How Republicans and Their Big Business Allies Duped Tens of Millions
of Evangelicals into Voting for a Corporate Agenda

*The bible-thumping white underclass have given a big boost to the corporate bottom line.*

*November 10, 2010* *By* [*Frank Schaeffer*](http://www.alternet.org/authors/9553/)

Tens of millions of American voters got duped badly in the 2010 election. The bible-thumping white underclass thought they hit back at what they regarded as the nefarious forces trying to “take our country away.”

They were bought, paid for, sold, traded and manipulated by the most powerful in the US election: a Billionaire Lynch Mob led by Rupert Murdoch, Karl Rove, the Koch brothers, and hundreds of millions in organize corporate cash. They peddled a fear agenda: fear of immigrants, fear of government control of our lives, fear that their country would become irrevocably changed.

Here's how it happened:

**Where the fear and loathing began**

A bedrock article of faith among many of the anti-Obama white voters is that America had “Christian origins,” and that today America must be “restored” to “our religious heritage.” The “Puritan heritage” of America is constantly cited as evidence for our need to return to our “biblical roots.” The Constitution is also waved around as if it too is some sort of Bible to be religiously believed in. Of course the Billionaire Lynch Mob doesn’t care about such quaint ideas as individual liberties, let alone “biblical absolutes,” but many of the people who believed the anti-Obama lies did care.

The earnest, mostly Evangelical dupes have a point: by calling for a “return to our roots” (be they biblical and/or constitutional) they are actually maintaining a grand old American tradition: religious delusion as the basis for conquest. The Puritans believed that they were importing “authentic Christianity” to America, especially as written in the Old Testament. They said that they were on a divine mission, even calling themselves “The New Israel” and a “city set upon a hill.” John Winthrop (governor of Massachusetts Bay) transferred the idea of “nationhood” in biblical Israel to the Massachusetts Bay Company. And the Puritans claimed they were God’s “Chosen People.” They said that they had the right to grab land from the “heathen.” These were the American Indians whom the Puritans thought of as the “new Canaanites,” to be slaughtered with God’s blessing and in the case of the Pequot Indians burned alive.

There are many threads in the anti-Obama tapestry but three are ignored at our peril: 1) The End Times fantasies of the Evangelicals; 2) The rise of so-called Reconstructionist theology and 3) the culture war launched over the legalization of abortion.

These “threads,” not the economy alone, are also the source of the vote where white lower class and white middle class Americans voted in droves against their own self-interest.  Let’s unpick these fraying threads one at a time.

**1. “End Times” Fantasies**

The evangelical/fundamentalists/Republican far right is in the grip of an apocalyptic “Rapture” cult centered on revenge and vindication. This “End Times” death wish is built on a literalist interpretation of the Book of Revelation. This fantasy has many followers. For instance to take one of many examples, Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye’s “Left Behind” series of sixteen novels represents both a “reason” and a symptom of the hysteria that grips so many voters.

The “Left Behind” novels have sold tens of millions of copies while spawning an “End Times” cult, or rather egging it on. Such products as Left Behind video games have become part of the ubiquitous American background noise. Less innocuous symptoms of End Times paranoia include people stocking up on assault rifles and ammunition, freeze dried food (pitched to them, by the way, by Billionaire Lynch Mob-handmaid Glenn Beck), gold (also sold to them by Glenn Beck), adopting "Christ-centered" home school curricula, fear of higher education (“we’ll lose our children to secularism”), embracing rumor as fact (“Obama isn’t an American”) and fighting against Middle East peace iniatives, lest they delay the “return of Jesus,” for instance through Houston mega church pastor John Hagee’s Christian Zionist-centered “ministry.”

*A disclosure: My late father, Francis Schaeffer, was a key founder and leader of the American Religious Right. For a time in the 1970s and early 80s I joined him in pioneering the Evangelical anti-abortion Religious Right movement. I changed my mind. I explain why I quit the movement in my book* [*CRAZY FOR GOD -- How I Grew Up As One Of The Elect, Helped Found The Religious Right, And Lived To Take All - Or Almost All - Of It Back*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0306817500/ref%3Ds9_simh_gw_p14_d0_i2?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=center-2&pf_rd_r=0W1K664DZTXN8ZQD9ZNV&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=470938631&pf_rd_i=507846%22%20target=)*.*
John Hagee, mega church pastor and founder of Christians United for Israel said: “For 25 almost 26 years now, I have been pounding the Evangelical community over television. The Bible is a very pro-Israel book. If a Christian admits ‘I believe the Bible,’ I can make him a pro-Israel supporter or they will have to denounce their faith. So I have Christians over a barrel you might say.” The assumption Hagee makes -- that “Bible-believing Christians” will be pro-Israel -- is the dominant view among American Evangelical Christians. These are the people who goad us to make perpetual war worldwide. And these are the people who supposedly follow a teacher who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

Few within the Evangelical community have dared to publically question such Haggee’s approach. The Christian Zionists led by Hagee et al even went after their very own George W Bush for backing peace talks between Palestinians and the Israeli government. So can you imagine the hatred the Christian Zionists have for President Obama, who also wants peace in the Middle East?

 The momentum for building a subculture that’s seceding from mainstream society (in order to await "The End Times" has irrevocably pried loose a chunk of the American population from both sanity and from their fellow citizens. The Christian Zionist franchise holds out hope for the self-disenfranchised that -- at last -- everyone will know "We born-again Christians" were right and "They" were wrong. But here’s the political significance of the Christian Zionist dominance: the evangelical/fundamentalists’ imagined victimhood.

I say imagined victimhood, because the born-agains are hardly outsiders let alone victims. They’re very own George W Bush was in the White House for eight long, ruinous years and Evangelicals also dominated American politics for the better part of thirty years before that by enforcing a series of “moral” litmus tests that transformed the Republican Party into their very own culture wars lickspittle.

