

#1601 Christian Nationalism is not Christianity, it is Fascism

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we will look at Trump's greatest impact, that of bringing the fringes of the conservative movement into the center, and by strongly courting the evangelical Christian vote, helping accelerate the Christian nationalist movement to merge religion with patriotism.

Sources today include *Confronting Christian Nationalism*, a little on the nose there, *Fresh Air*, *Radio Atlantic*, *The Hartmann Report*, *Meet the Press*, and *The Chris Hedges Report*, with additional members-only clips from the *Benjamin Dixon Show* and *Democracy Now!*.

A Threat to Church and State - Confronting Christian Nationalism - Air Date 9-9-23

AMANDA TYLER: We should have a common understanding about what we're talking about as far as Christian nationalism goes, and I'm going to point to the statement that's available at ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org. The work that we did back in 2019 was about providing an advocacy platform for people who are interested in learning more and for taking a public stand, and the centerpiece of the [00:01:00] project is a statement, and in the statement itself, we define Christian nationalism as a "political ideology that seeks to merge our identities as Americans and Christians."

So a few things here: one, we are specifically talking in the American context. This is something that comes up, this is not particular to the United States, but in our work, we are really focusing on the American expression of Christian nationalism, and so we talk explicitly about American and Christian identities. But we also want to distinguish that Christian nationalism is not Christianity.

Christian nationalism is a political ideology, Christianity is religion. That said, you can't totally divorce Christianity out of it. It'd be great just to say, "Oh, this has nothing to do with Christianity," that would be really easy, right? That's not accurate, and that's because Christian nationalism uses the narratives and the symbols, [00:02:00] and in some cases, even the theology of Christianity to further this political ideology. But as we define Christian nationalism, it is not itself a religion. It is more about identity than religion in a lot of ways. And we

get at this in one of our resources that we have available at ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism, a really handy one pager that your guests last week Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry helped us put together called, *What is Christian Nationalism?*, and we talk about how it's more identity than religion.

When we define Christian nationalism, I think it's also important to say what it's not. It's not patriotism. Patriotism is a love of country, and we can love, we can show our love of country in a number of different ways. We can wave an American flag. We can protest in the streets. We can exercise our constitutional rights. These are all different ways to be patriotic. Nationalism is a love of country [00:03:00] that also requires an allegiance to it above everything else, including our theological views. And so when our patriotism starts to ask us to sacrifice our theological views, that's no longer patriotism—that's nationalism, and particularly as we're talking about here, Christian nationalism.

DOUG PAGITT: It really does seem like there's a lot of people who believe, as a matter of fact, that this was founded as a Christian nation with intent for a Christian community to express the desire and will of God in the world. I don't know. I hear that so often from people who I think would feel totally bothered by the fact that that would be Christian nationalism. They think it's just history. They think it's just a proper description of how the world came together.

Can you talk a little bit about how do you make sense out of the history that so many people have been taught? Maybe it was in Sunday-school or school-school, or homeschool or somewhere along [00:04:00] the line, they just picked up from, I don't know, the pilgrims forward, that there were a bunch of religious freedom seekers that came to America to establish freedom from an oppressive government and that was God's call and the United States of America has a unique place and they just view the world through God's lens and they think God has given the people of Christian faith this land and we should be gracious to everyone, but, you know, it was a Judeo Christian place. How do you even begin to unravel that when that doesn't feel like a choice people are making or an ideology they're picking? They feel like it's history. What advice do you have for people trying to, make some better sense out of all that?

AMANDA TYLER: I think for one just engaging in conversation and not taking some of this history and sometimes I'll put that in air quotes, "history" as fact. You can cherry pick any kind of history of the United States. You can take different anecdotes about certain founders or constitutional framers own religious views. You can construct a [00:05:00] narrative as some of these Christian nationalists, like David Barton, have done in the past.

David Barton is someone who has spent decades writing this history of the United States as a Christian nation, and a lot of this, as you said, gets into some of these curricula that homeschools and others use in order to teach this history—you can cherry pick that history. You could spend your time going anecdote for anecdote or quote for quote. I don't often think that that's really a productive way to do it, and so instead, and again I'm a lawyer and I lead this advocacy group about religious freedom for all, so I go to our founding documents and I go to the US constitution itself. And religion or religious is mentioned exactly once in the original US Constitution from 1787, in Article 6 where there says there will be no religious test for public office. And so I say if our founders really wanted to set up a Christian nation, this was a really [00:06:00] ineffective way to do it, to say from the beginning that there would be no religious test for public office.

And then you can go to the first amendment, of course, that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. But if you are saying at the very first amendment to the US constitution that we are not going to establish a religion, there will should be no law respecting an establishment of religion, again, you're not setting up a Christian nation when it comes to the laws and the structure of our government itself.

It was never meant, however, for there to be a total divorcement of religion from the public square, far from it, but as far as our government itself, our government was set up as a secular government, not one that was meant to promote one particular religion over others or even religion over irreligion. It was set up as a [00:07:00] secular government

How Trump Is Dividing The Evangelical - Fresh Air - Air Date 11-29-23

TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR: I think it's fair to say that you trace some of this to Jerry Falwell, who was a founder of the Moral Majority. And the Moral Majority is credited as being the evangelical group that helped Ronald Reagan get elected and that brought the evangelicals into the political realm and into a very forceful influence in American politics. So can you talk about that a little bit, the connection that you see?

TIM ALBERTA: Yes. I think, in many ways, when people ask, where does this story begin, I think it starts with Jerry Falwell Sr., and I think it starts with his Moral Majority. I think, perhaps even more to the point, Terry, it starts with the

founding of a small Christian college in Lynchburg, Va., that was later renamed from Lynchburg Baptist College into Liberty University. And that period of time in the mid to late 1970s, when Jimmy Carter is president, when the culture wars are [00:08:00] beginning to rage around abortion and prayer in public schools, and pornography, and drug usage, and all of these things, Jerry Falwell Sr. senses an opportunity to use these massive organizations—his Christian school, his large Christian church, and this new organization, the Moral Majority—to use them in concert to apply pressure on the secular left and to enlist like-minded religious conservatives to join his cause.

