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Theocracy Alert

And the Supreme Court nominee is . . .

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July 13, 2005—Within minutes of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's announcement that she was retiring, the leaders of the evangelical Christian Right began working toward their own version of John Nelson Darby's "[rapture](#)." *Roe v. Wade* overturned, no such things as gay (or any other minorities') civil rights, no right to privacy for anyone, and the agents of "morality" everywhere enforcing "God's will," as defined by the likes of Louis Sheldon and James Dobson, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.

Those who refused to embrace the theocratic regime would be "left behind," relegated to permanent second-class status. The most egregious among them—those gay people who want to confess love and affirm social commitment by getting married—would be consigned to the [Louis P. Sheldon Camps](#) to be "properly" dealt with by [Commandant Rev. Fred Phelps](#).

Rev. Sheldon was [salivating](#) online, as was [James Dobson](#) and the other proponents of theocracy. Most commentators, analysts, pundits, scholars and political scientists agree that Sandra Day O'Connor was indeed a moderate voice for reason: a jurist who considered each case on its merits rather than ruling according to a political or theological ideology. But for Rev. Sheldon, she was a radical "leftist." Then again, just about everyone and everything are left of Rev. Sheldon and his "thinking."

James Dobson was quick to point out that Bush promised "during his campaign that he would appoint justices in the mold of Clarence Thomas or Antonin Scalia."

Most Americans do not want persons who are openly engaged in homosexual conduct as partners in their businesses, as scoutmasters for their children, as teachers in their children's schools, or as boarders in their home.—Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in dissent of the *Lawrence v. Texas* decision

I cannot do the horrible, conservative things I would like to do to society.—Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, AP, March 2004

[Clarence Thomas](#) keeps a lower profile than Scalia, but his "[originalist](#)" opposition to basic [civil rights](#) is a matter of [record](#). What isn't widely known—or wasn't until the July 6 New York Times [OpEd](#) by Paul Gewortz and Chad Golder—is that Clarence Thomas is the most "activist judge" on the Supreme Court:

We found that justices vary widely in their inclination to strike down Congressional laws. Justice Clarence Thomas, appointed by President George H. W. Bush, was the most inclined, voting to invalidate 65.63 percent of those laws; Justice Stephen Breyer, appointed by President Bill Clinton, was the least, voting to invalidate 28.13 percent. The tally for all the justices appears below.

Thomas 65.63 percent, Kennedy 64.06 percent, Scalia 56.25 percent, Rehnquist 46.88 percent, O'Connor 46.77 percent, Souter 42.19 percent, Stevens 39.34 percent, Ginsburg 39.06 percent, Breyer 28.13 percent

By July 5, Don Wildmon of the American Family Association was hysterically sounding the same [note](#) as Sheldon and Dobson: “Stand With The President, Ask Him To Keep His Promise And Appoint Another Scalia and Thomas To The Supreme Court: Help send millions of letters to the President encouraging him to stay the course.” And in bold red font: “It is vitally important that you forward this to every person on your email list.”

Imagining the possibility of rekindling the Dark Ages when they ruled supreme, Catholic theocrats quickly joined the fray. A Catholic group by the name of [Fidelis](#) warned Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter and Ranking Member Senator Patrick Leahy to keep anti-religious bigotry out of the upcoming Supreme Court confirmation hearings.”

How hypocritical. High-road “moral” threats from the Catholic Church that’s responsible for the torture and murder of *millions* of people throughout its blood-soaked history. That’s the same Catholic Church that covered up its enormous pedophile sex scandal. The same Catholic Church that tries at every turn to embed its religious bigotry into the civil laws of sovereign nations now wants “religious bigotry” declared sacrosanct in political matters. But it gets better . . .

Fidelis President Joseph Cella stated: “We will be paying particularly close attention to Senators Kennedy, Schumer, Feinstein, Durbin and Feingold who vilified Bill Pryor for having ‘deeply-held’ religious beliefs. Mocking any nominee for living their beliefs, and abusing them with sharp rhetoric will not go unanswered. We also warn Senators Landrieu, Chaffee, Nelson (FL), Snowe, Stabenow, Collins, and Johnson to not ‘Pryor’ any nominee.”

