



The Fellowship of the Crooked Cross: Trump's Evangelical Hounds of Hell

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Abstract

This critical rage pedagogy article explores intersections between Alt-Right movements and Christian fundamentalist prosperity theology. Starting from The Fellowship Foundation founded in the USA in the 1930s and looking at similar and interconnected developments in various countries from South America, Africa, and Europe, the article explores theological foundations of today's worldwide ascend of fascism. Using the example of Anders Behring Breivik's famous terrorist attack in Norway, it explores theoretical background for Alt-Right attacks on political correctness and 'cultural Marxism'. Looking into the 'end of the world' theology and its morality, the article explains deep relationships between Christian fundamentalist prosperity theology and Israel. The article connects Christianity's forward-looking, linear view of history with 'end of the world' theology and capitalism. It explores the postdigital and post-truth nature of evangelical Christians' public communications and links them to various anti-intellectualist tendencies such as the anti-vaccination movement. Using insights from Marxism, critical pedagogy, and liberation theology, the article demystifies Christian fundamentalist theology and points towards opportunities for resistance.

Keywords Critical pedagogy · Liberation theology · Christian fundamentalism · Prosperity theology · Alt-Right · Linear time · Marxism

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Glorious news, everyone! Donald Trump is God! Everything makes sense now, and the final purpose of all things is at last clear. Donald Trump on Wednesday proudly quoted a messenger who said he was ‘the second coming of God,’ and he described himself as ‘the chosen one,’ looking up at the sky. As I said, wonderful, good, normal news! (Petri 2019)

President Donald Trump recently quoted Newsmax commentator Wayne Allyn Root—who has promoted anti-Semitic and racist conspiracy theories against George Soros and President Barack Obama—in a tweet that compared the president to the ‘second coming of God,’ and who referred to Trump as the ‘the King of Israel’:

Thank you to Wayne Allyn Root for the very nice words. ‘President Trump is the greatest President for Jews and for Israel in the history of the world, not just America, he is the best President for Israel in the history of the world...and the Jewish people in Israel love him.... like he’s the King of Israel. They love him like he is the second coming of God... But American Jews don’t know him or like him. They don’t even know what they’re doing or saying anymore. It makes no sense! But that’s OK, if he keeps doing what he’s doing, he’s good for... all Jews, Blacks, Gays, everyone. And importantly, he’s good for everyone in America who wants a job.’ Wow!¹

Later, in an interview with reporters on the lawn of the White House, Trump glanced at the sky and then referred to himself as ‘the chosen one’—using a phrase that Christian evangelicals often use to describe Trump as the imperfect vessel God has chosen to undertake his perfect plan for humanity (presumably to rid the world of gays, socialists, communists, feminists, and proponents of political correctness). He used the term to refer to being divinely chosen to lead the trade war against China. While self-aggrandizement is the coin of Trump’s realm, for the pathological narcissist Trump to lay claim to God’s throne caused heads to turn even among Trump’s most ardent supporters, whose widely voiced disquiet caused Trump to confess that his comment was surely a joke. Yet at the same time, Trump has warned, ‘Politicians think we’re joking. We don’t joke’ (Chapman 2019a).

Nevertheless, to claim divine kingship within the same lineage of King David was a politically shrewd move given that Trump’s Christian base will clearly resonate with the messianic ‘end times’ association generated by the term ‘the chosen one’ (Easley 2019). Those who choose to downplay this as one of Trump’s tongue-in-cheek comments, or an off-the-cuff joke, gravely underestimate Trump’s Machiavellian mindset.

We stand at the threshold of uncertainty and hopelessness, with humanity’s capacity for producing the conditions of world peace rapidly dwindling as Trump’s regime becomes more and more entrenched in notoriety. The U.S. under Trump can now brag an implacable culture of unbridled barbarism that catechizes the public to be suspicious of reasoned arguments, forbearance, and magnanimity in order to create a worldwide spiritual stealth offensive, one that claims to care about the travails of the poor but instead displays a cruel animosity towards the less fortunate. It follows the Republican Party’s embrace of seed-faith theology which underpins prosperity gospel values—give money to your pastor and you will reap a mighty harvest of unprecedented magnitude, perhaps worth a hundred times your initial investment. If this fails to happen, well,

¹ Donald Trump’s Twitter@realDonaldTrump, 21 August 2019, 1:34 PM.

then, remain in the protective custody of the church until you reap your heavenly reward—the most important goal is to stay in the game and avoid being labeled a loser. The prosperity gospel is all about winners. There is no room for losers, the only safe harbor is for those who embrace unreservedly the corrupted will of the public mind in what Trump has announced should be known as ‘the Age of Trump!’—a Trumpian title suitably grandiose for this world historical progenitor of fascism! The Age of Trump could prove to be one of the most bizarre and consequential periods of recent human history, but not for reasons extolled by Trump.

Just when you think such a culture of narcissism has passed its high-water mark, it exceeds our expectations. Trump’s *Nebelwerfer*² tweets have the great advantage of offering a postdigital (Jandrić et al. 2018) smoke screen designed to distract us away from his policy decisions through a panoramic spectacle of pure vile and its catalytic effect on his *Nebeltruppen*³ base, including his impassioned evangelical defenders. These tweets—nurtured by lies, upheld by deceit, and impelled by a toxic narcissism, dump mortar shells of incendiary ravings directly into the social media apparatuses that now make up a considerable portion of the public sphere. But as explosive as these tweets are, they work more like an accumulation of bile clogging the national brainpan, which sooner or later begins to leak, permitting the poisonous mulch to pass through the public blood/brain barrier resulting in what we refer to as the Collective American Psycho Phenomenon (CAPP). The CAPP works through the slow normalization of barely fettered rage, a rage designed to appear to have an external breaking mechanism by means of government checks and balances, but which can override those checks and balances by the sheer force of its emotive power and supernatural claims. The rage gets amplified to Wagnerian proportions in the cyberspace forums of 8chan and 4chan, by trolls and social media personalities, and by *de facto* state media such as Fox News.

A recent example of Trump’s disinformation strategy equates Antifa with terrorism (a dubious claim), yet he has not condemned white supremacist militia movements and militant right-wing organizations as domestic terror organizations. It has been reported that in newsletters and communications to and from Trump’s Justice Department, Labor Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Homeland Security, there were links to antisemitic racist websites, and publications such as the Epoch Times⁴ that is linked to the Chinese Falun Gong movement (a movement outlawed in mainland China), who have pushed through their related media properties, the QAnon conspiracy theory⁵ (Brigham 2019). Republican Governor Greg Abbott claimed recently that undocumented immigrant children should not be given a public education, as the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark 1982 case *Plyler v. Doe*. Republican politicians such as Abbott are trying to outdo themselves in making anti-immigrant assertions, with the intention of attracting support from Trump’s followers and ensuring their reelection chances. And this same governor, according to The Mexican American Legislative Caucus of the Texas House of Representatives, only a day before the August 3 mass murder of 22 people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas—which was committed by a white supremacist

² The *Nebelwerfer* was a series of poison gas weapons developed and used by German army in World War II.

³ The *Nebeltruppen* was a branch of German army which developed and used the *Nebelwerfer*.

⁴ See <https://www.theepochtimes.com/>.

⁵ QAnon is a conspiracy theory about a secret plot against Donald Trump and his supporters.

who was targeting Latinos—‘sent out anti-immigrant mailers calling for Texans to “take matters into our own hands”’ (Russo 2019).

Trump himself has built his reputation on attacking immigrants, and his administration has been criticized for separating refugee children from their parents and placing them in cages. He wants to abolish birthright citizenship; he has called for violence against protesters at his campaign rallies; he has mocked a disabled reporter, bragged about grabbing women’s genitals, and accused Mexican immigrants of being criminals, drug dealers, and rapists; he has called for a ban on all Muslims from entering the USA, exhorted his followers to beat up protestors during his rallies (and offering to pay any resultant litigation costs himself), and described neo-Nazis as ‘very fine people;’ he attacked with unrelenting fervor two Democratic congresswomen, Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rep. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan; he claimed that white supremacy is not a growing problem in the USA and refused to name mass shootings by white supremacists as domestic terrorism; he accused American Jews of being disloyal to Israel if they vote for a Democrat; refers to the media as the ‘enemy of the people’; and lies to the American people so frequently that the news media can barely keep up with reporting on his blatantly false statements (Politifact 2019). Trump’s administration constitutes one of the vilest excuses for democratic governance in the modern history of humanity. We can only hope that no other government will ever claim its place. Many U.S. citizens, Republican included, found it reprehensible to have a president call for a military parade to celebrate himself (under cover of the Fourth of July national holiday). And yet, this is the president that many evangelical Christians believe is ‘the chosen one’ of God, a vile sinner brought to his spiritual knees in the service of a God of righteousness.

How far into the future will it be before the U.S. government becomes overpopulated with beliefs and attitudes resembling those of officials like the goose-stepping Ukrainian lawmaker, Artyom Vitko, who enjoys belting out the lyrics of a Russian neo-Nazi band, praising Adolf Hitler with verses like ‘Adolf Hitler, together with us, Adolf Hitler, in each of us, and an eagle with iron wings will help us at the right time?’ (Sokol 2019) How long before U.S. fascists are officially enjoined to fight on behalf of western Christian civilization here?