And what he discovered was this incredibly explosive, dynamic formula for raising money, for mobilizing the grassroots to vote Republican. And I think what was so dangerous about it was that there's ample evidence to suggest that Jerry Falwell Sr. himself did not believe in most of this fear that he was peddling, this fear that he was using to [00:09:00] exploit the masses of evangelicals who he was raising hundreds of millions of dollars from, and buying a private jet and flying around the country, saying that the end is nigh. Falwell Sr. himself did not personally believe that, but he was planting this...

TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR: But how do you know?

TIM ALBERTA: Well, I've spoken with a lot of people close to him. I've read some of his correspondences. There is ample evidence to suggest that Falwell, and his contemporaries at the time, some of whom spoke to me for this book, they knew that what they were doing was dishonest, that it was duplicitous, and they didn't particularly care because they saw this as a means to an end, the end being a conquest of the secular culture. And so once you justify things that way, then it's fair game.

TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR: Would you say that Ronald Reagan opened the door to evangelicals basically becoming the base of the Republican Party?

TIM ALBERTA: I think in some ways, yes. [00:10:00] This kind of shotgun marriage between Jerry Falwell Sr. and his Moral Majority and the Ronald Reagan campaign in 1980, I think it completely reoriented American politics as we knew it to that point. And what we see today in terms of Donald Trump's relationship with the religious right, the throughline is Jerry Falwell Jr., who was probably the single biggest endorsement for Donald Trump back in the 2016 campaign because it was establishing a continuity between not only generations of the Falwell family, but generations of these evangelical activists who had finally found relevance and success in the political arena and were really reluctant to give that up.

TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR: Oh, you describe one picture of Jerry Falwell Jr. and Donald Trump, and the background was one of Trump's walls at one of his homes, and it's filled with photos, and some of those photos are Playboy [00:11:00] models and other things that should be far outside of what Jerry Falwell Jr. would be endorsing.

TIM ALBERTA: Yes. And the great irony was that it was Jimmy Carter's presidency that really galvanized Jerry Falwell Sr. to get engaged and to mobilize these tens of millions of evangelical voters. And one of the specific things that Falwell Sr. cited was the fact that Jimmy Carter had the audacity to give an interview to Playboy magazine, which Jerry Falwell Sr. singled out as an avatar of America's cultural and moral decay. And here is his son and his namesake, Jerry Falwell Jr., a generation later, posing in front of a Playboy magazine with Donald Trump, giving a thumbs up and smiling broadly, and tweeting that out to all of his followers. And just that split screen, that juxtaposition, tells you so much about the [00:12:00] trajectory of this movement.

TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR: Jimmy Carter was a much more liberal evangelical than the Falwells, but also, that's the interview, the Playboy interview, is the interview in which Jimmy Carter confessed that he sometimes had lust in his heart. Not that he acted on it, but that he had it in his heart, and I think the implication was he felt guilty about it. But Trump's lusted out loud. He's had affairs with Playboy models, and he's talked about sexually harassing women and how cool that is. So, that's a contrast, too.

TIM ALBERTA: I'm so glad you're raising that, Terry, because yes, in that Jimmy Carter Playboy interview that I believe he gave in 1976, that was what Falwell and some of his associates at the time seized all over. "How dare this person who would run the United States of America, be the leader of the free world, how dare this person admit that he has felt temptation and lust in [00:13:00] his heart? That is totally unacceptable for the leader of God's ordained country, the United States." And yet here we are, 50 years later, dealing with a president who has become the unquestioned leader of that religious right movement who has spent years parading his mistresses through the tabloids, boasting about sexually assaulting women, who was found liable recently of sexual abuse by a jury.

So understanding the backslide here of what the standards are and what they aren't inside the American evangelical movement, and really, I think, just to put it very bluntly, understanding the rank hypocrisy that has guided this movement in recent years is at the core of this story.

TERRY GROSS - HOST, FRESH AIR: Do you see parallels between the split in the evangelical church and the split in the Republican Party? Just as many people have left their churches for more open-minded [00:14:00] churches, a lot of Republicans who are more from the Republican mainstream have abandoned the party.

ALBERTA: Oh, absolutely—the parallels are uncanny. I think they start with just this basic fact that Donald Trump, in many ways, represented the fringe of the party becoming the mainstream. That is probably the single biggest consequence of the Trump presidency is that these voices that once existed at the periphery of the GOP during the Tea Party years and even farther back, they, in Donald Trump, suddenly took over the mainstream of the party to the point now where anyone who is attempting to adhere to traditional conservative Republican policy beliefs is an outcast because they no longer belong in the party.

We've seen that same dynamic at work in the evangelical movement, which is to say that 15 or 20 years ago when you would [00:15:00] see Westboro Baptist Church protesting outside of funerals with these heinous, hateful banners that they would hold up, those people were rightly viewed as a cult, they were viewed as the fringe, but today, you have pastors who are even more incendiary, even more extreme than Westboro Baptist, and they have massive followings. They preach to millions of people online every Sunday. They've been invited to Trump's White House. One of these pastors in particular, Greg Locke, who has built this massive tent revival church in Tennessee and who is known for things like saying that autistic children are oppressed by demons, and for staging burnings of Harry Potter books, and he's debating flat Earth theology next week at his church, in fact— this pastor, he was invited to the White House, and he posed for a photo there with Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham. So these people who once would have been treated as outcasts [00:16:00] and pariahs, they are now very much in the evangelical mainstream.

How Trump Has Transformed Evangelicals - Radio Atlantic - Air Date 12-14-23

TIM ALBERTA: Floodgate is a church in Brighton, Michigan, which is my hometown. They had about 100 people, 125 people on an average Sunday for their worship services. So it's a pretty small church—roadside congregation—in my hometown. And I grew up a few miles from there. I had never heard of it.

Fast-forward to COVID-19: Gretchen Whitmer, the Democratic governor of Michigan, had issued shutdown orders that implicated houses of worship, and most of the churches in the area, including very conservative churches— theologically, culturally, politically conservative—they decided to shut down for some period of time, and that included my home church, where my dad had been the pastor—the church that I grew up in, spent my whole life in, they closed down. And basically, at that moment, this massive schism was opened in the [00:17:00] community, not only in the community I grew up in, but in the faith community that I grew up in, sort of universally speaking when we talk about evangelicalism in America, because this same thing that happened in Brighton, Michigan, was happening all over the country, which was to say that churches that closed down had some number of their congregants who were up in arms, who were furious, who basically believed that the pastors there were cowards and that they were succumbing to the forces of secularism that had the Church in the crosshairs.

