



# RELIGIOUS RIGHT STRIKES BACK!

Billionaire Presidential candidate Donald Trump dominated the news in 2016. Now, as President, he continues to be the center of attention. While some Freethinkers may be interested in the promised wall on the southern border of the US, most are much more concerned about the wall of separation between state and church. In this connection an interesting article appeared in The New York Times on January 27th entitled "Donald Trump, the Religious Right's Trojan Horse."\* Michelle Goldberg wrote:

"This time a year ago, leaders of the old guard religious right were determined to stop Donald J. Trump from winning the Iowa caucuses. ... Once Mr. Trump seized the Republican nomination, religious conservatives realized that their only path to federal influence lay in a bargain with this profane, thrice-married Manhattan sybarite. So they got in line, ... Mr. Trump is ... fully repaying his Christian conservative supporters. For all his flagrant sinfulness, he's assembling a near-theocratic administration, his cabinet full of avowed enemies of church-state separation. ... one of Mr. Trump's first acts as president was to widely expand the so-called global gag rule on abortion."

Americans will not be personally affected by foreign aid rules. But they will be if Mr. Trump keeps his promise to sign a bill defunding Planned Parenthood. Or if he signs legislation allowing discrimination against LGBTQ people for "religious" reasons. Already this year a "personhood" bill has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (HR 586) and a similar bill (S 231) introduced by "libertarian" Rand Paul in the Senate. The House version declares that "each human life begins with fertilization, cloning, or its equivalent, at which time every human has all the legal and constitutional attributes and privileges of personhood." Will Mr. Trump sign that bill? As Goldberg writes – and it takes little imagination to appreciate the fact – such "politics of coercive piety will transform American life." The irony is that:

"By winning the primary over the strenuous objections of prominent Christian conservatives, Mr. Trump revealed [the Religious Right's] diminishing sway. When those same leaders decided to champion him, they had to shrug off everything they'd ever said about the primacy of personal morality in politics. Had he lost, they'd have been utterly discredited. But Mr. Trump didn't lose, and now the movement that helped deliver his victory faces a deliverance of its own."

The question is why President Trump is willing to give these religious political extremists whatever they want. Does he really feel that he is in their debt? Is he earnestly trying to show the self-proclaimed agents of "God's Will" that he is not the monster the media say he is? Has he come to fervently believe in Christian Dominionism? Or does he just not realize how dangerous theocracy is?

Goldberg says that:

"President Trump may lack a coherent ideology, but he shares with the religious right a kind of Christian identity politics, a sense that the symbols of Christianity, if not its virtues, deserve cultural precedence."

Put another way, it seems likely that President Trump, like many Americans, has not thought too deeply about matters of religion. He may simply be "going along to get along" with his new radical religious supporters. He appears to accept common beliefs that Christianity is a good thing, that faith in "God" is a mark of superior character, and that irreligiosity tears at the fabric of society and of morality itself. How many Americans have even heard of Christian Dominionism, much less know what it is and what it would mean if its agenda were made the law of the land?

Moreover, the loudest critics of Christian radicalism are the same people that went all-out in 2016 to portray Mr. Trump as virtually a reincarnation of Adolph Hitler. Why should Mr. Trump pay

them any heed now? If Mr. Trump ever thought he had a friend in Democrats such as the Clintons, or even “moderate” Republicans, would he not now feel disabused of that idea? This is consistent with Mr. Trump being a “big picture” businessman who has little interest – or time and opportunity – to get bogged down in details. Whatever else he is or is not, he is no philosopher. He is devoted to deal-making, not thought-analyzing. As Goldberg concludes:

“With hindsight, Mr. Trump’s libertinism made him the perfect Trojan Horse for conservative values. Because he’s such an irreligious figure, social issues barely figured in the campaign. Even as Christian conservatives put their faith in Mr. Trump, opponents of the religious right’s agenda — which remains broadly unpopular — could convince themselves that Mr. Trump wouldn’t enact it. The religious right has been elevated to power without having to contest its ideas in an election.”

Probably a good many of those who voted for Donald Trump did so because of concerns about immigration, national security, international trade, taxation and “the economy stupid,” as well as distaste for his opponent and her friends. Such voters may not have anticipated – and who did?! – that this would come at a high price: control of the levers of political power by deranged enemies of reproductive freedoms, state-church separation, and some of the most important and promising areas of science.

Yes, these theocrats insist that they support the U.S. Constitution. We will see if that document can survive their radical agenda.

\* <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/opinion/sunday/donald-trump-the-religious-rights-trojan-horse.html>

**Proselytizing ... is a search for a final and irrefutable demonstration that our absolute truth is indeed the one and only truth. The proselytizing fanatic strengthens his own faith by converting others.”**

**[Eric Hoffer (1902-1983) in The True Believer]**

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**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar , or our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at:**

**- [www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought](http://www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought) - JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Jason’s Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of 635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

**Freethought Salon:** Discuss today’s service topic or other conundrums of interest. It happens most non-first Sundays of the month, over breakfast, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel restaurant “The Vineyard” - inside the hotel - in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM.

**Game Night:** Nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Le Havre, Carcassonne, and other fun games!

**Freethought Book Club March 25, 2017 5 pm, THE CLASSIC BOOK: If You Meet The Buddha on the Road, Kill Him by Sheldon Kopp, Location: Lynda Koshy’s residence at 331 Pecan Hollow Drive, Coppell, TX**

**Communitas Dinner Group: (To be Announced)**  
**Have Another Idea?** Email or call! Read bulletins & presentations and post on the FORUM at [www.churchoffreethought.org](http://www.churchoffreethought.org) LIKE US at [www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/](http://www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/) and sign up for our Twitter feed at [twitter.com/ntcof](http://twitter.com/ntcof) !

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:**

**“HERESIES”**

**> Sunday, March 5, 2017 <**

**COMFORT INN DFW AIRPORT NORTH**

**(Take the Freeport Parkway exit, then the frontage road east just past Best Western; service starts at 10:30 but come early for coffee, snacks - you can bring some! - and conversation)**

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mailing address: 1001 N Waldrop Dr #815  
 Arlington, TX 76012  
 (214) 702-2050

Website: [www.churchoffreethought.org](http://www.churchoffreethought.org)  
 Email: [info@churchoffreethought.org](mailto:info@churchoffreethought.org)