Many capitalists may wish to assist progressively in creating better living standards for humanity through the acquisition of capital, the manufacture of products, the investment of profits, and through research and development. However, this grievously misses the point—that it is value production that drives capitalism, not altruism. We do not deny that there are altruistic capitalists, but the nature of the productive process itself mandates the exploitation of human labor through the sale of the labor power of the working-class—a process inextricably interlinked with a system unutterably riven with contradictions fatal to the aggrieved and underserved. Without the augmentation of surplus value, capitalism can no longer continue to exist.

We are concerned in this essay with those that imbue capitalism with a divine force, with those unswervingly devoted the prosperity preachers who maintain that Donald Trump is serving the divine will of God. These preachers and their organizations help give spiritual legitimacy to the Trump regime and, in return, Trump gives them the moral and political legitimacy that they so crave as well as removing any obstacles to their generation of wealth.

God's Work in the Devil's Playground

The fact that Jesus worked as a carpenter and his apostles presumably carried money bags is in no way saying that Jesus approved of capitalism. There are plenty of passages in the Bible that confirm just the opposite (see McLaren 2015). There is a clear and present danger today in viewing utopia as unattainable, but just as dangerous is believing that a group of businessmen could create a social universe of leaders led by God since this sets in motion the creation of a God-fearing people. The problem is that this fear is optimally cultivated by mega-weaponizing religion, saturating it with the idea that the USA holds a favored status among God and his angels—a perception that too often translates as *Might Makes Right*. The Nazis were exceptionally efficient in the creation of fear by turning Nazism into a millenarian, messianic, and esoteric cult utilizing Ariosophy (Aryan wisdom writings undergirded by a heavily racialized *völkisch* ideology that highlights occultist-racial doctrines emphasizing the idea of root races), postulating mythical homelands such as Thule and Hyperborea, adopting concepts such as the master race and the *Untermenschen* (lesser races), and cleaning Christianity (known as positive Christianity) of its attachment to Judaism (see Steigmann-Gall 2003).

We wonder if Christian fundamentalists in the USA sometimes confuse God and his angels with the Wicked Witch of the West⁶ and her winged monkeys. What else can we think when evangelical Christians who cheer the ‘public charge’ provision (stipulating that immigrants should not be allowed into the country if it suspected that they have insufficient finances and will be forced to use public services) that Trump is pushing so that the USA can bar more classes of ‘aliens’ and more immigrants? And can permit only the wealthy to enter the country? We know what happened when the State Department applied the public charge clause to Jewish refugees from Germany seeking to escape Nazi persecution when they arrived at Ellis Island. Many of them were forced back to Germany and murdered in Nazi concentration camps.

Dystopias of all measures and stripe become fiercely attractive as alienated youth become more and more irresponsible by following those Christian ‘leaders’ who would counsel them to use their hatred responsibly. Those who proffer such wise counsel are none other than pastors, priests, and politicians at war with political correctness. They are able to raise up armies of the righteous by imposing their collective morality upon the (re)distribution of violence. It is not only nerdish personalities imitating ancient alchemists obsessed with decoding Biblical prophecies or modern-day scholars spending a lifetime attempting to unlock the key to the Voynich manuscript⁷ who are drawn to extremist groups on the far right. Rather, it is often those who prefer readymade and undercooked solutions to overthinking the many challenges related to living together as a human species and sharing in the resources of our planet earth. We are witnessing a frightening acceleration of citizens all too willing to throw caution to the wind when it comes to Making America Great Again (MAGA). We are talking about Trump’s minions who organize under chilling covenants such as Ironmarch,⁸ who are connected

⁶ The Wicked Witch of the West is a negative character in *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum 1900).

⁷ The Voynich manuscript is an early 15-century illustrated codex written in an unknown system which has never been deciphered.

⁸ Ironmarch was a far-right website specialized in social networking for fascists.

to extreme-right groups such as the *Atomwaffen* Division⁹ and the *Feuerkrieg* Division,¹⁰ or who are affiliated with Satanic and Left-Hand Path occult groups such as the Order of Nine Angels, based in the United Kingdom. Can you not hear the sound of spit-polished hob-nailed boots marching in unison with Herr Trump?

While some of these perfidious characters are unwittingly indulging their darkest desires, others display with an open defiance their flirtations with the ‘astral life force of pain’ emanating from the works of sinister icons such as Aleister Crowley, Anton LaVey, and Ayn Rand and members of the Noctulian elite.¹¹ With connections to the Qliphoth¹² and Goetic Magick,¹³ they hope to steel themselves into living gods. They want to absorb the ‘dark spirituality’ that is so favored by authors published by Ixaxaar Occult Publications¹⁴ or Martinet Press.¹⁵ In their pages and plot lines, they are able to get in touch with their own personal ‘helter skelter’ and dream of a post-apocalyptic ‘cult of the commandant’ right out of *Iron Gates* by Temple of Blood (2014). We mention these spiritual gurus from the extremist right because they represent the dark underbelly of the ‘respectable right’—those from religiously conservative families who have chosen to take the more ‘clean cut’ path of The Fellowship Foundation (see Moss 2019). Do not act so surprised dear readers; some of them could easily have been your classmates at USC or Yale before they went to Ivanwald¹⁶ for their initiation. The Fellowship is a secretive Christomonist or Christofascist network of evangelical Christians based in the USA that has worldwide reach, and is designed to convert world leaders to Christianity. It is informed by the imperatives of Christian Zionism and creates worldwide support for Israel. (It is worth remembering that Christian Zionism—the belief that Biblical prophecy is in accordance with the creation of the state of Israel—can be traced to a time well before Jewish Zionism, at least to the seventeenth century. The Anglosphere—the USA, Canada, Australia—all of them settler colonial societies, strongly support Israel more than other countries and share strong Christian Zionist religious currents.)

Begun in 1935, it is sometimes referred to as The Family and organizes the annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Its most influential leader to date was Doug Coe, who died in 2017. The Fellowship of the Ring it is not, although it does bear some attributes of Tolkien’s Traditionalism (which some critics describe as neo-fascist). We are referring to a secretive non-organizational network of evangelical Christians bent on a stealth spiritual offensive—business, political, military, and religious leaders and others (but not likely your average shoe salesman or lathe operator)—whose ideological roots have by now anchored themselves so far into our structural unconscious that they effect a deep-vein thrombosis blocking the religio-political arteries of

⁹ The *Atomwaffen* Division is a neo-Nazi terrorist network formed in the Southern United States in 2015.

¹⁰ The *Feuerkrieg* Division is a neo-Nazi terrorist network formed in the Baltic in 2019 and modeled after the *Atomwaffen* Division.

¹¹ The Noctulian elite are members of the Order of Nine Angels based in the Noctulian temple.

¹² In Jewish mysticism, the Qliphoth are representations of evil or impure spiritual forces.

¹³ Goetia is the practice of conjuration of demons.

¹⁴ Ixaxaar Occult Publications is a publishing house specialized in occult literature in the Necrosophic-Qayinite and Qliphothic Tradition, as well as the cultivation of Spirit. See <https://www.ixaxaar.com/>.

¹⁵ Martinet Press is a publishing house specialized in publishing ‘texts that reflect the darkness that is endemic to real antinomian spirituality’. See <https://martinetpress.wordpress.com/author/martinetpress/>.

¹⁶ Ivanwald is the communal living house which belongs to The Fellowship Foundation.

our postdigital society, preventing critical ideas from passing through the blood/brain barrier to the juncture where neuronal circuits and ethical imperatives meet.

Some of its *Leibstandarte*¹⁷ members, such as Franklin Graham, began to support Putin as an ally for conservative Christian family values as early as 2013, with some even proclaiming the Russian Orthodox Church to be the moral leader of the world (in Russia, same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are ineligible for the legal protections available to opposite-sex couples and in 2013, an amendment of the child protection law was created that criminalized the distribution of materials among minors that advocated any non-traditional sexual relationships). This year Putin jumped onto a Ural motorcycle at Babylon's Shadow international bike festival near in Sevastopol, Crimea, and rode along with the infamous anti-gay Russian biker gang known as the Night Wolves (or 'Putin's Angels' as they are sometimes called in the west), led by a former surgeon nicknamed (of all things!) 'The Surgeon.' Streaming patriotically from their motorcycles are red flags with portraits of Stalin and the wartime slogan 'For the Motherland! For Stalin!' (Popov 2015). Members of the Night Wolves have advocated for the seizure of Ukraine and supported Russian anti-Maidan movements, and some with advanced martial prowess participated in the invasion of Crimea and fought for the pro-Russian side in the Donbass war. Several times a year, they participate in motorcycle pilgrimages to holy Russian Orthodox sites. The Night Wolves receive funding from the Kremlin; and in turgid comments on patriotism, Putin has praised them for setting 'manly' examples for Russian youth, regarding their brutal loyalty as the purest strain of Russian manhood. So much for Franklin Graham and his support for Russia's moral leadership. Ask the Slovakian government what they think of the Night Wolves' 'European headquarters' stationed in their country, a base that contains old military vehicles, including tanks, and lies snugly in the quaint village of Dolna Krupa, 70 km (44 miles) from the capital Bratislava (Peter 2018).