And meanwhile, churches like Floodgate that took a bold stance against the government and stayed open, those churches were doing the Lord's work. And so what you saw at Floodgate was a congregation that had about 100, suddenly within about a year had gone to 1,500, and now they're even much bigger today than they were at that time.

And so when you go into Floodgate on a Sunday morning, as I did many times, instead of some of [00:18:00] the traditional Sunday-morning worship rituals—the church creeds and the doctrines being read aloud, the doxology sung, some of the standard stuff that you would become accustomed to in an evangelical space—really what you would see was the pulpit being turned into a soapbox, and the worship service turning into a low-rent Fox News segment, with the pastor just inveighing against Anthony Fauci, against Joe Biden, against the Democratic Party, against the elites who are trying to control the population—very dark, very angry, very conspiratorial. And that's what you would see inside of a church like Floodgate.

HANNA ROSIN - HOST, RADIO ATLANTIC: It's not exactly an evolution. It's more like an intensification, and I'm curious how the dots got drawn between a theological argument, and COVID-19 masking, and then went all the way to Fox News.

ALBERTA: Well, you're right that it's intensification. It is also evolution. [00:19:00] I'll explain, I think, what is the arc that led us to this place. To understand this moment is to understand the sweep of the last 50 or 60 years in the evangelical world.

So, during the mid-to-late '70s, and certainly into the '80s through the Reagan years, the Moral Majority is ascendant. You've got tens of millions of evangelicals who are suddenly energized, galvanized, mobilized politically. And then you begin to see, after the Iron Curtain falls and the Cold War ends, and we move into this period of a kind of peace and prosperity, that some of that panic starts to fall away a little bit.

A lot of churches ratchet it back, and things return to normal for a period. And you see that, really into the early 2000s, with a notable exception, I would add, of the Bill Clinton impeachment, which I think was a major moment for a lot of evangelicals—certainly my own father, my own church—where a lot of evangelicals wanted to take that moment to emphasize that [00:20:00] character matters, morality matters, and that our political system depends on having moral leaders.

And then you fast-forward, and things are still at a low simmer for a while there.

HANNA ROSIN - HOST, RADIO ATLANTIC: I think at the same time during the period that you're describing, we do come to think, in our cultural imagination, of evangelical as equivalent to conservative, eventually as equivalent to Republican conservative, and then eventually as equivalent to white Republican conservative. Those definitions are also getting hardened during the period that you describe as quiet.

ALBERTA: I think that's right, and I think that some of that owes to just a self-identification phenomenon. So, during George W. Bush's presidency, he's talking about his relationship with Billy Graham, he's talking about evangelicalism, and so that is becoming a part of the political lexicon all over again.

I think really what starts to trip the alarms [00:21:00] inside of evangelicalism is the end of the Bush presidency and the election of Barack Obama. Now, for some reasons that are obvious, i.e., we're talking about a white evangelical movement, portions of which, perhaps significant portions of which, are deeply uncomfortable with a Black president.

I also think that during Obama's presidency, you see a significant move in the culture. I mean, even just on the issue of same-sex marriage, for example, Obama runs for president in 2008 opposed to same-sex marriage, and by the time he leaves office, he is in favor of it and the Supreme Court rules to legalize same-sex marriage nationally. All of that is happening in the space of less than a

decade, and you're seeing major cultural movement toward the left. And a lot of evangelical Christians during this period of time are really beginning to sound the alarm, they're really hand-wringing, saying, [00:22:00] "Okay, this is it. This is the apocalypse we've been warning about for 50 years."

Even if that apocalypse was once an abstract thing, something that they gave voice to but maybe didn't really believe it, suddenly this convergence of factors is causing a lot of churches to become, not just more conservative, not just more Republican, but really more militant in a lot of ways—in the rhetoric you hear from the pulpit, with the tactics that they will choose to engage in some of the culture-war issues with.

And so that leads us to Trump coming down in the golden escalator. And Donald Trump is not exactly a paragon of Christian virtue. The thrice-married, casino-owning, manhattan playboy who parades his mistresses through the tabloids and uses terrible, vulgar rhetoric—I mean, this is not someone who the rank-and-file evangelical would point to as an ally, much less as a [00:23:00] role model.

And I reported extensively in 2016 on a really well-organized, well-financed effort to rally evangelical leaders around Ted Cruz, because they at least viewed him as one of their own. But he also had all of that same pugilism, all of that same attitude, that "we've been pushed around too long, and now it's time we fought back and we did something about this."

Donald Trump secures the Republican nomination, and then he realizes that he can't get elected president without the support of these white evangelical voters and, frankly, without overwhelming support of those voters. And so, methodically, he starts his courtship of them. He chooses Mike Pence as his running mate. He releases this list of Supreme Court justices. He promises explicitly that they will be pro-life Supreme Court justices, something that had never been done by a presidential nominee. He's doing all of this signaling [00:24:00] to evangelical voters.

Perhaps most importantly, he goes to New York in the summer of 2016, and he meets with hundreds and hundreds of these prominent evangelical pastors from around the country, and he basically promises them, he says, look, I will give you power. If you elect me, I will give you power, and I will defend Christianity in this country.

And so there's \ this transactional relationship where Trump gets the votes from these people, and they get not just the policies in return, but they get the

protection in return. It's almost as though Trump becomes this mercenary who, on their behalf, is willing to fight the enemies out in the culture, in the government. Anyone who is hostile to the Christian way of life as they view it, Donald Trump is going to fight on their behalf.

Will MAGA Mike Inflict a Religious Crusade on America? - The Hartmann Report - Air Date 11-2-23

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THE HARTMANN REPORT: Can we stop MAGA Mike and the Republican party from inflicting their religious crusades on America? We have the handmaidens tale alert—Idaho just [00:25:00] arrested their first teenager for abortion trafficking. But to start out my op ed today over at Hartman report. com is titled, *Can We Stop MAGA Mike & the GOP from Inflicting Their Crusades on America?*

Mike Johnson, it turns out about three and a half years ago, Mike Johnson gave a speech in which he said that he wanted a religious litmus test for office holders. , David Corn is reporting this over at Mother Jones. Johnson told attendees to a workshop on America as a Christian nation, quote, "You better sit down any candidate who says they're going to run for legislature and say, 'I want to know what your world view is. I want to know what, to know what you think about the Christian heritage of this country. I want to know what you think about God's design for society. Have you even thought about that?' If they haven't thought about it, you need to move on and find somebody who has... we have too many people in government who don't know any of this stuff. They haven't even thought about it."

