 Club, December 30, 1981, he stated that “The Constitution of the United States is a marvelous document for self-government by Christian people. But the minute you turn the document into the hands of non-Christian people and atheistic people they can use it to destroy the very foundation of our society.” Never mind that most of the founding fathers did not consider themselves Christian and clearly, adamantly, and unequivocally defended the right of everyone in America to believe—or *not* believe, as he/she chooses.

Replacing this republic would be the Dominionist theocracy which pronounces itself above the rule of law and claims to be directed by the “higher law” of the Bible. In that society, abortion would be illegal, even in cases of rape or incest; capital punishment would be mandatory in every state, and for some Dominionists, it should be extended to anyone with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual; the nation’s entire infrastructure and economy would be privatized; public schools would be turned into essentially Dominionist parochial schools, and no social services would exist except those of faith-based charities.

The fastest-growing industry in the nation, the prison system, would undoubtedly find itself at the top of the financial markets as hordes of “unbelievers” were incarcerated. However, given the multitudes of fundamentalist Christian organizations now proselytizing in the nation’s prisons, the heathen masses would be given “one more chance” to be born again, hence sending them to prison would be doing God’s work and society a favor.

Most egregious, and certainly paralleling terrorism’s culture of death is the fundamentalist Christian contempt for life—I repeat: *contempt for life*. As [Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister](#) notes, being “pro-birth” is not the same as being pro-life. Forcing females to have children without providing what they need financially, emotionally, and educationally is a pro-birth agenda that murders countless bodies and souls. Because they don’t think the Sermon on the Mount is really very important, these individuals have an appalling disconnect, fawning over the decaying body of a woman in a permanent vegetative state while praising the demise of over 100,000 innocent Iraqi citizens and touting the patriotism of some 1,600 dead U.S. troops.

The religious right of twenty-first century America is anti-American, inherently violent, and a cruel, tyrannical, punitive, force of death and destruction. In its mindset, adult human lives do not matter because the human condition itself is inherently evil resulting in eternal and everlasting punishment in hell, unless its members are redeemed in a prescribed manner by the fundamentalist God/man/savior, Jesus Christ. Moreover, with an embarrassingly adolescent flamboyance, Dominionists shamelessly rape, pillage, and desecrate the earth because in the first place, their Bible has given them authority over all things human and in the second place, their “imminent” apocalyptic rapture, transporting them from the human “veil of tears” to live happily ever after in heaven, entitles them to do so.

Meanwhile, we the unredeemed, the unbelievers, the poor, the feminists, the gay and lesbian, the disabled, the homeless, the mentally ill, the addicted, and those who are conscientiously following divergent spiritual paths of their choice, are suffering in the wake of Christian fundamentalism’s devastation of the economy, the earth, and the human race. But this is what we deserve for not becoming born-again devotees of their Jesus. And we deserve even worse—to burn in hell for all of eternity. Hence, we are expendable, inconsequential, and a force to be conquered, broken, imprisoned, or killed.

In his article, “Feeling The Hate,” in the May 2005 issue of *Harpers Magazine*, Chris Hedges conjectures that we may well see a civil war in America between the religious right and everyone else who does not identify as such. I do not know if this will happen, but I do know that the demented logic and circular reasoning of “the Bible says” fundamentalists must be challenged and exposed at every turn for what it is: Intellectual, emotional, and spiritual terrorism—un-American, un-democratic, inhuman. Furthermore, I wouldn’t be surprised if some of their children, somewhere, sometime, write research papers that prove to the world that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

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