The US equivalent of Russia's Night Wolves are the Bikers for Trump. Jack Holmes cites an interview Trump gave to Breitbart News in March 2019:

You know, the left plays a tougher game, it's very funny. I actually think that the people on the right are tougher, but they don't play it tougher. OK? I can tell you I have the support of the police, the support of the military, the support of the Bikers for Trump—I have the tough people, but they don't play it tough—until they go to a certain point, and then it would be very bad, very bad. But the left plays it cuter and tougher. Like with all the nonsense that they do in Congress ... with all this invest[igations]—that's all they want to do is—you know, they do things that are nasty. Republicans never played this. (Holmes 2019)

Holmes remarks that this was not the first time Trump has mentioned that opposition to his regime could be met by biker force. Earlier, in September 2018, Trump said this at one of his rallies:

They're so lucky that we're peaceful. Law enforcement, military, construction workers, Bikers for Trump—how about Bikers for Trump? They travel all over the country. They got Trump all over the place, and they're great. They've been

¹⁷ 'Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler', or the 1st SS Panzer Division, was a German elite army unit in World War II, responsible for guarding Adolf Hitler.

great. But these are tough people. These are great people. But they're peaceful people, and Antifa and all—they'd better hope they stay that way. I hope they stay that way. I hope they stay that way. (Holmes 2019)

By couching his violence in the phrase 'I hope they stay that way,' Trump is granting himself space to claim 'plausible deniability' should his supporters take his words to mean that Trump would really like to see his opponents be subjected to violence (after all, his words do resonate with the militant right in ways that Trump most surely understands). Plausible deniability is defined as

circumstances where a denial of responsibility or knowledge of wrongdoing cannot be proved as true or untrue due to a lack of evidence proving the allegation. This term is often used in reference to situations where high ranking officials deny responsibility for or knowledge of wrongdoing by lower ranking officials. In those situations officials can 'plausibly deny' an allegation even though it may be true. (USLegal 2019)

If you think Bikers for Trump—Trump's *Schutzstaffel*¹⁸ - are just a bunch of tattooed beer guzzlers, tough guys stumbling around in bars and cheering on the most buxom wet t-shirt competitors, think again. Not only do they identify rabble-rousers at Trump rallies and occasionally rough up protesters, their 100,000-member organization sponsors large pro-Trump events through a sophisticated political action committee. In the age of Trump, organized chaos is in requisition, providing the cultural nutrients best able to nourish the bacillus of fascism which views all opponents to Trump as actively malign.

This current historical juncture constitutes the real-world precincts that serve as battlegrounds for social justice that include churches, schools, courts, social media, corporate board rooms, factory shop floors, university seminar rooms, and community centers. Wait. Did we just say 'social justice'? That is a term unlikely to be found in the catechism of The Fellowship. For the Fellowship Foundation seems to have followed the Republican Party's shift towards Trumpism and become resolved on another hazard at the hand of destiny—the prosperity gospel and Donald Trump. That it has a champion in Trump is very telling. The idea that Trump was put in power by God amounts, of course, a circular argument—it is a logical fallacy in which the reasoner begins with what he or she is trying to prove. But it is an effective propaganda tool—it significantly helped to distinguish America from those atheist commies during the Cold War. It is a faith-based con game. After all, it cannot be logically disproven that Trump is doing God's work in the devil's playground—no matter how horrific his presidency appears to many, including us. It cannot be disproven that the USA has a special providential mission to bring the nations of the world to Jesus. For those who wish to outlaw abortion, then, Trump's stacking of the Supreme Court with conservative judges outweighs all of Trump's obscene personal failures, revealing to diehard believers that God always uses imperfect vessels to do his perfect work.

¹⁸ The *Schutzstaffel*, commonly known under the abbreviation SS, was a major paramilitary organization in Nazi Germany.

But it gets worse. For prosperity preachers such as Paula White, if you are against Trump or fail to render proper support, you are *de facto* against God. Sarah Posner writes:

On a recent appearance, after Charlottesville, on the television program of once-disgraced televangelist Jim Bakker, White declared that opposition to Trump is akin to being anti-God. Trump, she said, has been ‘raised up by God because God says that He raises up and places all people in places of authority. It is God that raises up a king, it is God that sets one down and so when you fight against the plan of God, you’re fighting against the hand of God.’ She also seized the opportunity to promote her recent book, *Dare to Dream*, and its front-cover blurb from Trump: ‘Read this and you’ll be ready for great success.’ (Posner 2017)

At this point, we need to say more about Paula White. Paula White is a completely bizarre preacher that could be a character out of a Stephen King horror film. She is President Trump’s spiritual advisor, who famously dedicated the White House as ‘holy ground sanctified by the superior blood of Jesus.’ In a sermon in California, she attacked sex education as follows: ‘Right now, we’re fighting in California—in third grade, in fifth grade—they put certain things on certain vegetables and teach them how to insert them in certain parts of the anatomy’ (Reed 2019b). She claimed that mobile app Snapchat was designed for the purpose of human traffickers. She then went on to attack free government-funded health care and higher education: ‘You want free education? Really? You want free healthcare? Really?’ she asked (Reed 2019b). ‘Lyndon Johnson sent 100,000 social workers out, looked for every black pregnant woman, created a system called welfare and drove the male out of the household and said, “We’re going to destroy the black community because we’re going to destroy the family”’ (Reed 2019b). Can anyone listen to her with a straight face? That she said, ‘We’re going to destroy the black community because we’re going to destroy the family’ (Reed 2019b). Can anyone listen to her with a straight face?

That the inhabitants of 133 C Street¹⁹—who mix church and state so seamlessly through their invisibility—genuinely believe they are instruments of such political power would be more plausible if they would, say, seek to better the lives of the world’s poor and oppressed, if they would seek to do as much for those who are already born, as for the unborn. If only these ‘godly guys with guns’ would just try to clean up the political mess made by their former vessels of power—Bush Sr. and Bush Jr., Reagan, Clinton, Nixon, and Carter. To show their ‘good faith,’ perhaps they could counsel Trump not to order the U.S. Navy to patrol Venezuela’s coastline and cut off all supplies of food and medicine. Or sign back on to the Paris Agreement. Or toss the neoliberal logic aside in favor of a dialectics of the concrete.

Matthew Chapman reports that U.S. government prosecutors have charged a dozen religious leaders in California with forced labor of homeless people. Chapman writes: ‘According to prosecutors with U.S. Attorney Robert Brewer, Imperial Valley Ministries — which operates group homes and nondenominational churches around the country — took in homeless people promising food and shelter, only to force them to surrender their welfare benefits and beg for money nine hours a day,

¹⁹ The 133 C Street Center is a townhouse in Washington, D.C. operated by The Fellowship.

six days a week, “for the financial benefit of the church leaders.”(Chapman 2019b) The United States Attorney’s Office expands on the charges as follows: The indictment alleges that church leaders locked victims inside group homes with deadbolt locks; confiscated identification documents such as driver’s licenses, passports, immigration papers and identification cards, in order to prevent victims from escaping; stole victims’ welfare benefits; and required adherence to rules such as, ‘you are not to discuss things of the world’ and ‘the only thing to be read is the holy bible’ and ‘if any of the rules are broken there will be discipline.’ Windows were nailed shut at some group home locations, leading a desperate 17-year-old victim to break a window, escape, and run to a neighboring property to call police. The teen was brought to the El Centro Medical Center for cuts sustained from the escape. (The United States Attorney’s Office Southern District of California 2019)

It Must Be God’s Will Because It Happened

Among other things, neoliberal logic is a logic of the lowest common denominator, a technocratic rationality in which, when applied to economics, the main aim is to extract and accumulate as much surplus value as possible. Finance or asset capitalism, accumulation by dispossession, disaster capitalism, crony capitalism—all of these incarnations of capitalist exploitation are an outgrowth of neoliberal ideology. In order to be able to think outside of neoliberalism’s own limits requires the fertilizing influence of Marx (Hudis 2012). Utilizing a historical materialist critique can help us think more deeply about how we might live differently in the present and imagine futures of concrete possibility outside of neoliberalism and the logic of value production. It can help us to break free from the production of those forms of time, space, and self which are presently in the thrall of capital.

Historical materialists generally believe that it is possible to grasp the object of knowledge, that a world exists independent of our existence, and that this world can be directly grasped (although not fully grasped) in itself. Critical theorists, including the great educator, Paulo Freire, wager that the objective world needs to be understood in relation to others, to the social character of both our being human and our becoming more fully human. This is what is called fostering transformative volition, or protagonistic intent, a praxis of the possible that moves in and on and through the world designed to transform the material and social conditions that shape us (and are shaped by us) so that our capacities are enhanced and our humanity enlarged (McLaren 2015). Here, the world can be conceived as a concrete totality, a reality that is already a structured, self-forming dialectical whole in the process of coming into existence. The challenge is to avoid solipsism and idealism through a method of analysis and a conception of the world that involves a dialectical analysis of reality and a dialectical unity with the oppressed.