The idea of religious people taking over government is not, I'm pretty sure, what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is [00:26:00] God's," but Johnson goes on to clarify the phoniness of his embrace of Jesus when you consider his very anti Christ like positions on, for example, despoiling our planet.

He's a climate change denial person. He had tax cuts for billionaires. Whose taxes would Jesus cut? Really? And his opposition to health care and other welfare programs. I point out an article, and I'm not going to go through the whole thing again with you, because I say it so often on this program, but there is literally only one place in the Bible where Jesus tells his disciples what they have to do to get into heaven, and it's in Matthew 25, and he says, I was hungry and you gave me food. He says that, in the end days, he's talking to the sheep,

the people who are going with him to heaven, as opposed to the goats who are going to hell. He says, I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came onto me. And at that point, his disciples freaked out and said, wait a minute. We've never seen you in any of these [00:27:00] situations. And he said, as you do, onto the least of these my brethren, you do unto me.

This is the essence of Christianity. It's also the essence of Judaism and Islam and Hinduism and Buddhism. It's told with different stories and different religions, but this message that it is our job as human beings, and particularly as followers of a religion, it is our job to care for our brothers and sisters. This is core to every religion in the world, and it is rejected by Mike Johnson and his right wing buddies. Rejected.

Mike Johnson voted repeatedly to end Obamacare, to overturn Obamacare. Oh, those 20, 30 million Americans, they don't need healthcare. Screw them. They're just low income people. This is clearly Mike Johnson's philosophy. And, it shouldn't surprise us, this has been the philosophy of the Republican Party since 1920, when Warren Harding basically kicked out all the progressives after the downfall of Teddy Roosevelt and [00:28:00] Robert Taft, and Harding flipped the Republican Party into pure oligarchy. That's where we're at.

So anyhow, Jesus is not, yes, there are places in the Bible John 14, where he talks about being saved through confession, or John 3:5, where he talks about baptism, but basically, that's the only place in the Bible where Jesus says, "Here's how you get to heaven."

I realize there's a debate among Christian theologians about whether it's possible to get to heaven without ever having done any good works, purely by confession, by saying the right magic words. I'll leave that debate to those folks. I'm not going to weigh in on it. I am a fan of "you are known by your works." but there's nothing. Jesus never said anything about taking over governments, or banning books, or cursing queer people, or trying to overthrow elections that you lost, or passing laws to enforce your religious beliefs. In fact, he said the opposite. Crippling the IRS, religious litmus tests, nothing about controlling women, or embracing AR [00:29:00] 15s, or trickle down economics. None of that stuff came out of the mouth of Jesus. But now we've got these fake Christians running around saying, "We know, we know what what Christianity is."

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, don't pray in public. and what do they do? What's the first thing they do as soon as Mike Johnson is elected speaker?

They gather around him and pray over him on the floor of the House of Representatives. Johnson even goes farther than that. He says that the environmental movement, "defies the created order of how this is all supposed to work." He believes environmentalists, presumably because they're looking at scientific data rather than reading the Bible. Johnson apparently believes the universe is 6, 000 years old and all that kind of stuff, noah's Ark held dinosaurs.

Apparently because environmentalists are reading science instead of the Bible. He thinks they're working for Satan. He says, "when you take God outta the equation and you remove absolute truths... you gotta make all this stuff up. So what they've done is, as the devil always does, they take the truth, they turn it upside down. So the radical environments environmentalists—they actually [00:30:00] believe that the environment is God." How dare they, see the sacred in nature? Frankly, that's another part of most religions.

I'm telling you, the fossil fuel billionaires must have laughed themselves silly when they found Johnson. They really hit the jackpot. Here's a guy two heartbeats away from the presidency, and he thinks doing anything about climate change is Satan's work. It doesn't get weirder than that.

Similarly, because democracy appears nowhere in the Bible, Johnson's just fine with strongman autocracy. He's the architect of the Republican Attorney General's strategy to sue before the Supreme Court to throw up Biden's votes in multiple swing states. After all, King David didn't need democracy, he wasn't elected. Why should King Donald have to be elected?

Trump's 'personal shortcomings' have become a 'bonus' for evangelical Christians, says Tim Alberta - Meet the Press - Air Date 12-24-23

KRISTEN WELKER - HOST, MEET THE PRESS: You write that "for decades, the religious right had imposed exacting moral litmus tests on public officials," and yet eventually "evangelical leaders embraced Trump's shortcomings." How do you explain this evolution?

TIM ALBERTA: It is an evolution, it's an arc. So you think about the [00:31:00] 2016 election and It's easy to forget now, but for a long time, Evangelicals were Trump's softest supporters. He had to really go to great lengths to firm up his support. He had to put Mike Pence on the ticket. He had

to release the list of Supreme Court nominees. He really had to court this group. And there was this uneasy alliance, a transactional relationship, where he said, I will give you all these policy victories that you want in exchange for your votes.

What that has morphed into is something very different, where those personal shortcomings that were once a real deficit in the eyes of those White evangelical voters, it's almost now like a bonus. And I think what I mean by that is, for a lot of these people who are panicked who are just stricken with fear about the culture changing so quickly, and the country turning on Christianity, and that their faith is in the crosshairs and one day they're going to be persecuted for their faith in this country— a lot of folks believe that. They think the [00:32:00] barbarians are at the gates, and so they need a barbarian to defend them, to protect them.

And so, they look at Trump, and the behavior, and the rhetoric, and in some sense, because he is not bound by biblical teachings, not bound by biblical virtues, he is free to fight for them in ways that no good Christian ever would. And that's the tragic irony to all of this is that in some sense, these people have decided that the best way to preserve Christian virtue in this country is to first set Christian virtue aside.

KRISTEN WELKER - HOST, MEET THE PRESS: Are you saying that evangelicals idolize?

