

pp. 85-86 "These men suffered a loss of their own masculinity," Roberta Pughe says, "so they have taken on this extreme form of masculine power, the power to oppress and to dominate. On the extreme end of the masculine continuum, it is the oppressive force that kills, that destroys. There is no room for anything else. Everything else is a threat. The feminine is a threat. Children are a threat. Homosexuality is a threat because it embraces a feminine, nurturing side between men. All power has to be concentrated at the top and be destructive."

p. 88 this conditioning of children to fear nonconformity and blindly obey ensures continued obedience as adults. The difficult task of learning how to make moral choices, how to accept personal responsibility, how to deal with the chaos of human life is handed over to God-like authority figures. The process makes possible a perpetuation of childhood. It allows the adult to bask in the warm glow and magic of divine protection. It masks from them and from others the array of human weaknesses, including our deepest dreads, our fear of irrelevance and death, our vulnerability and uncertainty. It also makes it difficult, if not impossible, to build mature, loving relationships, for the believer is told it is all about them, about their needs, their desires, and above all, their protection and advancement. Relationships, even within families, splinter and fracture. Those who adopt the belief

system, who find in the dictates of the church and its male leaders a binary world of right and wrong, build an exclusive and intolerant comradeship that subtly or overtly shuns and condemns the "unsaved." People are no longer judged by their intrinsic qualities, by their actions or capacity for self-sacrifice and compassion, but by the rigidity of their obedience. This defines the good and the bad, the Christian and the infidel. And this obedience is a blunt and effective weapon against the possibility of a love that could overpower the dictates of the hierarchy. In many ways it is love the leaders fear most, for it is love that unleashes passions and bonds that defy the carefully constructed edifices that keep followers trapped and enclosed. And while they speak often about love, as they do about family, it is the cohesive bonds created by family and love they war against.

p. 89 Joost A. M. Meerloo, the author of *The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brainwashing*, wrote:

"Living requires mutuality of giving and taking. Above all, to live is to love. And many people are afraid to take the responsibility of loving; of having an emotional investment in their fellow beings. They want only to be loved and to be protected; they are afraid of being hurt and rejected.

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

23

It is important for us to realize that emphasis on conformity and the fear of spontaneous living can have an effect almost as devastating as the totalitarian's deliberate assault on the mind. . . . Trained into conformity the child may well grow up into an adult who welcomes with relief the authoritarian demands of a totalitarian leader. It is the welcome repetition of an old pattern that can be followed without investment of a new emotional energy."

p. 93 Her experience was a window into how willingly followers handed over their consciences to these leaders, abandoned all moral responsibility of the word of those who had elevated themselves to the status of quasi-deities.

pp. 105-106 Gays and lesbians within the church, seeking desperately to deny their sexuality and remain in the Christian collective, suffer severe depression and blows to their self-esteem. The U.S. Surgeon General's office has published data indicating those who are young and gay are two to three times more likely to commit suicide. Those who are able to conform, no matter what the personal cost, will find acceptance. Those who remain militant, who stand up for another way of being, are condemned. The tactics that will finally disenfranchise them and their supporters from a future Christian America are left

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

24

unmentioned, but the rhetoric makes it plain that there will not be a place for them. And these preachers warn that if America does not act soon to repress the lifestyles of gays and lesbians, God will punish the nation.

p. 113 "Before they seize power and establish a world according to their doctrines, totalitarian movements conjure up a lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the needs of the human mind than reality itself; in which, through sheer imagination, uprooted masses can feel at home and are spared the never-ending shocks which real life and real experiences deal to human beings and their expectations. The force possessed by totalitarian propaganda—before the movements have the power to drop iron curtains to prevent anyone's disturbing, by the slightest reality, the gruesome quiet of an entirely imaginary world—lies in its ability to shut the masses off from the real world."—Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

pp. 114-115 The danger of creationism is not that it allows followers to retreat into a world of certainty and magic—which it does—but that it allows all facts to be accepted or discarded according to the dictates of a preordained ideology. Creationism removes the

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

follower from the rational, reality-based world. Signs, miracles, and wonders occur not only in the daily life of Christians, but also in history, science, medicine and logic. This belief system becomes the basis for understanding the world, and random facts or data are collected and made to fit into the belief system. If facts can't be made to fit, they are discarded or treated as misguided opinions. When facts are treated as if they were opinions, when there is no universal standard by which to determine truth in law, in science, in scholarship, or in the reporting of the events of the day, the world becomes a place where lies become true, where people can believe what they want to believe, where there is no possibility of reaching any conclusion not predetermined by those who interpret the official, divinely inspired text.