This idea is consistent with the holistic human science developed by Marx. Marx was a humanist and in no way was he an economic determinist. Marx was interested in historical laws of tendency of capital, which, for Marx, were not the same as natural laws. Contrary to many of his critics, Marx in no way ascribed to the idea that capitalism follows universal evolutionary laws. History does not follow a single

trajectory; there are many contingencies and regularities, broadly predictable tendencies and possible futures. It is true that Marx believed in the primacy of material relationships as against the primacy of ‘spirit,’ and through his great corpus of works, he made us aware that profit does not come from market relations (buying low and selling high) but from human labor power and the sweated labor of the toiling class. In no way, are we arguing that spiritual values are unimportant. What we are saying—and I believe it is consistent with many liberation theologians—is that we need certain material conditions to obtain in society before the quest for spiritual values can be pursued effectively. In other words, we need to eat in order to function. Which is not to admonish those, like Saint Francis, who chose to take a vow of poverty and to live as a mendicant. If we want a simple formula to examine humanity, we could say that those who have to sell their labor power to earn a living (those who produce the profit for the capitalist) are part of one class—the working class. Those who purchase human labor and take the profit away from labor are part of another class—the capitalist class. It is not labor itself that takes the commodity form in capitalism, it is labor power, the capacity to labor. It is not the physical act of laboring, but the potential to do work, given all our creative and productive power in aggregate. We sell, in effect, our ability to labor. But workers are treated as an abstract force, and it alienates workers when it is sold to capitalists. The value-form of labor cannot absorb all the subjectivity of the worker, since the worker can choose to resist the capitalist’s abstract forms of domination. Workers can fight efforts by the cold calculus of capitalism to subsume all of the workers’ subjectivity and humanity, to package it as a dead commodity form.

Following Marx’s focus on the development of human productive forces—a very complex process that is historically related to the material conditions of production and the class struggle—it becomes necessary to understand social relations and organizations as regimes of exploitation and alienation. Every given stage of development of the productive forces of society—that is, of the human species, and of the division of labor—is bound up historically with certain social relations of production, particularly class relations. Once a particular form of class domination comes into existence as a result of this complex process of historical development, the dominant element in the relations attempts to freeze it into place, and the existing society loses its progressive character. Despite changes in the material conditions of production, any ruling class will seek to preserve its rule at all cost, thus becoming a fetter on further social and economic development. The state, law, religion, and the entire realm of ideas, to the extent that they represent the overarching interests in society and are conditioned by the underlying set of socioeconomic relations, will all be enlisted for the purpose of defending the status quo and of patching up society’s contradictions, often through the disheveled fantasies of Hollywood or the brittle enchantments of popular culture. Since most Christian evangelicals focus on individual sin and accountability, it is a challenge to instruct them to consider capitalism as internally related to the suffering of the poor and the oppressed. It is imperative that we recognize the need to move beyond capitalism if we ever hope to bring about genuine equality and a greater unfolding of human powers and capacities.

Marxism and Christianity are in no way as incommensurable as languages as evangelical Christians from The Fellowship would have us believe. Both Marxism and Christianity are helpful in explaining reality and helping us to understand what

forces and relations shape the human condition. Both are part of the praxis of history and can be viewed as historically conditioned action systems, defined by their relationship to historical contingencies. Denys Turner (1983) has correctly stipulated that Marxism requires abolishing the conditions which requires it—capitalist exploitation. Similarly, according to Turner, Christianity will realize itself only at the cost of its abolition *as Christianity* since its realization will become a fully human reality rather than a sacred reality—a fully socialized humanity and a fully humanized society consisting of love, which is presumably what the Kingdom of God is all about.

Turner (1983) also recognized that because God is non-identical with the contingencies of any particular form of history, our full humanity can only be known through aspirations for liberation which cannot be realized in practice but only through anticipation. We can only symbolize and understand the sacred aspect of our lives heuristically. So while Marxism argues about ‘the impossibility of moral knowledge in capitalist conditions,’ it exists as a revolutionary form of praxis in that it points out how it is impossible for capitalism to conform to its own truth in practice since to conform in this manner is ‘structurally impossible for capitalism’ (Turner 1983: 213). Like Freire and others, who speak about the ontological vocation to become more fully human, liberation theologians refuse to admit that ‘what is most fully human could be compatible with the conditions of alienation and exploitation which historically obtain’ under capitalism (Turner 1983: 213). Under capitalism, humanity remains sycophantic before aristocracy and can only be anticipated. Thus, the absence of morality in Marxism is not in any sense a ‘mere amorality’ because it reveals that it is capitalism, not Marxism, which is amoralistic. In other words, Marxism reveals the ‘platitudinous imperatives, so forthcoming from Christians, to “love” within conditions of gross and systematic exploitation’ (Turner 1983: 216).

Does not Christianity reject its fundamental principles when presented as an already written moral text to which only Christians or particularly enlightened Christians have access? But for today’s MAGA warriors, whether those who have surrendered to the Nazi culture of *Stormfront*,²⁰ or those who have set up their captain beds in the rowhouse of 133 C Street, whatever happens as a result of their connections to national or world leaders will be considered as *de facto* God’s will. Just replace the nebulous aphorism ‘it is what it is’ with ‘it must be God’s will because it happened.’ That is one of the great dangers of some forms of fundamentalist Christianity. Another grave danger is not simply that they are dismantling the First Amendment but that they are susceptible to the leadership covenant of infamous Nazis in their weaponizing of God in an attempt create a New World Order. And the New World Order is not only inhospitable to labor but dangerous to the sanctity of life. When the Family was in its early days, it supported Mayor and then Governor Arthur Langley who crushed the labor movement in Washington State.

The recently deceased leader of The Fellowship and founder of Washington D.C.’s Annual Prayer Breakfast, Douglas Coe, once compared the commitment of the Nazis to their genocidal cause to the same fanatical commitment we must muster towards to the demands of Jesus. Sharlet records Coe as saying:

Hitler, Goebbels and Himmler were three men. Think of the immense power these three men had, these nobodies from nowhere. Actually, emotional and mental problems.

²⁰ *Stormfront* is a neo-Nazi, Holocaust-denial website. See <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/index.php>.

Prisoners. From the street. But they bound themselves together in an agreement, and they died together. Two years before they moved into Poland, these three men had a study done, systematically a plan drawn out and put on paper to annihilate the entire Polish population and destroy by numbers every single house...and every single building in Warsaw and then to start on the rest of Poland. It worked, Coe says; they killed 6 1/2 million 'Polish people.' (Sharlett 2008: 253-254)

Sharlet then describes Coe recollecting pictures Coe had seen of young Chinese Red Guards, executing people and describing this act as 'a covenant, as pledge' and ending with the words, 'That was what Jesus said' (Sharlet 2008: 255). Coe wants us to emulate the extremist conviction of genocidal killers in our pledge to make Jesus's salvic grace known to all of humankind. There is something quite dark and ominous in this vision of creating a covenant with a loving Christ.

In the script for the Netflix documentary, *The Family*, a voiceover (presumably citing the words of Doug Coe) proclaims:

Christianity is not a weak thing. Woe to the pussy-footing, namby-pamby, wishy-washy, dilly-dallying individual who bears the name of Christ and who fails to recognize that individual who bears the name of Christ and who fails to recognize that all things are possible to him that believes with courage and confident boldness Put on the whole armor of God. (Moss 2019)

Coe's remarks suggest he might be familiar with the works of Julius Evola, an iconic Italian philosopher of fascism, whose magnum opus, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, first published in Italian in 1934, describes a world in disarray due to industrialization and cultural miscegenation, antiseptically cleaved from the mythical traditions and wisdom of the ancient myths (Last 2017). Evola sought to resurrect the myths of 'traditional' societies through art, religion, and fascist politics, a move that was to become known as Traditionalism. Evola wrote a work for fascist dictator Benito Mussolini on the doctrine of 'spiritual racism' that ranked the world's races according to their fidelity to traditional mythic foundations. Evola, however, did not embrace the 'scientific' racism and the rhetoric of 'progress' that came to dominate Italian and German fascism (Last 2017). In fact, many of the followers of Traditionalism became attracted to the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, whose famous works on hobbits have been criticized by some as crypto-fascist.