How interesting Cella would cite [William Pryor](#), a man whose legal decisions and other professional statements are little more than rephrased religious dogma of the most vile kind. Pryor was the only attorney general from another state to author an amicus brief defending the Texas sodomy statute used solely against homosexuals when the case ([Lawrence v. Texas](#)) was before the U.S. Supreme Court. In the brief, he argued that states have an interest in singling out same-sex relationships for punishment and compared them to “prostitution, adultery, necrophilia, bestiality, possession of child pornography . . . incest and pedophilia.” The date of a Pryor family vacation at Disney World was changed to avoid being in the park when same-sex families were also there. As Kevin Cathcart, executive director of Lambda Legal put it, “William Pryor is the most demonstrably antigay judicial nominee in recent memory.”

Cella called Pryor a man of “deeply held” religious beliefs. That’s fine. What’s not fine is when those personal religious beliefs dictate professional legal decisions and judgments, which is exactly what Fidelis and the Christian Right want, especially when it comes to women’s rights and gay rights. But they don’t want that unethical and unprofessional behavior criticized, nor do they want faith-based attitudes about abortion or gay rights used as a litmus test, even though they themselves use them as such.

That lesson in basic theocratic logic is already being played out in relation to the possible nomination of attorney general Alberto R. Gonzales. He’s definitively opposed by the gurus of the Christian Right because of his views on abortion. “Conservative Groups Rally Against Gonzales as Justice” was the title of a July 3 New York Times [article](#) by Adam Nagourney, Todd S. Purdum and David D. Kirkpatrick: “Within hours after Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s announced retirement from the Supreme Court, members of conservative groups around the country convened in five national conference calls in which, participants said, they shared one big concern: heading off any effort by President Bush to nominate his attorney general, Alberto R. Gonzales, to replace her.”

Those same Christian leaders and groups don’t want the Senate to ask questions about nominees’ views on “religious issues” such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Can the Christian Right get any more hypocritical?

Even the G.O.P. is getting concerned about the *obvious* hypocrisy and hysterical language of the Christian Right, as reported by the New York Times on July 6 in an [article](#) entitled “G.O.P. Asks Conservative Allies to Cool Rhetoric Over the Court”:

The White House and the Senate Republican leadership are pushing back against pressure from some of their conservative allies about the coming Supreme Court nomination, urging them to stop attacking Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales as a potential nominee and to tone down their talk of a culture war.

Other than the Christian Right exposing themselves as ranting hypocrites, there's another upside to all this. George W. Bush could be impaled on the horns of a dilemma. Does he do as his Christian Right masters demand, or does he try to salvage his place in history? With luck, he won't accomplish either. Each of the leaders of the "Christian Right" wants to remake the Supreme Court in his own *particular* image, and there's nothing like infighting among dogmatic, megalomaniacal theocrats to cause a self-destruction implosion. For GWB, choosing the particular "Christian base" for *his* Christian base could prove to be . . . "nuclear," as he says.

And the infighting has begun with a new label: "celebrity gospel." According to Rev. Mark H. Creech [writing](#) for AgapePress, "A celebrity gospel is when a preacher compromises the gospel of Christ in order to achieve or sustain a celebrity status." And although Creech names only two guilty of this "anathema"—Billy Graham and [Joel Osteen](#)—it would seem Rev. Lou Sheldon fit the bill as well. His antics and public statements, as well as his plea to buy his new *outrageously* homophobic book make the case for his inclusion. The e-mailed plea began with . . .

PLEASE ORDER REV SHELDON'S NEW BOOK
EXPOSING THE HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA

As a loyal supporter of the Traditional Values Coalition, Rev. Lou Sheldon is asking you and the religious conservative community to support the call to morality that is spelled-out in his new book, *The Agenda: The Homosexual Plan to Change America* . . .

The plea to purchase included a clear "celebrity gospel" blurb: "Conservative Christian pastor, Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, spends every day on the frontlines of the battle to stop the homosexual agenda" and uses his media empire to enhance himself and his message of hate. That a boy, Lou! Show your true colors . . .

Another positive potential from Justice O'Connor's resignation is that new alliances and coalitions will probably be formed, and they might well be just the political forces needed to defeat the American Taliban and its Republican cohorts. They must be. The stakes are too high not to be. Women's rights, gay rights, basic civil rights and a litany of issues many other Americans care deeply about are all at stake. The [Constitution Restoration Act](#) in the hands of a theocratic Supreme Court could be . . . [deadly](#), in all ways.