pp. 115-116 In the promulgation of the totalitarian belief system, at first we are told we all have a right to an opinion, in short, a right to believe anything. Soon, under the iron control of an empowered totalitarian movement, facts become worthless, kept or discarded according to an ideological litmus test. Lies become true. And once the totalitarians are in power, facts are ruthlessly manipulated or kept hidden to support the lie. Hannah Arendt called the principle behind this process "nihilistic relativism." The goal of creationism is not to offer an alternative. Its goal is the destruction of the core values of the open society—the ability to think for oneself, to draw independent conclusions, to express dissent when

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

judgment and common sense tell you something is wrong, to be self-critical, to challenge authority, to advocate for change and to accept that there are other views, different ways of being, that are morally and socially acceptable.

p. 116 The front lines of the culture wars are the classrooms, and the battle is one reality-based educators are slowly losing. Twenty states are considering changing the way evolution is taught in order to include creationism or intelligent design. Intelligent design has been the code word of the movement since the Supreme Court ruled in the 1987 *Edwards v. Aguillard* case that creationism cannot be taught in public schools. Intelligent design argues that the slow process of evolution could not have produced something as complex as the living cell. Rather, life was created by an "intelligent agent," one the proponents of intelligent design are careful to specify is unknown, in order to skirt the judicial ban on creationism. Several states, including Pennsylvania, now have state education charters requiring that students be taught the evidence "both for and against" evolution—although there is no scientific evidence against it. And many Americans buy into the myth.

p. 117 The scientific accounts of creation and the origin of species became in the eyes of fundamentalist believers the materialist foundation of the human race's moral and cultural

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

decline. It dethroned Christians from their self-constructed platform of moral and ethical superiority. It challenged the belief that God intervenes in human affairs to protect and guide believers. The ideological pillars of literalist Christianity, which viewed the universe as revolving around and serving the interests of anointed Christians, were destroyed.

p. 118 Evolution implicitly challenges the possibility of miracles, the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection, and an apocalyptic end to human existence in which the saved are lifted up into heaven. For believers who have found in the certitude of Christian fundamentalism a shelter from despair, a despair that threatens to consume them again if they return to a reality-based world, evolution is terrifying. The miracles they insist they see performed around them, the presence of the guiding, comforting hand of God in their lives, the notion that there is a divine destiny specially preordained for them, crumbles into dust under the cold glare of evolution. Evolution posits what they fear most: a morally neutral universe. It obliterates the fantastic constructs of their belief system. And the steady efforts by creationists to erode the authority of evolution and discredit Darwin are, because of all this, unrelenting and fierce.

p. 119 Believers are told that Darwin, and all evolutionists, were behind the genocides unleashed by all modern tyrants from Hitler and Stalin to Pol Pot. And Christians must be

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

prepared for battle, for war, against satanic forces that lie incubating within America's secular, evolutionist, materialistic, godless society, forces getting ready to begin a new round of mass exterminations, this time of American Christians.

p. 120 The Creation Museum presents the creationist argument that Adam and Eve were human beings and that God created everything on the earth in six 24-hour days. Adherents to this world-view do not believe that the earth has existed for millions of years or that the first living cell appeared 3.5 billion years ago or that the dinosaurs roamed the planet for 160 millions years before becoming extinct, their reign ending abruptly. They scoff at the notion that the dinosaurs could, as biologists suggest, be the ancestors of birds. Instead, they embrace a strict 6,000-year chronology of the Bible. Men and dinosaurs coexisted and were created during the same six-day cycle, wholly and fully evolved. When the biblical flood covered the earth, dinosaurs, along with other species, were sheltered on Noah's ark. The rest of the dinosaurs were drowned in the flood, and this, as the museum's exhibits explain, accounts for the vast tracts of fossilized dinosaur bones. Animals on the ark, including dinosaurs, repopulated after disembarking, but environmental changes meant that the dinosaurs could not adapt and died off. The biblical accounts of sea monsters, leviathans and behemoths are, according to the museum's displays, references to dinosaurs. They do not give credence to the concept of the big bang because Genesis states that God created

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

waters and Earth on the third day, and the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day. It is a story hardly more credible than the fantasy of a child, but it fulfills a powerful emotional need.

p. 123 The paleontologist “creates a story based on her assumption about ‘millions of years’ of earth history with the help of artists and sculptors,” reads the sign over the dig site. “She transforms the story into ‘believable history’ that appears in films, books and papers. The room shows how the false assumptions of evolutionary scientists end up ‘as facts’ in our public schools and museums.”