Tolkien has been accused of crypto-fascism (ranking of different races such as hobbits, dwarves, orc, elves, and humans; orcs with cockney accents become stand-ins for aggrieved proletarians; love of Shire life is reflective of bourgeois elitism). The cultural upheaval experienced in Italy in the 1970s was strongly influenced by *The Lord of the Rings*, which was first published in Italian in 1971 (Last 2017). Italian Traditionalists inspired by Tolkien used his work to challenge the dominance of the Italian left of the time. This Traditionalism became a new type of fascist movement that did not try to colonize the world but rather attempted to create their own Shires where they could worship pagan gods surrounded by a homogenous culture untainted by multiculturalism and the evils of the progressive politics of the culturally dominant left. Tolkien's works were required reading among Italy's burgeoning 'neo-fascist' youth groups, and in 1977, a 'fascist Woodstock' took place, a two-day retreat called Camp

Hobbit. Camp Hobbit displayed some elements of hippie culture but was dominated by military haircuts and clothing, Celtic cross armbands and black handkerchiefs (Last 2017). The political line of march in Camp Hobbit was to wage war against communism and capitalism. That type of politics attracted many anarchistic hippies. And while Camp Hobbit and its supporters held two successful sequels, Italy's New Right was marginalized in the ensuing decades. However, it appears to be making a comeback. John Last writes:

Many attendees saw themselves as transcending the binary of Italian politics by fusing Leftist social critiques with the militancy of fascism. Beneath its festive spirit, Camp Hobbit had hoped to 'recode' the language of the hippie left with the Traditionalist philosophy of Evola, according to historian of fascism Roger Griffin. Camp Hobbit spawned two successful sequels, drawing several thousand attendees. But the coalition emerging from Camp Hobbit quickly fell to infighting. By the mid-'80s, the New Right was again on the margins, primarily associated with anti-communist terrorism. Though it experienced moments of political power, it never succeeded in achieving cultural dominance over its enemies on the progressive Left.

In recent years, however, the movement has seen somewhat of a resurgence. In July, members of Italy's new New Right organized 'Campo Hobbit 40,' an attempt to resurrect the spirit of the original camp on its fortieth anniversary. Evola, too, is enjoying renewed popularity, beloved by adherents of the American Alt-Right. (Last 2017)

For those Alt-Right supporters of Traditionalism—and here the Christian Fellowship organization and Camp Hobbit meld together in some triumphalist fantasy redolent of Reagan's America as a *shining city* upon a *hill* whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere (Reagan here borrowed a phrase from the parable of Salt and Light in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount)—the dark side of this fantasy is everywhere evident in recent mass shootings across the USA, very likely inspired by the fascist rhetoric of (the now self-proclaimed 'chosen one') Donald Trump. To rebirth fascism in the USA requires a carefully calibrated recoding of Traditionalism and Christian fundamentalism resulting in the Christomonism or Christofascism that is clearly reflected in the dominant narratives of Trump's Evangelical Advisory Council—Paula White, Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell, Jr. Whether we are referring to fascist-lite fantasies of Tolkien Traditionalism or the real-world genocide atrocities of Hitler's Third Reich, we cannot be too cautious, especially here in the USA when the president of the most powerful country in human history has just acknowledged he is the chosen one of God. John Last writes:

As for Tolkien, the political meaning of his work is as murky as it ever was. Despite a cast of hundreds, Middle Earth remains an empty stage onto which ideologues of all stripes can project their politics. Even six feature films and countless imitators have failed to bring Traditionalist critiques into the mainstream.

Perhaps his revolutionary fans should have considered the view of his harshest critic, Michael Moorcock: 'In Tolkien, everyone's in their place and happy to be

there. We go there and back, to where we started. There's no escape, nothing will ever change and nobody will ever break out of this well-ordered world.' So much for revolution. (Last 2017)

Many of these MAGA warriors who presumably would share Trump's belief that some neo-Nazis attending the infamous Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, are 'good people,' have likely never even heard of Doug Coe, Julius Evola, or William S. Lind, and their fellow proponents of fourth-generation warfare. Like The Fellowship, the architects of the Alt-Right mainly work behind the scenes (with the exception of some paleoconservatives such as Pat Buchanan, who appears regularly on television). Nor are many Trump followers aware of the intellectual roots of those organizations that now swear fealty to that imperfect vessel of prosperity Christianity whose toxic narcissism often clouds an awareness of his hidden handlers, those worshippers from the temple of white ethno-nationalism who follow the teachings of Paul Weyrich, Pat Buchanan, Steve Bannon, William Lind, and Doug Coe.

'End of the World' Theology and its Morality

Lind is particularly pernicious, as parts of his 2004 Free Congress Foundation book entitled '*Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*' (Lind 2004)²¹ were plagiarized by Anders Behring Breivik, a white supremacist who blew up and shot to death 77 fellow Norwegians in 2011. Through his written work, Lind attempted to create a post-Cold War adversary, an enemy of the people, a 'love it or leave it' label that can be attributed to anyone whose scholarship is politically favorable to critical pedagogy, or to scholarly work in the humanities and social sciences that draws generically from 'critical theory.' Lind is greatly responsible for the term 'social justice' becoming grist for the seemingly never-ending myth mill that maintains that communists in the universities are taking over our nation's campuses through their teachings grounded in critical theory. Bruce Wilson is worth quoting at length on this issue:

On the same day in 2011 during which he single-handedly blew up and shot to death 77 Norwegian citizens (mostly teenagers) and injured an additional 319 people—with a truck bomb and automatic weapons firing hollow point bullets designed to inflict maximum tissue damage—neo-Nazi terrorist Anders Behring Breivik electronically distributed a 1518 page manifesto titled *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* that called for the deportation of Muslims from Europe and identified—as the arch-enemies of Western and Christian civilization—two forces: 'cultural Marxism' and Islam.

Anders Breivik, who during a recent court appearance gave a classic, stiff-armed Nazi salute, has explained to press that his terrorist massacre, which Breivik has called a 'marketing method', was meant to publicize his manifesto.

The core thesis of Breivik's manifesto is William Lind's 'cultural Marxism' conspiracy theory, and the terms 'cultural Marxism' or 'cultural Marxist' appear

²¹ The open access book is available at https://www.nationalists.org/pdf/political_correctness_a_short_history_of_an_ideology.pdf.

over 600 times in the manifesto. Analyst and researcher Chip Berlet explains Breivik's thesis, from Lind, with the following formula:

‘Cultural Marxism=Political Correctness=Multiculturalism=Muslim Immigration=Destruction of Judeo-Christian nations’

Anders Breivik was so gripped by William S. Lind's ‘cultural Marxism’ conspiracy theory concerning the origin of ‘political correctness’ that Breivik's manifesto plagiarized, with minor modifications and additions by Breivik, the *entire body* of William Lind's 2004 Free Congress Foundation book ‘Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology.

From pages 11 to 37, Breivik's manifesto reproduces the core of the Free Congress Foundation book (pages 4-51) edited by William S. Lind – whose introductory chapter by Lind, ‘What is Political Correctness’, Breivik lifted almost unchanged.

Breivik's manifesto also borrowed, on page 13, the exact words of William S. Lind from Lind's introduction to a 1990s twenty-two minute Free Congress Foundation video, on the origins of ‘political correctness’:

‘Just what is “Political Correctness?” Political Correctness is in fact cultural Marxism (Cultural Communism) – Marxism translated from economic into cultural terms.’ (Wilson 2016)

Wilson (2016) notes that Lind met the presidential candidate Donald Trump in 2016 and give him a copy of his book, *The Next Conservatism* (Weyrich and Lind 2009).

The most hated examples of ‘political correctness,’ ‘critical theory’ or ‘social justice’ decried by Christian fundamentalists encompasses much of what has been written under the banner of cultural studies, feminist theory, critical race theory, GLBTQ studies, LatCrit, post-colonial and de-colonial studies, and liberation theology. Consider these words by the Alt-Right's avatar of cultural Marxism, William Lind:

Fatefully for America, when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the Frankfurt School fled - and reestablished itself in New York City. There, it shifted its focus from destroying traditional Western culture in Germany to destroying it in the United States. To do so, it invented ‘Critical Theory.’ What is the theory? To criticize every traditional institution, starting with the family, brutally and unremittingly, in order to bring them down. It wrote a series of ‘studies in prejudice,’ which said that anyone who believes in traditional Western culture is prejudiced, a ‘racist’ or ‘sexist’ or ‘fascist’ - and is also mentally ill.

Most importantly, the Frankfurt School crossed Marx with Freud, taking from psychology the technique of psychological conditioning. Today, when the cultural Marxists want to do something like ‘normalize’ homosexuality, they do not argue the point philosophically. They just beam television show after television show into every American home where the only normal-seeming white male is a homosexual (the Frankfurt School's key people spent the war years in Hollywood).

After World War II ended, most members of the Frankfurt School went back to Germany. But Herbert Marcuse stayed in America. He took the highly abstract works of other Frankfurt School members and repackaged them in ways college students could read and understand. In his book ‘Eros and Civilization,’ he

argued that by freeing sex from any restraints, we could elevate the pleasure principle over the reality principle and create a society with no work, only play (Marcuse coined the phrase, ‘Make love, not war’). Marcuse also argued for what he called ‘liberating tolerance,’ which he defined as tolerance for all ideas coming from the Left and intolerance for any ideas coming from the Right. In the 1960s, Marcuse became the chief ‘guru’ of the New Left, and he injected the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School into the baby boom generation, to the point where it is now America’s state ideology.