Educators come immediately to mind. Many times they are prevented from conveying the knowledge and providing the professional services they know are needed, because faith-based bureaucrats refuse textbooks offering anything but Bible-approved curricula and deny funding for "tolerance" and "diversity" programs. With all the money going to "faith-based" initiatives—such as "[abstinence only](#)" sex education (which the American Academy of Pediatrics [opposes](#))—there's less money for real education, especially for those most in need, as Michael Janofsky noted in his July 4 New York Times [Article](#): "A new analysis of federal money that public schools receive for low-income students shows that a record number of the nation's school districts will receive less in the coming academic year than they did for the one just ended."

Other potential allies include the medical research community and those whose loved ones suffer from diseases and disabilities embryonic stem cell research may be able to cure if it were fully funded and considered a national health care imperative, which it should be. But Mr. Bush is adamant about his [stem cell theology](#): "President Bush seems determined to thwart any loosening of the restrictions he has imposed on federal financing of embryonic stem cell research, despite rising sentiment in Congress and the nation at large for greater federal support of this fast-emerging field. His actions are based on strong religious beliefs on the part of some conservative Christians, and presumably the president himself. Such convictions deserve respect, but it is wrong to impose them on this pluralistic nation."

Since the leaders of the Christian Right and their political sycophants—such as [William Pryor](#) and [Rick Santorum](#)—see gay people as “animals” polluting the theocratic environment, animal rights activists and environmentalists are natural allies, especially as Bush moves to fulfill his commitments to Republicans’ corporate obligations and their “biblical duty” as Dobson’s Focus on the Family outlined them in their pre-2004 election “Must Read Election Message”:

God put human beings on the earth to “subdue it” and to “have dominion” over the animals (Gen. 1:28). . . . The Bible does not view “untouched nature” as the ideal state of the earth, but expects human beings to develop and use the earth’s resources wisely for mankind’s needs (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; 9:3; 1 Tim. 4:4). In fact, we believe that public policy based on the idealism of “untouched nature” hinders wise development of the earth’s resources. . . .

The rape of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge makes the case, as does the Bush administration’s record on *all* other ecological and environmental issues. Among reputable scientists, there is no doubt about global warming and the disastrous effects it could have in the near future but, once again, obeying his masters on the Christian Right and the oil industry, Mr. Bush turns a blind eye and deaf ear, as an [AP story](#) recently attested: “In an interview with British journalist Trevor McDonald to be broadcast on ITV television Monday [July 4], Bush repeated his opposition to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and said the United States would not sign it or any similar deals limiting gas emissions.”

As more “middle class” Americans have a harder and harder time making ends meet, they, too, may become increasingly angry about all their tax money that’s being funneled into the Bush administration’s “faith-based” programs, especially as their fiscal and ethical realities become more generally known. In an October 2004 article entitled “Faith Without Works: After Four Years, the President’s faith-Based policies have proven to be Neither Compassionate nor Conservative,” Washington Monthly editor Amy Sullivan exposed some of those realities, including “the total absence of accountability for faith-based grantees.”

Ralph G. Neas, president of People for the American Way, is absolutely right: “This is one of those moments in American history. No matter what side you’re on, everything you’ve believed in, everything you’ve cared about, everything you’ve fought for is at stake.”

Jerry Falwell has already proposed a sort of “[scorched earth](#)” plan. Sheldon, Dobson and the other leaders of the Christian Right no doubt spent their Independence Day weekend plotting and planning to eradicate the [wall](#) Thomas Jefferson—the political scientist behind and lead [draftsman](#) of the Declaration of Independence—knew *must* be in place between church and state if the young, idealistic nation’s “independence” and experiment in the self-evident truths of a reason-based government were to survive.

It’s time for the light of a new Age of Reason and Enlightenment, not the darkness of the [theocratic](#) abyss:

A Muslim lawmaker [Ashraf Choudhary] in [New Zealand] Prime Minister Helen Clark’s government has said he condones the stoning executions of homosexuals and adulterers as prescribed by strict Islamic law.