p. 129 “To tell men that they are equal has a certain sentimental appeal. But this appeal is small compared with that made by a propaganda that tells them they are superior to others, and that others are inferior to them.”—Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. I

p. 130 This destruction of community is one of the crucial factors that has led to the rise of the Christian Right. The megachurches, which have prospered in these environments, have become surrogate communities, places where people can find clubs to pursue common interests, friends, a sense of belonging, and moral direction. In these sprawling churches,

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

which often look like shopping or convention centers, believers are reassured, told that affluence is blessed by God—a sign of their righteousness and the righteousness of their nation—and that in the embrace of the church they have a place, a home.

pp. 182-183 The tawdry display of cheap consumer goods, emblazoned with neon, lines both sides of the road, a dirty brown strip in the middle. It is a sad reminder that something has gone terribly wrong with America, with its inhuman disregard for beauty and balance, its obsession with speed and utilitarianism, its crass commercialism and its oversized SUVs and trucks and greasy junk food. This disdain for nature, balance and harmony is part of the deadly, numbing assault against community. Ten or fifteen minutes negotiating the traffic down South Telegraph Road make the bizarre attraction of the End Times—the obliteration of this world of alienation, noise and distortion—comprehensible. The manufacturing jobs in the Detroit auto plants nearby are largely gone, outsourced to other nations with cheaper labor. The paint is flaking off the cramped two-story houses that lie in grid patterns off the highway. The plagues of alcoholism, divorce, drug abuse, poverty and domestic violence make the internal life here as depressing as the external one. And the congregation gathering today in this church waits for the final, welcome relief of the purgative of violence, the vast cleansing that will lift them up into the heavens, and leave the world they despise, the one they ruined or that was ruined for them, to be wracked by plagues and flood

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

and fire until it, and all those they blame for the debacle of their lives, are consumed and destroyed by God. It is a theology of despair. And for many, the apocalypse can't happen soon enough.

pp. 184-185 He was previously known for books such as *Spirit Controlled Temperament*, *Transformed Temperaments*, *The Male Temperament* and *Your Temperament: Discover Its Potential*, all variants of astrology. In short, before becoming the champion of a Christian America and the apocalypse he made his living as a fortune-teller. LaHaye has helped found and lead numerous right-wing groups, including the Council for National Policy, and he is not only the nation's best-selling author, but also one of the dominionists' most powerful propagandists.

p. 185 LaHaye, along with two other well-known apocalyptic preachers—including Gary Frazier, the glib, silver-tongued founder of the Texas-based Discovery Ministries, Inc., which leads "Walking Where Jesus Walked" tours in Israel—travels the country holding daylong End Time conferences, such as today's event at the Gilead Baptist Church. Tickets to the event in Detroit cost \$20. Frazier and LaHaye also take pilgrims to visit Israel, where they stand on the hill of Megiddo—better known as Armageddon—that in the Book of Revelation is the site of the final battle between the forces of Christ and the Antichrist. In

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

the lobby of the church, just outside the sanctuary, a television set on a stand continuously runs one of the tapes of a "Walking Where Jesus Walked" tour next to a table filled with Frazier's books, CDs and DVDs.

p. 188 "You see what God did was in this simple dream of Daniel, God set the boundaries, the parameters, that there would never be more than four world empires in the entire history of time," Frazier explains. "It would be the Babylonians defeated by the Medes and the Persians, who were then later defeated by the Greeks, who were defeated by Rome, but the interesting part is found in the two feet and the ten toes of part iron and part plate."

p. 194 The warning came at the moment Pat Robertson and other radio and televangelists began speaking about a new political religion that would direct its efforts at taking control of all institutions, including mainstream denominations and the government. Its stated goal was to use the United States to create a global Christian empire. It was hard, at the time, to take such fantastic rhetoric seriously, especially given the buffoonish quality of leaders in the Christian Right who expounded it. But Adams warned us against the blindness caused by intellectual snobbery. The Nazis, he said, were not going to return with swastikas and brown shirts. Their ideological inheritors in America had found a mask for fascism in patriotism and the pages of the Bible.

p. 197 The Republicans accused Al Gore of attempting to steal the election through court fiat, the very theft being secretly orchestrated by the Republicans. Richard Hofstadter was one of the first to grasp the role of projection in "The Paranoid Style in American Politics":

It is hard to resist the conclusion that this enemy is on many counts the projection of the self; both the ideal and the unacceptable aspects of the self are attributed to him. The enemy may be the cosmopolitan intellectual, but the paranoid will outdo him in the apparatus of scholarship, even of pedantry. Secret organizations set up to combat secret organizations give the same flattery. The Ku Klux Klan imitated Catholicism to the point of donning priestly vestments, developing an elaborate ritual and an equally elaborate hierarchy. The John Birch Society emulates Communist cells and quasi-secret operation through "front" groups and preaches a ruthless prosecution of the ideological war along lines very similar to those it finds in the Communist enemy. Spokesmen of the various fundamentalist anti-Communist "crusades" openly express their admiration for the dedication and discipline the Communist cause calls forth.