The next conservatism should unmask multiculturalism and Political Correctness and tell the American people what they really are: cultural Marxism. Its goal remains what Lukacs and Gramsci set in 1919: destroying Western culture and the Christian religion. It has already made vast strides toward that goal. But if the average American found out that Political Correctness is a form of Marxism, different from the Marxism of the Soviet Union but Marxism nonetheless, it would be in trouble. The next conservatism needs to reveal the man behind the curtain - old Karl Marx himself. (Lind [n.d.-a](#))

As a countermeasure to cultural Marxism Lind writes:

Gramsci called for Marxists to undertake a ‘long march through the institutions.’ Our counter-strategy would be a long march to create our own institutions. It will not happen quickly, or easily. It will be the work of generations - as was theirs. They were patient, because they knew the ‘inevitable forces of history’ were on their side. Can we not be equally patient, and persevering, knowing that the Maker of history is on ours? (Lind [n.d.-b](#))

It is all out culture war, that is unmistakable, but the shock troops of the right remain steadfastly unaware of the ideology of their generals. The shock troops are Lind’s rabble, after all. Clearly, to them, hate is enough to drive them forward on behalf of their leaders. For them it is just as easy to forego the theory provided by the Alt-Right intelligentsia. Soundbites from Trump rallies is nourishment enough for maintaining their hate-filled pogroms against immigrants and people of color under the banner of fighting for good, old-fashioned American family values.

The Traditionalist gospel spreads all over the world; only during the past decade, The Family and similar organizations have supported various Alt-Right movements throughout Europe, Russia, Africa, and elsewhere (Moss [2019](#)). South America is a special case in the point. According to recent reports,

Evangelical Protestants now make up 22 percent of Brazil’s population of roughly 209.3 million, and represent the fastest-growing religious demographic in the country. Catholicism, meanwhile, has been losing members since 1872. Evangelicals comprise a politically conservative demographic that is quickly transforming its social influence into political power. (Polimédio [2019](#)).

Their strong rise ‘is enabled by a politics of morality: evangelicals take anxieties over issues concerning life, family, sexuality, and gender roles and articulate them into

politics and leverage them into policy’ (Polimédio 2019) and supported by growing relationships between the evangelicals and Israel. Following two interlocking deep convictions—first, that ‘God has reserved Israel as the Jewish homeland, and second, that the creation of modern Israel was an act of divine providence’ (French 2019)—Evangelical Protestants have now started to change ‘Brazil’s historical support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict’ (Osborn 2019). This change in attitude, problematic at so many levels, has deep roots in Christian fundamentalist theology. The special relationship between Christian fundamentalists and Israel is forged from the belief.

that the book of Revelation (with some supplements from the book of Daniel, Ezekiel, and 1 Thessalonians) provides a template for the end of the world. A central component of their theology is that true Christians will be spared any further suffering because they will be ‘raptured,’ or taken up to heaven, before the final horrors begin. It’s everyone else who will suffer. (Moss 2018)

While ‘the specific order of end-time events can vary from preacher to preacher and group to group,’ they share a common belief ‘that the return of the Messiah will follow the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and the restoration of the state of Israel as a kind of Jewish theocracy.’ (Moss 2019) ‘Freeing’ the mystical land of Israel from Muslims, therefore, is the ultimate goal for any fundamentalist Christian.

This theology is based on a specific philosophical understanding of time. While ‘non-Abrahamic religions often have a cyclical concept of time and theology,’ (Peters 2019) ‘Christianity, like all messianic religions, also Judaism, inspires a forward-looking, linear view of history.’ (Nederveen-Pieterse 1991: 77). ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1). As our modern sciences wouldn’t have gone down the path of modern scientific inquiry at all without the predominance of the world-view associated with the Abrahamic faiths’ (Fuller and Jandrić 2019: 203), the linear concept of time is deeply engrained into capitalism. Donald Trump’s climate change denial, Jair Bolsonaro’s poisonous role in burning the lungs of our planet, and Christian fundamentalists’ support of profit over nature, is perfectly aligned with their ‘end of the world’ theology and its morality. Hey-ho, let’s frack some more shale and burn some more oil until the whole earth becomes hot and dark! For as long as Israel is free of Muslims, and for as long we cherish our family values, we will be taken up to heaven—and the rest of the people can burn in hell!

One feature that does not seem to trouble Trump or his evangelical advisors who anticipate that the ‘end-times’ are near, is the long-term implications of bringing Israel’s far-right closer to the center of power and into the mainstream of Israeli politics. Netanyahu is trying to achieve by bringing supporters of the racist rabbi Meir Kahane into the Knesset. Netanyahu’s declaration that he will annex the West Bank settlements and his recent alliance ‘with a fringe extremist party inspired by an American-born rabbi, Meir Kahane, who advocated a Jewish theocracy and the forced removal of Palestinians’ (Bruton and Goldman 2019), has created a climate in Israel ripe for a heightening of fascism. Fearing he may lose electoral power, Netanyahu is relying

on Israelis to embrace his move further to the political right. Bruton and Goldman expand:

In the face of this potential election threat, Netanyahu reached out to the extreme right of Israeli politics for support, and helped broker a union between the Jewish Power and Jewish Home parties.

The new grouping includes Bezalel Smotrich, who declares himself a ‘proud homophobe’; Itamar Ben-Gvir, an attorney who defends Israeli settlers implicated in West Bank violence; and Benzi Gopstein, leader of an extremist anti-assimilation group whose Twitter handle means ‘Kahane was right.’

Netanyahu’s Likud party said it would reserve the 28th spot on its parliamentary list for the Jewish Home party and grant it two Cabinet ministries in a future government if it merged with the Jewish Power party.

It is this merger that has caused the greatest concern. Jewish Power are political heirs of Kahane’s Jewish Defense League — which is considered a terrorist organization by the FBI. (Bruton and Goldman 2019)

Jonathan Greenblatt, the Anti-Defamation League’s chief executive, has spoken out against any possible merger between Jewish Power and Jewish Home: ‘There should be no room for racism and no accommodation for intolerance in Israel or any democracy,’ he said. ‘It is troubling that they are being legitimized by this union’ (Bruton and Goldman 2019). According to Zach Dorfman (2019), ‘[o]ver time, Israeli politics has increasingly conformed to parts of Kahane’s vision, paving the way for a perpetual occupation of the Palestinian territories and fomenting a belligerent ethnonationalism that would have appalled Israel’s early socialist Zionist leaders.’

Embracing an increasing fascist politics in the USA, in Israel, and throughout Europe and Latin America, fighting for family values at home and abroad, and shrugging one’s shoulders at ecological destruction are much more than a form of short-sighted politics or even engaging in partisan power games—for some Christian fundamentalists, these poisonous actions are perceived to pave the way to the road of salvation. While it is clear that Trump’s protection of religious liberties and his appointment of anti-choice Supreme Court Justices has elated Christian evangelicals, so has Trump’s kindred relationship with Netanyahu. So where, exactly, does Israel fit in with the evangelical Christian ‘end-time’ scenario? According to interpretations by some evangelical theologians, when Israel’s political boundaries are reestablished according to what God promised the Israelites in the Bible, then the dominos (or should we say tablets of stone) start to fall in heaven and the end-times scenario takes effect. According to Cristina Maza:

Jerusalem has a central role as the city of prophecy and the place where the end of times plays out. According to the prophecy, a 1,000-year period of peace must be followed by seven years of tribulation, during which wars, disease, and natural disasters will lay waste to the earth. In the book of Revelation, Israel is described as a nation that exists during the time of tribulation, and Jerusalem’s Jewish temple is resurrected during this period. The last temple was destroyed around 70 A.D, and today there is a mosque on the Temple Mount where the previous two temples are believed to have stood. Evangelicals believe that a unified Israel with

control over Jerusalem will facilitate the construction of a new Jewish temple, and set the groundwork for the end of times. (Maza 2018)

When Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he certainly secured the second-term votes he needs from the evangelical community who believe in pre-millennialism, that the second coming of Christ will begin a 1000-year period of peace and prosperity. According to Maza,

By recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, many critics say Trump killed any chance of a negotiated peace deal in the Middle East. But evangelical Christians threw their full weight behind the decision. Currently, over half of all American evangelicals support Trump's presidency, and the announcement about Jerusalem plays a big role in that. (Maza 2018)

Trump's recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the disputed Golan Heights region, his relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and his alignment with the policies of Netanyahu, bode well for skuppering a peace plan with the Palestinians. Intense conflict is needed. And Trump is providing it. He pressed successfully for Netanyahu to deny a scheduled visit to Israel by Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), one of the first two Muslim women in Congress, and Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), a daughter of Palestinian immigrants. Trump supports those fanatics who describe him as the king of Israel and the Second Coming of Jesus. And he decries as disloyal to Israel, those Jews in the USA who vote Democrat. If Jeremiah's presentation of the New Covenant for Israel is to be honored, and the Messianic Age when all Israel will be saved and restored to the Land of Israel under the lordship of the Messiah is to come to pass, then the Israelis need to build their temple on the Temple Mount, where the Dome of the Rock (Al Aqsa mosque), sacred to Muslims, currently stands, the site where Muslims believe Muhammad ascended to heaven.