TIM ALBERTA: I think some portion of them do, absolutely. And I think an even bigger portion of them, Kristen, idolize America. They have taken this country, and held it up in a place of a covenant relationship with God, where if America suffers, then God himself suffers. And that is a-biblical, [00:33:00] it is bad theology but it's also dangerous to the precepts of what a pluralistic society is and how it functions. And to be clear, we now have some significant chunk of the American people who, they don't view these partisan political disputes as red team versus blue team, they view them as good versus evil. They view these everyday political debates as a proxy in a holy war. And I don't know that we've fully begun to grapple with the implications of that.

KRISTEN WELKER - HOST, MEET THE PRESS: It's significant because what you are describing is a relationship that evangelicals have with politics that supersedes what the average person feels when they think about politics, and you describe this evolution of evangelicals as increasingly entrenched within far right politics. Do you think that's because of Trump, or do you think that was also a natural evolution?

TIM ALBERTA: Both. Trump [00:34:00] accelerated a lot of things and I think, even more so, Kristen, one of the, one of the factors here that sometimes goes underappreciated is COVID 19. And when you had a number of blue state governors issuing shutdown orders that implicated houses of worship, and people who had been marinating for decades in this message that the culture was coming for you, that the government was going to come for your churches, that they were going to shut you down, that you wouldn't be able to preach God's word in this country anymore, that's a real phenomenon dating back to the 70s and the 80s, this sort of end times prophesying. So when COVID 19 comes, it was like the prophecy was fulfilled for a lot of these people, and they were radicalized by it inside churches that preached that the end is here.

KRISTEN WELKER - HOST, MEET THE PRESS: How did pastors respond to the challenge of guiding their congregations through COVID 19? You described this as really deepening this phenomenon that you're talking about.

TIM ALBERTA: Yeah, and so there were some [00:35:00] pastors who decided to be war profiteers, who turned their churches into, they turned their Sunday morning worship into Fox News segments. They turned their pulpit into a soapbox and they really decided to lean into this.

That, from all of my reporting, Kristen, represents a very small fraction of the clergy. Most of the pastors who I've spent time around, including a lot of just big, conservative Republican pastors in conservative communities, they took a safe, rational approach. They shut down their church for a few weeks or for a few months or whatever the case was with their congregation. And by doing so, they were labeled Marxists. They were labeled as collaborators with the regime. They were weak, spineless, squishes, whatever, and some small but vocal portion of their congregation would first wage war against them, trying to get them to relent, and then if the pastor wouldn't relent, they would leave the church, and they would find their way to one of these other churches that [00:36:00] had pounced on the COVID 19 fracturing as an opportunity to grow.

And as I document in the book, I've been to churches that have grown tenfold, twelvefold, just in that 18 month period or so during COVID, where the pastor saw an opportunity, a financial opportunity, because the people who come into your church, they put money in the plate, and suddenly, some of these churches have grown from small little roadside congregations to big, booming megachurches. So, there's an industry here and people have taken advantage of the fear and the grievance that was percolating at the grassroots level.

The Trump movement is turning America fascist w/ Jeff Sharlet - The Chris Hedges Report - Air Date 10-27-23

JEFF SHARLET: The first rally I went to was in early 2016 in Youngstown, Ohio, which is, of course, a town just absolutely destroyed, a steel town just decimated. And there was a big crowd at the airplane hangar, and the first thing I noticed and realized was a staple was that while the press -- which was all penned up, they all agreed to stay in a little metal cage basically so that they can [00:37:00] be used as like a prop in Trump's passion play -- was twiddling their thumbs.

He was introduced by one of the most right-wing preachers that [you'd] ever heard, just a local preacher, but a very, very militant guy. And I've heard a lot of right-wing preachers. And in fact that this was a staple of this, and it was a sort of a combination of that kind of wrath of God, but also at this particular -- or I think it was at this, but no, it was a different rally -- black preacher who often introduced him would say, "I don't see black. I don't see white. The only color I see is green." And I would listen to the people around me talking about, while they waited for his plane, Trump Force One, to come in -- remember, this is not a president, he's coming in his own president [plane] -- they would talk about all the gold with it; the plane was literally heavy with gold. And I realized that what was happening here was this appeal to the prosperity gospel when Trump says, "We're going to win so much you're going to get tired of winning." He wasn't saying that I'm just like you. He was saying like prosperity gospel preachers always do: [00:38:00] "Look at my blessings. Look at my airplane, my riches, my beautiful suit. I am obviously more blessed than you. But by falling behind me, falling into my wake, you can partake of that blessing too."

And you raise Norman Vincent Peale, who he referred to as his preacher, Trump -- we make a lot of Trump's irreligious religiosity, but of course. I think we're confusing religiosity with piety. He is certainly impious. But he grew up really fascinated by Billy Graham on television as a charismatic figure, and Norman Vincent Peale, the power of positive thinking. He described Norman Vincent Peale as part of his "holy trinity" of mentors: his father, Fred, from whom he learned toughness; Roy Cohn, the legendary Red Scare warrior from whom he learned cunning; and Norman Vincent Peale, you could argue, from whom he learned bullshit. That, the point is the sale. Norman Vincent Peale boiled the gospel down to a [00:39:00] salesman's manual. And he carried that forth. And that's what was happening in 2016, I think, was really what he was saying, "Vote

for me and you'll get a piece of the riches, you're going to get some of the gold. Your plane too will be heavy with this precious cargo."

CHRIS HEDGES - HOST, THE CHRIS HEDGES REPORT: In that sense, he really replicates the role of a mega preacher completely, who is idolized, who can't be questioned, on the route to physical prosperity.

But the second time Trump runs, which you also cover, you say the whole landscape has changed in a much darker way. How did it change?

