

America's modern religious war

There is a civil war in American Christianity: The Christian Right declaring Trump the Lord's anointed versus progressive Christians denouncing him.

Did Republicans buy the evangelicals or the evangelicals take over the Republican Party? Each side gained. Evangelicals got the appointment of conservative judges; an unflinching rejection of abortion and the promise to revoke Roe v. Wade; a gradual de-privileging of homosexuality and gay marriage; and an activist guarantee of freedom of religion, including government support of religious schools and religious symbols in the public square and the withdrawal of prosecution of religious prejudice against homosexual and other liberal civil rights.



by
Donald Heinz
The author is a retired Chico State professor and the author of *Beyond Trump: Achieving a New Social Gospel*.

In turn, the Christian Right bestowed religious legitimacy on the philosophy of small government with no responsibility for social justice and the baptism of unregulated capitalism as God's own economics. The self-congratulatory ideology of the shining city became God's American dream,

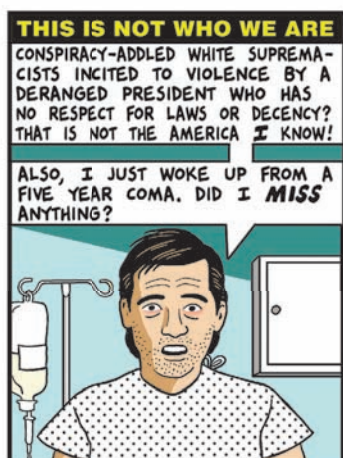
while our political-economic culture was shielded from religious critique. The idea of "social sin" and "structural analysis" of an economy that immiserates the poor and destroys the environment was rejected in the name of opposing cultural Marxism and preserving Christianity as a purely individualist path to salvation.

Contemporary Catholic neo-conservatism was insisting that a pro-life stance is the single moral issue decisive in politics, while also giving disencumbered capitalism a pass from a century of Catholic social theology that championed the poor as victims of rapacious capitalism.

On the opposite side of this civil war, progressive Christians call for the demise of the Christian Right, lest it discredit all religious belief and contribute to the marginalization of historic Christianity. They propose a renewed social gospel that carries the essence of Christianity onto the streets, fights for social justice and champions "the least of these" in a grossly unequal system. They applaud Pope Francis' social theology and the sacramentalization of workers and unions.

How will this end? In view of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, will the Christian Right admit it wasn't God who anointed Trump but their own mistaking the idolatry of Christian nationalism for historic Biblical Christianity? Will left and right Christians find ways to work for the good of the whole? □

THIS MODERN WORLD

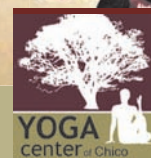


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