

Frank Schaeffer

America Stands On the Brink of an Evangelical - Catholic-Imposed Theocracy

[Frank Schaeffer](#)

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All in the name of “religious freedom”...and Trump’s judicial picks will be the sole arbiters.

A GOP theocracy coup against checks and balances is gaining momentum through Trump’s court picks. Trump’s legislative failures are in the news but his far-right theocracy-facilitating judicial appointments are the bigger story.

Trump’s picks will have a lasting outsized impact on American life. Trump has many judicial vacancies to fill because the GOP anti-Obama-obstruction worked.

Trump doesn’t care about the religious right’s agenda but since he has ceded the selection of judges to the Federalist Society and Heritage Foundation, ultra-right groups that do care, the religious right is literally being put in power in ways most Americans don’t seem to understand. I do understand because in the 1970s and 80s I helped craft this plan.

As [Sunnivie Brydum](#) notes in an [article](#) that I’m gratefully borrowing from in this blog we’re well on the way to making Evangelical Sharia Law permanent. Trump’s Federalist Society and Heritage Foundation judges will roll back the expansion of civil rights and civil liberties that have developed over the past seven decades. Women, gays, blacks- beware. America is headed for Saudi-style repression and religious theocracy in the name of “religious liberty.”

What’s been astounding in filling the open seats left because of GOP- Obama obstruction is the rapid pace of committee hearings and confirmations for Trump’s Federalist Society-Heritage Foundation far-right religious extremist judicial nominees. The breakneck pace is unprecedented. This is not a coincidence. It fulfills a dream hatched by my late father Francis Schaeffer and me. We crafted this in Dad’s book *A Christian Manifesto* (1983). It sold hundreds of thousands of copies. The media paid no attention.

The ideological evangelical/conservative Catholic extremism of Trump’s Federalist Society-Heritage Foundation appointments should alarm anyone not willing to live in what will amount to an American version of Iran. The nominees are deeply conservative and often unqualified. No one on the right cares about their lack of qualifications because they will reverse abortion rights, gay rights, voting rights and affirmative action.

One of Trump’s judicial nominees has supported “conversion therapy” for LGBTQ youth and supported legislation that would allow employers to discriminate against gay employees under the guise of religious liberty.

Another Trump judicial nominee called Justice Anthony Kennedy a “judicial prostitute” for supporting gay rights.

Another Trump nominee stated that being Muslim is synonymous with being a terrorist and called transgender children “part of Satan’s plan.”

Theocracy looms. Put it this way: Mike Pence’s Francis Schaeffer inspired ideology looms!

A memorandum made public last week proposed a court-packing plan that will give Trump hundreds of new appointments to the federal judiciary. These partisan religious right picks will make the federal judiciary a theocracy stronghold that won’t shift for decades.

Remember that facts don’t matter here anymore than judicial pick’s qualifications. Trump doesn’t deceive his followers rather he creates an environment in which whether something is true or not becomes irrelevant. All that matters is if it feels good for a moment. And Trump’s white evangelical supporters crave winning the culture wars I helped start—even while Trump’s GOP shafts them by raising their taxes to make rich GOP donors richer.

And nothing distracts (middle-class voters from the fact their Medicare is about to be cut) better than sharply focused hate. “Those most powerful in society have always been able to wield religious freedom arguments for their own interests,” says Tisa Wenger, associate professor of American religious history at Yale.

The Christian right’s religious freedom talk is designed to be a distraction as used by Trump. But there is an underlying reality: Religious conservatives are set to impose their cultural mores on broader society.

Trump’s borrowed theocracy policy began gradually in the late 1970s and ’80s, following Roe v. Wade. My dad Francis Schaeffer and I led the way on this with C Everett Koop who then became Ronald Reagan’s surgeon general. Forty years later the white evangelicals gave us Trump out of frustration because their agenda wasn’t winning. Now it is! And I found myself writing these words in my new book, [LETTER TO LUCY — A manifesto of creative redemption in the age of Trump, fascism and lies](#):

“I ask myself these questions silently and inwardly: How may I atone for helping to poison America with certainty addiction? How do I defend my grandchildren against the religious right juggernaut I helped create? How do I reject what my parents stood for (fundamentalist fanaticism) and yet honor the love they gave me? How can I help my grandchildren stumble upon the goodness of life before they’re sold towering mounds of brain-damaging garbage? How do I help save the world? (And what kind of deluded messianic fool am I to believe that this is even possible?)”

Evangelicals and conservative Catholics settled on a highly effective framing of “religious freedom” painting any participation in (or association with) gay rights or abortion as an infringement on their “sincerely held religious beliefs.” As I describe in [Letter to Lucy](#), Dad and

I began this strategy in reference to taking away women's abortion rights as a matter of Christian "conscience."

Evangelicals and conservative Catholics have successfully taken what we did and 40 years later are framing their opposition to gays and abortion rights in a compelling way making freedom of conscience their claim but ALSO forcing their religious fundamentalism on millions of Americans – in fact on the majority — who have no connection to extremist religious beliefs. This is tyranny.

"Religious freedom" litigation in the 21st Century has increasingly attempted to expand the definition of what may be considered a religious practice. A ruling in favor of Masterpiece Cakeshop against gays would expand this sphere to the very gates of theocracy. And this is just a foretaste of what Trump's deluge of court-packing appointments will do.

With legal recognition for LGBT people Trump's evangelicals are recycling the "religious freedom" argument to oppose gay and women's rights. The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) a "Christian" legal nonprofit is leading the way imposing theocracy as "religious freedom." It models its strategy on the Christian legal groups Dad inspired in the 1980s like the Rutherford Institute.

Just as evangelicals today use the arguments Dad and I forged against legal abortion rights to bash gays, so too using the "religious freedom" evangelical argument white supremacists will soon also be using religious exemption non-discrimination laws. Their plan will be to facilitate the resurgence of Nazis and white supremacist activities as above the law, exempted from restraint because bigotry too will be a religious right. Trump's far-right white judges will rule in their favor.

Given the highly effective Evangelical/Catholic legal framing of "religious freedom" Dad helped invent, look for Nazis and white supremacist (Trump's "good people" carrying torches) working on rulings in favor of the right to a faith-based Nazi hate bubble. Anti-Semitism is also a Christian tradition!

Bedrock American religious liberty ideals have been used to justify imperialism, racism, slavery, misogyny, and (recently) anti-LGBT animus. Trump's far-right religious zealot judicial picks will soon be deciding cases in favor of overt discrimination as a bedrock all-American "religious freedom."

Despite the long history of Supreme Court adjudication of religious freedom claims, the precise nature of what the Court considers to be a legitimate faith-based issue used to vary widely. It's now tilting to the far theocratic right.