JEFF SHARLET: By 2020, of course we're into the pandemic. The "You're gonna win so much you'll get tired of winning," we can't really go with that. There was the aborted slogan tag, "Keep America Great", but MAGA just works so well that he's stuck with that. But it was darker in the sense of he had been using conspiracy theories -- and I think what's fascinating with that kind of narrative world that he was [00:40:00] creating, was winking at -- he's a little bit like a drug dealer who starts using his own supply. And I write in the book of a particular interview with Laura Ingraham in -- I think it was in 2019 actually the summer of '20, no the summer of 2020 -- and Laura Ingraham is doing what the right wing press did for him, which was always take his words, broadcast them, but also channel them into some kind of reason. And he was resisting it, sitting on the edge of his chair, leaning forward, looking very uneasy, talking about dark forces, men in black uniforms, circling in the planes above him, right now, he's using the present tense, and you could see Laura Ingraham trying to reel him back, saying by dark forces, you must mean Obama's people. And he's "No, people, you don't know who they are. I can't, I couldn't, I can't tell them the name." And he's no longer winking at the conspiracy theories he's trafficked in. I think he's fallen into the abyss and that kind of conspiracy thought was so definitive of the rallies I would go [00:41:00] to, where there's always a lot of blood and gore in the rhetoric of a Trump rally -- and that's been one of the failings of the press in not really addressing that; they would just ignore those stories -- but now he would go on at length about decapitations and disembowelments and "bad hombres" as he put it -- creeping in through windows, lots of these sort of horrible horror movie kind of rape fantasies and things that he knew that he couldn't even tell you about.

And it struck me as a kind of modernized, Americanized, bastardized, gnostic gospel. Gnosticism -- and I know that you've read deeply in this literature, but just to boil it down in the simplest sense -- an idea that there's an elect or a small group, initiates, who have secret knowledge, and that what's on the surface isn't real. And in fact, the actual God isn't real. There's a deeper power behind that. And of course gnosticism even has its own variation of the [00:42:00] deep state, the bureaucracy that gets in the way of the truth. And I think this is -- I

don't think Trump actually believed QAnon, but he believed in this kind of gnosticism, this secret knowledge that you obtained not through rationalism, but through a kind of mystic connection.

And of course, this starts to sound a lot like fascism, which it is.

Interview with Author Elle Hardy on Christian Nationalism - The Benjamin Dixon Show - Air Date 1-19-23

ELLE HARDY: Pentecostal Christianity is the fastest-growing religion in the world. And it's something that's been going a bit under the radar, I think, which is really why I wanted to write the book.

So it only started in 1906. It was founded by the son of freed slaves from Louisiana in a small Los Angeles church. And what really got it going then, and what's really making it explode now over the last 30 years around the world, is still a lot of the same things. It's really the faith of the world's working poor. And it really centers spirituality around the Holy Spirit. So it's the gifts of the Holy Spirit as told in the Bible. So it's things like speaking in tongues [00:43:00] that, that usually come to mind, but the main thing that's really getting people in the tent is health and wealth. In terms of getting people in the tent, it's about 35,000 people a day -- which I think is like pretty much like two Madison Square Gardens for context, so that's a lot of people -- and at the moment it's about 600 million and counting. And by 2050, there'll be about a billion people, or one in 10 people globally, who are Pentecostal charismatic. I tend to call them Pentecostal for ease of reference, but there are a few different branches and ways of referring to the movement. So it's a really significant thing that's going on.

And the other thing that's pretty significant there is that there's been a lot of connections with the rise of what I call the radical right in politics. So Pentecostals were the first evangelicals in America to get behind Donald Trump, more so than before Southern Baptists and other groups like that. They were really prominent in J. O. Bolsonaro coming to power and just recently the storming of the Brazilian capital in Brazil. They've been behind people like Rodrigo Duterte in the [00:44:00] Philippines, very prominent in Nigerian politics. So it's a really influential movement and a global one. One I think is really fascinating. And as I said, something that I think has just gone a bit under the radar.

BENJAMIN DIXON - HOST, THE BENJAMIN DIXON SHOW: Elle mentioned the foundations of the Pentecostal movement, and it immediately triggered in my mind, a memory of the Azusa Street revival. I know of it because of my biblical background, my church background, William J. Seymour, a Black man, son of a free slave is who founded it. So I asked Elle, how did this movement go from being one founded in Blackness to what it is now? A very forward-facing, nationalist, racist movement. And I want you to pay particular attention to her response and how historically as this movement grew and changed and evolved, there's still an alignment between Blackness, Black people, Black nations that have aligned with this new Pentecostal movement that is increasingly becoming the face of racism, [00:45:00] bigotry, and hatred, and even becoming the religious face of the Trump campaign.

ELLE HARDY: There's a couple of things. There's certainly in terms of substance, I think that there's a real movement going on globally that we're seeing that a lot of conservative-minded people and a lot of conservative-minded Christians are really feeling besieged by the liberal world around them. You'll hear people say, I can't turn on the damn TV without, some Hollywood actor telling me who to vote for, or I lost my job because women are in the workplace now. And, as all you hear about is is the environment and climate change and that sort of thing.

So there is a real sense of a lot of people in a lot of very different contexts around the world, really feeling like a liberal mindset is closing in on them. Someplace in the US, they'll call it wokeness. But you're certainly hearing it in other places as well. In the developing world, particularly places like Brazil and Nigeria, where Pentecostalism is really huge, you hear a lot about gay marriage and people, saying, "Oh, look, the West has lost its way with gay marriage," and " look [00:46:00] at your societies are falling apart since you let the gays get married." And that's absurd, but it's something that unfortunately a lot of people believe.

So there certainly is that sense, but I think the style is really important too. Pentecostal preachers have been, from the very earliest days, they've been one of the people. These are often people that come from working class backgrounds or, might be the most charming guy in the village in some places, or because of they don't often need a theological training to get their position. So they tend to be very good at what they do. They tend to be "people persons." They tend to have a real sense of an audience. And you find a lot of common cause in people like Trump. Trump's rallies are, if you read out the sorts of things that he would say at his rallies, it's incomprehensible. But if you listen to it, it's about the sort of back and forth with the audience, and it's about playing on certain things and it's about getting the energy going.

And so there just is some common cause, it's about preaching from the garden, not caring about what people say in books. And I think that is something that certainly can't be underestimated in the popularity [00:47:00] and how these political and faith-based movements have been able to align.

BENJAMIN DIXON - HOST, THE BENJAMIN DIXON SHOW: This is audio of pastor Greg Locke, who is the pastor of Global Vision Bible Church in Tennessee. Now he doesn't identify as a Pentecostal. In fact, his church was taken from a traditional Baptist church. Listen to this audio.

GREG LOCKE: I am not apologizing for what I said on this platform last week. [Applause] The Delta variant was nonsense then, it is nonsense now. You will not wear masks in this church! You will not wear masks in this church! I'm telling you right now. Do not get vaccinated! Do not get vaccinated! I don't care what you think about me. I don't need your money. I don't need your hand clap. I don't need more people on social media to follow me. I ain't following along with it. Joe Biden's days are numbered. I've told you the whole time this election was fraudulent. We got so much proof. The only people that can deny it are crack [00:48:00] smoking, demon-possessed leftists. I'm about to tear this whole pulpit in half.