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

34

pp. 198-199 *The New York Times* in 1944 asked Vice President Henry Wallace to answer the questions: What is a fascist? How many fascists have we? How dangerous are they? The Vice President's answers were published on April 9, 1944, as the war against the Axis powers and Japan was drawing to a close. He wrote:

The really dangerous American fascist . . . is the man who wants to do in the United States in an American way what Hitler did in Germany in a Prussian way. The American fascist would prefer not to use violence. His method is to poison the channels of public information. With a fascist the problem is never how best to present the truth to the public but how best to use the news to deceive the public into giving the fascist and his group more money or more power.

They claim to be superpatriots, but they would destroy every liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. They demand free enterprise but are the spokesmen for monopoly and vested interest. Their final objective toward which all their deceit is directed is to capture political power so that, using the power of the state and the power of the market simultaneously, they may keep the common man in eternal subjugation.

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

35

p. 199 Adams knew that resentments and bigotry lurk below the surface of all democratic societies and can be roused, under the right conditions, to promote a creed that calls for the destruction of democracy. What is evil about these systems of intolerance and persecution is not the foot soldiers who carry out the crimes, but the organization that mobilizes and unleashes these dark passions. He worried that such a movement was, late in his life, again on the march. It was more sophisticated than in the past, more cleverly packaged, and this time without serious opposition.

p. 201 *"I blush when I think of some of the responses I received. I was immediately besieged with questions like these: 'Do you think we should marry the nigger?' 'Aren't Negroes a naturally indolent and dirty race?' 'Haven't you been in business, and don't you know that every Jew is a kike?' Questions like these came back to me for over an hour. I simply repeated my question again and again: 'How do you distinguish between yourself and a Nazi?' Seldom have I witnessed such agony of spirit in a public place."*

pp. 202-203 Alvin Toffler wrote that if you don't have a strategy you end up being part of someone else's strategy. There are isolated groups and individuals who, at some cost, are fighting back. The nonviolent protests of the Reverend Mel White's Soulforce outside of Christian universities and service academies that discriminate against gays and lesbians are,

AMERICAN FASCISTS by Chris Hedges

36

according to the ideas of theologians such as Adams and Tillich, acts of faith. The clergy and rabbis who have banded together in Ohio to challenge the tax-exempt status of the megachurches that promote "Christian" candidates are performing an act of faith. The rulings of independent judges—such as the Republican-appointed Judge John E. Jones III in Dover, Pennsylvania—who have prohibited the teaching of creationism in public schools because it is not science, are acts of faith. Cardinal Roger Mahony, the head of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the nation's largest, has called on Catholics to be prepared to defy the laws now being considered in Congress and backed by the Christian Right that make it a felony to shield or protect or offer support to illegal immigrants. Such civil disobedience would be an act of faith.

p. 205 These small acts of kindness are deeply feared and subversive to these idealists, as the Russian novelist Vasily Grossman wrote in *Life and Fate*.

p. 206 Plato and Aristotle defended slavery and often attacked Athenian democracy, but this does not mean they should not be read for their deep and penetrating insights into political systems and ethics. Sigmund Freud understood little about love, viewed religion as infantile regression and viewed nearly every human motive through the lens of human sexuality, but at the same time Freud gave us one of the most powerful windows into and vocabularies for

the workings of the subconscious. The Bible was written by numerous people over hundreds of years with wide and often varying concerns, some of which were and are morally indefensible. Within its pages, however, lie powerful passages that help illuminate our lives and our place before the mystery of human existence. I, too, struggle, like the writers of the Bible, to understand. I, too, often get it wrong. But it is the honesty and rigor of the search, the doubts and reverses, the mistakes and regrets, the ability to stand up again and keep trying that ultimately express faith. This humility before the unknowable, the acceptance that there is much we will never understand, makes possible self-criticism, self-awareness, self-possession and self-reflection. They make possible compassion and acts of kindness. They allow us to see ourselves in the stranger, to reach out in solidarity to those who travel with us on this dusty, brief and often lonely road of life. This honesty and humility make possible a diverse and tolerant human community. They sustain life and, in the midst of it all, impart hope.

p. 207 Tolerance is a virtue, but tolerance coupled with passivity is a vice.