According to pre-millennialist Christians, there is a necessary sequence to the 'end-times.' It is not pure Chaos. First, Christ will come to earth to 'rapture' the living Christian believers to heaven and resurrect those dead who were 'true' dyed-in-the-wool Christians. Next, the Antichrist will reign on earth during the seven-year period of tribulation, after which time the Jews will recognize the Antichrist as a false God and accept Jesus as the true God and convert to Christianity. Christ then will return with an army of angels and defeat the Antichrist. Will Trump receive a special heavenly Mar-a-Lago residence and golf course to play out the rest of eternity, as a reward for kick-starting the 'end-times'? Will Mike Pence be permitted to stay at Trump's heavenly properties for free? I mean, why change things? Will Trump have a gold-plated toilet in which to churn his divine bowels after which Mike Pence can lick his ass clean (metaphorically of course)? (While Pence currently resembles a Marvel Comics villain, we would suggest he grow shoulder length hair and go full Lucius Malfoy in his purging of gays and lesbians). Do you think many Christian evangelicals believe that a peace plan between the Palestinians and Israelis is in the best interest of bringing about their version of the 'end-times' which, in order for Jesus to return to rule the earth, requires the prophecy of the Jews building the Third Temple to be fulfilled? And what about Cry for Zion, an Israel-based organization started in 2014, that is recruiting

Christians worldwide in its campaign to push Israel to fully control the Temple Mount? The Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism, the place where Abraham was said to offer Isaac to God in sacrifice. Clearly, it is not only Christian Zionists who have a vested interest in controlling the Temple Mount.

Hatred: An Instrument of Divine Will

Evangelical Christians pray for ‘family values’ to be embraced on a national level. Some evangelical leaders even claim that mass shootings that occur all-too-regularly across the USA is a result of a lack of ‘family values’ present in the US households. So what exactly do we mean by family values? How many guns does God want each family to own? Try asking the Russians. Are not Russian nationals now considered by many Christians as the new moral leaders of the contemporary world? Are they not clamping down on the subversive forces that besiege Christian leaders? Those forces are organized labor, socialists, gays, and lesbians, the left in general. The armor of God has become the armor of the wealthy industrialists, the lobbyists, the tech giants—led by the new generation of Christian leaders who are willing to smite the enemy with an iron fist. This is all about consolidating the Jesus of Empire—not the Jesus of the poor. You’ve heard of trickle-down economics? This is trickle-down Jesus, the Word of God being carried with missionary zeal to the kings of the world, trickling down to the unwashed masses, warning them of the evils of Islam, homosexuality, socialism, abortion, gun control advocacy—and in the process helping those kings remain in power in Jesus’ name. Thank you Jesus! Thank you Jesus! Jesus becomes disassembled as a force for social justice and becomes another excuse for the blunt force exercise of fascism (rather than the exorcism of fascism!), one that is fired in the top-down leadership crucible of Christian identity. The crazed idea that Trump is somehow a gloriously impure vehicle working for God (a James Bond character in the service of the Christian empire) has not only added a bizarre supernatural dimension to the religious triumphalism of Christian dominionism, also known as Christian sharia, but has achieved a level of familiarity that has naturalized a politics of the divine leader. Prophecies can now be forcibly fulfilled by using Trump’s hatred as an instrument of divine will. Trump has been described by the obsequious Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as a new Queen Esther, who convinced the King of Persia to spare the Jewish People. Pompeo himself has been aptly described not only as a Bible thumping evangelical Christian but ‘a heat-seeking missile for Trump’s ass’ (Reed 2019a).

Professed anti-fascists who secretly love fascism can now openly sing in unison: ‘We claim the right to stipulate a better way of life in the name of Jesus! We have our protector in the White House! Now we can refuse to serve gays in our businesses, we can refuse to marry interracial couples, we can tell black people to go back to Africa, we can patrol the US-Mexican border with The Renegade Network and keep the caravan of immigrants funded by George Soros and MS-13 in check! Now we will not have to say "happy holidays" anymore, we can unashamedly greet strangers on winter streets and joyously exclaim: "Merry Christmas"!’ There’s another country targeted for conversion by North American evangelicals that’s trying to stipulate a better way of life in the name of Jesus—Uganda. Is Uganda applying God’s Word to their Christian country by encouraging the killing of gays? Let us not forget that the

most Christianized country in Africa—Rwanda—became the site of Africa’s worst genocide. Didn’t 64 percent of German citizens during World War II identify as Christian? Did not Pope Pius XII fail to condemn the Nazis? Did the Vatican Refugee Commission help Nazis escape to Spain and to North and South America? All the more reason to build up white supremacist militias in the U.S. through the love of Jesus. Drag Obama, Hillary, Schumer and Soros in front of a military tribunal and put them on trial for treason!

Fascist sentiments seem not to deter the fundamentalists so long as they serve to preserve traditional family values, defining marriage as that between a man and a woman. If you follow these family values with patriotic fervor then, of course, purchase as many assault weapons as you need and remain battle-ready for Jesus. Christian evangelicals now have cultural license to create SMERSH²²-like networks among students to identify unpatriotic professors on university campuses such as Turning Point’s Professor Watchlist²³ or the now defunct Bruin Alumni Association²⁴ that labeled one of us, McLaren, as the most dangerous professor at UCLA, and offered to pay students one hundred dollars to secretly audiotape his lectures or those of twenty-nine other recalcitrant UCLA professors—all of whom were labeled the ‘dirty thirty’ and accused of brainwashing students with leftist ideological saber thrusts to their frontal lobe (see Jandrić 2018 for more details). Evangelicals can now exhort our youth to enter caves, not to fast for forty days and forty nights but rather to read *Bronze Age Mindset* by Bronze Age Pervert (2018) and dream of ways to conquer the ‘bug men’ and ‘lords of lies,’ so that those young fascists who follow a life of ‘sun and steel’ can bring a new military state into fruition.

Do any of the members of the God-led Fellowship demand accountability from U.S. presidents for war crimes—for the invasion of Vietnam and the killing of 3 million Vietnamese, for the killing of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis? The God candidate of chaos, Donald Trump, has made common cause with those who believe he is the Wolf King, a man-child riven with sin yet uplifted and anointed by God to do His work on earth. It is worth drilling down on the notion that Trump is carrying the will of God (is it in his hairspray perhaps?) Marcotte writes:

In the new Netflix documentary ‘The Family,’ which is based on a decade-plus of investigative work by journalist Jeff Sharlet, it’s explained that a secretive group of conservative Christian power brokers—including Vice President Mike Pence and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions—preach this idea of the ‘wolf-king,’ a leader anointed by God to enact the Christian right agenda. The ruthlessness or immoral conduct of such a leader...isn’t seen to be at odds with the forgiving spirit of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, these evangelical leaders believe God wants their leaders to be ruthless, because that’s what is effective. (Marcotte 2019)

²² SMERSH was an umbrella organization, formed in 1942 and named by Joseph Stalin, for counter-intelligence agencies in the Russian Red Army.

²³ See <https://www.professorwatchlist.org/>.

²⁴ The Bruin Alumni Association is a group for conservative alumni of University of California, Los Angeles.

Marcotte illustrates the effectiveness of the ‘king’ metaphor used by evangelicals when selling Trump to the public:

Some Christian conservative leaders do try to spin a fable in which Trump is a sinner redeemed by Jesus who now walks the path of righteousness in his personal life. But smarter evangelical pastors understand that while their followers will swallow all sorts of nonsense, that’s going too far. Instead, these ‘king’ metaphors allow them to make a different argument: God chooses ‘imperfect’ men to be ‘vessels’ for his will because they have talents — in Trump’s case, belligerence and bullying, interpreted as ‘strength’ — that matter more than their sinful behavior.

This reading, perversely, allows evangelicals to interpret Trump’s lechery and tendency to curse (they don’t really see his racism or encouragement of violence as sinful) as *more* evidence that he has been chosen by God. (Marcotte 2019)

In their public work, evangelical Christians are very well aware of the postdigital nature of contemporary communications (Jandrić et al. 2018). A master of combining truth, half-truth, and lies (MacKenzie and Bhatt 2018), Trump has managed to bring the concept of post-truth into dictionaries and popular discourses and has become an embodiment of Harry Frankfurt’s idea that ‘the production of bullshit is stimulated whenever a person’s obligations or opportunities to speak about some topic are more excessive than his knowledge of the facts that are relevant to that topic’ (Frankfurt 1985 [2005]). Evangelical Christians thrive on a multiplicity of ‘the competing conceptions of the real that undermine the possibility for a democratic debate.’ Jodi Dean writes: ‘it is not about news being fake or not fake; there is not an underlying reality that determines whether a story is fake or not fake. I’ll be clear: this does not mean there is no underlying reality. It means rather that there is no resolution of the antagonism which leads people to differ in their views of reality’ (Dean et al. 2019: 225). Post-truth is fertile ground for anti-intellectualism of all hues and stripes. My ignorance is as good as your knowledge! And why would not it be? If the president of the most powerful country in the world can easily dismiss the world’s scientists in his rejection of Anthropogenic climate change, why would I vaccine my child against measles? Never mind that vaccination is so efficient, that ‘most of the clinicians [in the U.S.] had never seen a measles case’ (Paumgarten 2019). Never mind that there is no proof that anti-measles vaccine causes autism. Hey-ho, let’s cherish our true American values and take our kids to Disneyland! But this is where the wicked measles virus patiently awaits. In 2015, ‘after a measles outbreak at Disneyland, the California legislature got rid of religious and “personal belief” exemptions to the state’s vaccine law, leaving only medical ones’ (Paumgarten 2019). While the overall rate of vaccination in California did rise after this measure, ‘so did the incidence of doctors selling bogus medical exemptions’ (Paumgarten 2019). But why care about vaccinating living children, when we organize prayer groups for the rights of unborn ones?