BENJAMIN DIXON - HOST, THE BENJAMIN DIXON SHOW: Greg Locke perfectly fits the description of what Elle Hardy was speaking about in our interview. Here she is with more.

ELLE HARDY: It can be really tricky, because a lot of people don't identify as Pentecostal. A lot of these, what we call now the third wave of the Pentecostal movement are broadly called neo-charismatics, but many won't call themselves that.

So it is very confusing. But the real unifying thing is the Holy Spirit. And so you can often see that in declarations of faith. You can see it on the focus on things like health and wealth. Greg Locke is a great example. Yeah, I do believe that he started out Baptist but you see him talking about the Holy Spirit. He's very focused at the moment on deliverance ministry. He's actually broken with Trump. I think he's saying that, he might not be the one for the next election and Locke really made his name by joining forces and by coming out for someone like Trump. And so yes, he's really moving into deliverance ministry, which is a very Pentecostal-based thing.

A lot of these churches now actually call themselves non-denominational because it's not great for business to exclude a [00:49:00] lot of denominations.

So yeah, the thing to really watch out for is the Holy Spirit, is the style and is really focusing on the gifts like health and wealth and speaking to people's lives in the here and now as well as the ever after. That's a really significant thing. And once again, that's what's always really set Pentecostals apart from the beginning is an understanding of things like hip-pocket issues and and what's really bothering people in their everyday lives.

Trump's Escalating Racist Rhetoric & the Far-Right's Plan for a Slow Civil War - Democracy Now! - Air Date 12-21-23

NERMEEN SHAIKH - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Over the weekend, Trump claimed immigrants are “poisoning the blood” of the country.

DONALD TRUMP: When they let — I think the real number is 15, 16 million people into our country, when they do that, we got a lot of work to do. They're poisoning the blood of our country. That's what they've done. They've poisoned.

NERMEEN SHAIKH - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Trump's remarks sparked widespread criticism. Vice President Kamala Harris said Trump's words were, “similar to the language of Hitler.” On Tuesday, Trump doubled down during a campaign stop in Iowa.

DONALD TRUMP: It's crazy, what's going on. They're ruining our country. And it's true: They're destroying [00:50:00] the blood of our country. That's what they're doing. They're destroying our country. They don't like it when I said that. And I never read *Mein Kampf*. They said, “Oh, Hitler said that,” in a much different way.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Trump was standing between two Christmas trees.

Jeff, first respond to this “poisoning of the blood” and the comparisons to Adolf Hitler. His wife, Ivana Trump, the mother of his first three children, who died falling down the stairs a little while ago, had said that he had a book of quotes of Adolf Hitler on his bedstand.

JEFF SHARLET: Yeah, I think it's fascinating that Trump volunteers, “I haven't read *Mein Kampf*.” And, in fact, the book he's alleged to have had, and

seems to recently have had, was a different book of Hitler's. But what's fascinating to me is he's going out of his way to say that and to repeat that language, [00:51:00] after it's already — the comparison has already been made. And I think he's invoking that because it's chaos and it's drama. And I think he's counting that in his base he's going to be more helped by the high drama of Hitlerian operatics in World War II than the comparison to the worst fascist dictator in history. I don't think he's dodging it. I think he's going toward it.

NERMEEN SHAIKH - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: So, what do you think, Jeff, of the consequences of not taking these words of Trump's seriously? And also, you know, is this likely to diminish his support or, in fact, increase it?

JEFF SHARLET: I mean, we can just — all we need to do is sort of look what's happening. It's increasing the support. Again, he's understanding that drama and spectacle are what he purveys.

But in terms of not taking it seriously, I'm glad a lot of the press is still covering this race like it's a horse race, as opposed to a last gasp of the closest thing [00:52:00] we could — you know, let's hold on to what we have of American democracy. We're starting to look at something called Project 2025. This is a 900-page blueprint put together by Trump's allies, the Heritage Foundation, funded by Koch money. Press has made a lot of Koch — about the Kochs endorsing Nikki Haley, but they're covering their bets. A 900-page blueprint for day one. Remember, Trump says, from day one — “On day one, I'm going to be a dictator,” which is another bit of language that I think he's kind of rope-a-doping the press. “I'm going to be a dictator. I'm just joking. No, no, on day one, I'm going to be a dictator. Just joking. What was that word I kept saying? Dictator.” Again, even more important than the substance is the spectacle, the drama, that makes him the exciting and, in fascist terms, the man of action. Then you've got this 900-page document that lays out, agency by agency, with every right-wing think tank on board, [00:53:00] with the personnel, 20,000 personnel, already figured out, recruiting 5,000 lawyers to fight for this, with — talking about concentration camps, domestic surveillance, all the facets of a full-sized fascist government. He doesn't have to have read that, just like he doesn't have to have read *Mein Kampf*, to hit those notes.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: So, in the 2025 document that people should understand, this 30-chapter, as you said, 920-page document funded by the Heritage Foundation, the Koch brothers, talking about defunding the Department of Justice, dismantling the FBI, breaking up the Department of Homeland Security, Departments of Education and Commerce — and your title of your book, the subtitle of *The Undertow, Scenes from a*

Slow Civil War, can you tease that out as we move into 2024, [00:54:00] what you mean by a “slow civil war”?

JEFF SHARLET: I think the slow civil war — I mean, first of all, we look at the casualties of — that are already happening, people, pregnant people, forced to have children or suffering physically, even dying, the epidemic of trans and queer suicide, all these facets of a growing concentration of fascist policy. But the slow civil war also takes place through lawfare, through the laws that prevent people from getting the things they need. They are casualties of that.

What we see in that document is the blueprint for a massive acceleration of it. It's an eight — the plan is based around 180 days. And they go back to — Heritage Foundation made its name by making a similar document for Ronald Reagan in 1980, 60% of which was implemented within the first six months of his administration. They cite [00:55:00] that, and they say, “OK, but that was for Reagan. Now we're in the age of Trump. We need to go much further.” That's the term that they actually use, “much further.”