The problem with the evangelical Christian mafia is not its attempts to swindle a gullible public and batter its way through the stubbornness of secular reason, or its ghastly moral compromise but its theological narrow-mindedness and refusal to acknowledge the condemnation of differentiating wealth by Jesus that can be found all throughout the New Testament (see McLaren 2015). The fact that it is ensepulchered in

the anti-Kingdom and enpretzeled in a Christianity that supports empire leads evangelical Christianity to gravely misunderstand the role that capitalism plays in Christianity. Human suffering is both material and spiritual. Relationships between human beings can be more fully born of justice and love when capitalism is transcended. But that raises the foreboding specter of socialism and causes evangelical Christians to reach for their AR-15s and stuff their 9mm Glock 17s down their britches.

The exegetical and theological efforts to denigrate socialism is based on a desire to transcend the flesh and live in some preternatural Greek logos stripped of blood and gristle—the individualistic dimension of Pauline anthropology—whereas liberation theology works to abolish suffering caused by systems of oppression, such as the social relations of production and human sin, which is more in keeping with the collective dimension of the Pauline message as a whole. The true covenant of Jesus is the transformation of the heart, not the observance of the letter. Interhuman injustice is sin and the way injustice is built into the very structures of capitalist society is indeed sinful. Sin need not be always individual but it can be social, it can result from the relationship between different peoples, defined nationally or racially within juridical and economic structures. Sin is both a concrete universal and supraindividual. José Porfirio Miranda notes the following:

...we can now affirm that according to Paul sin is incarnated in social structures, in the powerful wisdom of the world, in the human civilization which forces us to act in a determined way in spite of the contrary conscience which man still has regarding what is good and what is bad. But the fact that Paul repeats several times that the law serves as an instrument of sin (for example, Rom. 5:20; 7:10–11; 13; 1 Cor. 15:56; Gal. 3:19) leads us decidedly in the same direction. Sin, although it entered the world because of the guilt of one man, (Rom. 15:12a; cf. Rom. 5:15a, 17a, 18a; 1 Cor. 15: 21–22) has become structured into human civilization itself, whose most characteristic and quintessential expression is the law. It seems to me that this is the only way that we can understand how sin is a current within human history, a manifestly supraindividual force which gains control over peoples as such and increases its own power, even when men, trying to be conscientious observers of the law, believe they are struggling against sin. (Miranda 1974: 182)

Clearly for Saint Paul, the law is what gives power to sin. The juridicio-philosophical theory that appears to undergird his concept of the law sees the law and the state as inextricably connected. The law, associated with this world and civilization, is often contrasted with faith. How ‘mankind is organized and stamped from within and from without’ refers to its ‘civilizing, axiological, and organizational structuralization’ (Miranda 1974: 187). We contend that it is the ‘structuralization’ of capitalism that has wrought havoc on the human species. So long as law exists, justice remains out of reach of humanity. Today, it has become more urgent to work together to transform the existing laws of motion (development trends) of the capitalist mode of production (the relentless compulsion for surplus value extraction and capital’s growing concentration and centralization, tendency of rate of profit to decline, etc.) and repristinate the struggle for a socialist alternative. With Paul, we see the incapacity of the law even remotely to secure justice, since, as Porfirio Miranda reminds us, ‘[s]in is incarnated in this civilization and in the ideology which supports it’ (1974: 188).

Liberation theologians recognize Jesus as an outlaw who made the wisdom of the world seem foolish and so set on a mission to subvert the socially reproductive order of the world, to dismantle the mechanisms of social control and to bring a new order to the world. The Jesus whom prosperity gospel preachers profess to support when they prescind from the struggle for social justice cannot be the true God of the Kingdom. He can only be the God of the anti-Kingdom. Remember what Yahweh said to Moses when Moses asked Yahweh his name (Exod. 3:14)? In the King James Bible and most orthodox versions of the Torah Yahweh answered ‘I am that I Am.’ Yet, there exists a strong argument that Yahweh’s answer should be: ‘I will be who I will be’ (this position assumes that the Biblical phrase אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּהּ, ‘I am who I am’ (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*), should be read as ‘I will be what I will be’ because there is no present tense of the verb ‘to be’ in the Hebrew language (see Miranda 1974: 294–295). The term *ehyeh* is often contracted in the Bible to mean ‘I am’ which is puzzling since it is the first person singular imperfect form and is usually translated as ‘I will be’ (or ‘I shall be’). In fact, the Septuagint always translates the first person singular of *ehyeh* as *esomai* or ‘I will be’ (*esomai* is the future first person singular of ‘to be’ in ancient Greek). Yahweh is the third person of the imperfect which refers to the future. The power of the name Yahweh thus resides in the future (Miranda 1974: 295).

Some argue that Yahweh would never designate Himself with an absolute future tense (‘I will be what I will be’), in the sense that Yahweh is telling Moses that He is to be known through his actions. But neither would Yahweh reveal Himself as a philosophical principle (‘I am that I am’)—an existential God of Existence whose purpose is to be pondered and puzzled over. For those theologians who ascribe to the translation, ‘I will be who I will be,’ it appears that Yahweh is announcing that he will be revealed through historical time, in the moral quest for justice. For some liberation theologians, this means that people can discover God in the picket lines, in labor strikes, in courtroom litigation, in political arenas of policymaking, and in resistance movements against fascism. God is not always revealed in the outcomes of such struggles, but in the processual and performative nature of the struggles themselves. In this sense, Yahweh or God is, in effect, here but at the same time ‘not yet’ present—God becomes an eschatological affirmation. God will be God when there exists a people ‘who fulfill certain conditions’ (Miranda 1974: 295). We need to enable God to be that future God by engaging in the struggle for justice in the here and now. This does not mean that God is not quite God, or exists in some kind of perpetual state of becoming, or that God is somehow other than what God is at this very moment. However, it does suggest that God’s role in history will be made manifest for certain peoples at a contextually specific future time.

There is no necessary dialectical contradiction in saying that God can be God now and God can exist in and for the future simultaneously. It means that God does not exist outside the interhuman summons to justice. In this sense, the God of the Bible has much less in common with the Western ontological assumption that an object exists independently of whether it is known or not since the ‘I will be who I will be’ suggests ‘that a god who is conceived as existing outside of the interhuman summons to justice and love’ is not the God who is revealed through scripture but rather an idol (Miranda 1974: 296). This perspective views God as the seed of future humanity, reached through a new covenant, and Christians believe that this new covenant was established through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Put your faith in faith, in love, not

law—that is the message of this new covenant, according to liberation theologians. Rejected is the eternal return of the same and affirmed is the possibility of one man's death setting in motion the full realization of justice now and forever. Miranda (1974: 296) writes:

God will be only in a world of justice, and if Marx does not find him in the Western world it is because he is indeed not there, nor can he be. As Freud attests, 'There is no longer any place in present-day civilized life for a simple natural love between two human beings.' All our rebellion against Western civilization and against its acute extreme called capitalism is the attraction exercised on us by a future world in which justice, authentic love is possible. Then, in the societal relationship of justice, and not before, the authentically dialectical mind will have to see if god exists or does not exist. Anything else would be vulgar materialism and dogmatism.

This perspective of the gospel of liberation is very different than reconciling the Bible with Greek philosophy, in relation to the essence of man or the so-called 'true man.' In fact, Miranda (1974: 277) notes that 'in both Marx and the Bible the basis for all thought is this thesis which is the most revolutionary imaginable: Sin and evil are not inherent to humanity and history; they began one day through human work and they can, therefore, be eliminated.' This reading is much more in keeping with liberation theology, with the social gospel of Jesus Christ, where faith has efficacious social and ethical dimensions. It exists in diametrical opposition to the prosperity gospel driven by the law of motion of the capitalist mode of production that takes place in the frenzied carnivalesque of the megachurches across the nation. Praise be the Lord! Amen! Thank you Jesus! Rest on your feet and pull out from your pockets a love token for the church! Pay attention to the Holy Ghost! Shout, dance in the spirit and testify! But whatever you do, stay away from those social justice warriors, those cultural Marxists! And remember white Christian people—you are the oppressed! If you hear the words 'white privilege' run for cover!

Critical pedagogy is first and foremost about social justice. Caring about this mission, and seeing it through, means understanding the way that social justice is under attack by many of the religious leaders who have gathered like sycophantic bugbears around their loyalty to the soil Wolf King, Donald Trump. If Trump is defeated, watch them scurry to the American Redoubt, to find themselves a prepper-friendly church from which to tithe their congregants, to work towards amalgamating Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and the eastern parts of Washington and Oregon into a rustic, do-it-yourself theocratic state, cramping their families inside pre-made, blast-proof underground steel bunkers with just enough power to recharge their electric cap lamps mounted in their MSA Skullguard helmets for nightly study sessions on *The Art of the Deal* (Trump and Schwartz 1987).

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