NERMEEN SHAIKH - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: So, Jeff, how representative would you say this document is to the far-right conservative movement? And do you think, irrespective of whether Trump is elected or not, some of these policies will be carried through, or an attempt will be made to carry them through?

JEFF SHARLET: Yeah, I think that's the other thing we have to remember. One, if, through some fluke of fate, it is, after all, Nikki Haley — a possibility I don't take seriously, but if it does happen — this is ready-made for her, as well. But it's also ready-made for right-wing activism. It's putting the stamp of Trumpism. And that's coming not from one group or another that's been taken over, but Heritage Foundation, Alliance for Defending Freedom, which is the group arguably responsible for overturning Roe. We see the Christian right organizations. We see the libertarian big business [00:56:00] organizations. We see the intellectuals, as it were, of the right-wing movement, Claremont Institute, Hillsdale College. It's a convergence. The document represents 400 contributors, many, many of them former Trump officials, defense contractors. So, I think what it — it's a document also meant to display, once and for all, the full sort of application of the competence of the wonks put to work for the fury of Trump's fascism and to sort of say, “OK, everybody's on board. This is the shape. This is the project.” The project is Trumpism, regardless of where the man is.

Final comments on the idolatry at the heart of Christian Nationalism

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today starting with *Confronting Christian Nationalism* explaining Christian nationalism, *Fresh Air* spoke with Tim Alberta about the evolution of the Christian right from Carter to Trump. *Radio Atlantic* looked at the transformation of churches into extremist political hubs. Thom Hartmann discussed House speaker Mike Johnson. *Meet The Press* also spoke [00:57:00] with Tim Alberta about the idolatry of Trumpism. And *The Chris Hedges Report* discussed Trump's role in the prosperity gospel. That's what everybody heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *The Benjamin Dixon Show* looking at the rise of Pentecostalism in right-wing politics. And *Democracy Now!* looked at the intersection of Christian nationalism and project 2025, the plan to seize dictatorial powers for the next Republican president. We did all show on it if you need more context. To hear that and of all of our bonus contents delivered seamlessly to the new members only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

Now to wrap up, I just wanted to share a bit of the article that inspired today's topic to help drive home what I think is an important point. We heard from Tim Alberta, a couple of times in the show today. He's [00:58:00] Christian, but not a Christian nationalist. And he wrote an article in *The Atlantic* about how his father was a pastor of a church who sort of leaned into the merging of religion and patriotism a bit. For the first big chunk of the article, I thought it was just another of those stories that I now find completely boring about how a Christian conservative realized that the movement they've been supporting had, to their dismay, gone completely off the rails. Heard it. I'm sure that's hard for you. Welcome to reality. Try to keep up this time. Right? But I was glad to see that later in that same article, he actually got into some analysis that was truly illuminating. Up to that point, I had heard plenty about Christian nationalism; just, what it is, what it wants, why it's dangerous, et cetera. But I hadn't really heard what the pivot point is, what is the thing that differentiates a person who is both a Christian [00:59:00] *and* a patriot from someone who's a Christian patriot, if you know what I mean.

So towards the end of this article - the article is "My father, My Faith, and Donald Trump" - the author, Tim Alberta, is speaking with a new pastor in his father's old church. Winans is the new guy's name, and Winans didn't follow the same hyper-patriotic path that the author's father had been on. And so people are

beginning to leave the church and he's sort of struggling with this. So from the article, it says, "A lot of people believe there was a religious conception of this country, a biblical conception of this country', Winans told me, 'and that's the source of a lot of our problems. For much of American history, White Christians have enjoyed tremendous wealth and influence and security. Given that reality and given the miraculous nature of America's defeat of great Britain, its rise to superpower status and its legacy of spreading freedom and democracy, and yes, [01:00:00] Christianity across the globe" - just pausing for a second to recognize that this is coming from a certain perspective and at the very least, this is what people believe. There would be a lot of asterisks and counterpoints to the idea of us succeeding in spreading freedom and democracy, but we're setting that aside for now. So back to the article, given all of that, that he just mentioned, "it's easy to see why so many evangelicals believe that our country is divinely blessed. The problem is blessings often become indistinguishable from entitlements. Once we become convinced that God has blessed something, that something can become an object of jealousy, obsession, even worship. At its root we're talking about idolatry. America has become an idol to some of these people. If you believe that God is in covenant with America, then you believe, and I've heard a lot of people say this explicitly, that we're a new Israel', Winans said, referring to the old Testament narrative of God's [01:01:00] chosen nation. ' You believe the sorts of promises made to Israel are applicable to this country. You view America as a covenant that needs to be protected. You have to fight for America as if salvation itself hangs in the balance. At that point, you understand yourself as an American first and most fundamentally. And that is a terrible misunderstanding of who we're called to be. Plenty of nations are mentioned in the Bible. The United States is not one of them. Most American evangelicals are sophisticated enough to reject the idea of this country as something consecrated in the eyes of God. But many of those same people have chosen to idealize a Christian America that puts them at odds with Christianity. They have allowed their national identity to shape their faith identity instead of the other way around".

And then skipping to the end of the article, the author asks the new pastor, "What's [01:02:00] wrong with American evangelicals?' Winans thought for a moment. 'America', he replied. Too many of them worship America". And I don't know about you, but I found that very clarifying. Maybe not particularly comforting, but definitely clarifying. On the other hand. Since idolatry is such a core no-no of Christianity - you know, the worshipping of false gods and such - then maybe turning the ship around won't be impossible because the idea of turning away from false idols is something that is already part of their whole framework and worldview.

Now, of course it would take the right messengers to get the idea across. And I get that. We, as a progressive podcast, probably are not to those messengers. But it's definitely an idea worth spreading and perhaps the right message will eventually get to the right ears, coming from the right people and, uh, we'll save ourselves. But you know, [01:03:00] we'll see.

That is it for today. As always keep the comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts or questions about this or anything else. You can leave us a voicemail or send us a text at 202-999-3991, or simply email me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our Transcriptionist Trio, Ken, Brian, and Ben, for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships. You can join them by signing up today at bestoftheleft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good and often funny bonus episodes in addition to there being extra [01:04:00] content, no ads, and chapter markers in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player. You'll find that link in the show notes, along with a link to join our Discord community, where you can also continue the discussion.

So, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington DC, my name is Jay and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show, from bestoftheleft.com.