Nevertheless, the white evangelical/conservative Roman Catholic sense of being a victimized minority only grew with their successes. “You are not alone!” said Glenn Beck, playing to these “disenfranchised” “victims,” who – as the midterm results once again proved -- turn out to look more like a majority of white voters who had the power to turn Sarah Palin into a multimillionaire overnight and send the likes of Rand Paul to the Senate.

**2. The Rise of Reconstructionist Theology**

Where did the “victims” on the Far Right get their “theology” of perpetual damn-the-facts victimhood from? The history of theology (Christian or otherwise) is the history of people desperately trying to fit the way things actually are into the way their “holy” books say they should be. And since the facts don’t fit and never will, religious believers can either change their minds, embrace paradox, or find someone else to blame for their never-ending loss of face and self-esteem.

Most Americans have never heard of the Reconstructionists. But they have felt their impact through the Reconstructionists’ (often indirect) influence over the wider Evangelical community. In turn, the Evangelicals shaped the politics of a secular culture that barely understood the Religious Right let alone the forces within that movement that gave it its rage.

If you feel victimized by modernity (let alone humiliated by reality) then the Reconstructionists have The Answer to your angst: apply the full scope of the Biblical Law to modern America and to the larger world! Coerce “non-believers” to live in your imaginary universe! In other words Reconstructionists wanted to replace the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights with their interpretation of the Bible.

Most Evangelicals are positively moderate by comparison to the Reconstructionist “thinkers.” Most libertarians, who formed the backbone of the Tea Party (at least until the Far Right Evangelicals began to take the Tea Party over) would hate them. But the Reconstructionist movement is a distilled version of the more mainstream evangelical version of exclusionary theology that nonetheless divides America into the “Real America” (as the Far Right claim only they are) and the rest of us “sinners.”

The Reconstructionist worldview is ultra Calvinist, but like all Calvinism has its origins in ancient Israel/Palestine, when vengeful and ignorant tribal lore was written down by frightened men (the nastier authors of the Bible) trying to defend their prerogatives to bully women, murder rival tribes and steal land. These justifications probably reflect later thinking: origin myths used as propaganda to justify political and military actions after the fact—i.e., to justify their brutality the Hebrews said that God made them inflict on others and/or that they were “chosen.”

In its modern American incarnation, which hardened into a twentieth century movement in the 1960s and became widespread in the 1970s, Reconstructionism was propagated by people I knew personally and worked with closely when I too was a Religious Right activist claiming God’s special favor. The leaders of the Reconstructionist movement included the late Rousas Rushdoony (Calvinist theologian, father of modern-era Christian Reconstructionism, patron saint to gold-hoarding Federal Reserve-haters, and creator of the modern Evangelical home-school movement),  his son-in-law Gary North (an economist, gold-buff, publisher and leading conspiracy theorist), and David Chilton (ultra-Calvinist pastor and author.)

Reconstructionism, also called Theonomism, seeks to reconstruct “our fallen society.”  Its worldview is best represented by the publications of the Chalcedon Foundation, which has been classified as an anti-gay hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. According to the Chalcedon Foundation website, the mission of the movement is to apply “the whole Word of God” to all aspects of human life: “It is not only our duty as individuals, families and churches to be Christian, but it is also the duty of the state, the school, the arts and sciences, law, economics, and every other sphere to be under Christ the King. Nothing is exempt from His dominion. We must live by His Word, not our own.

  It’s no coincidence that the rise of the Islamic Brotherhoods in Egypt and Syria and the rise of Reconstructionism took place in more or less the same twentieth-century time frame—as modernism, science and “permissiveness” collided with a frightened conservatism rooted in religion. The writings of people such as Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna and those of Rushdoony are virtually interchangeable when it comes to their goals of “restoring God” to his “rightful place” as he presides over law and morals. Or as the late Reconstructionist/Calvinist theologian David Chilton, writing in *PARADISE RESTORED--A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (and sounding startlingly al-Banna-like) explained:

Our goal is a Christian world, made up of explicitly Christian nations. How could a Christian desire anything else? Our Lord Himself taught us to pray: “Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6: 10)… The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for the worldwide dominion of God’s Kingdom… a world of decentralized theocratic republics.... That is the only choice: pagan law or Christian law. God specifically forbids “pluralism.” God is not the least bit interested in sharing world dominion with Satan.

The message of Rushdoony’s work is best summed up in one of his innumerable Chalcedon Foundation position papers, “The Increase of His Government and Peace.” He writes: “[T]he ultimate and absolute government of all things shall belong to Christ.” In his book *Thy Kingdom Come* -- using words that are similar to those the leaders of al Qaida would use decades later in reference to “true Islam” -- Rushdoony argues that democracy and Christianity are incompatible: “Democracy is the great love of the failures and cowards of life,” he writes.  “One [biblical] faith, one law and one standard of justice did not mean democracy. The heresy of democracy has since then worked havoc in church and state… Christianity and democracy are inevitably enemies.”

**3. The Culture Wars Launched over the Abortion Debate**

The significance and rise of the Reconstructionists and their (often indirect) impact on the wider evangelical subculture can only be understood in the context of the January 22, 1973 Supreme Court ruling on Roe v. Wade.

Roe energized the culture war like nothing else before or since. This war has even fed the passion that burned within the so-called Tea Party movement’s reaction to Obama’s moderate legislative health care reform predicting “Death Panels.” Roe also indirectly energized even those members of the Far Right – for instance the Tea Party’s pro-choice libertarians -- who didn’t care about abortion per se. Roe had such far-reaching effects because reactions to Roe defined the scorched-earth, winner-take-all and rabidly anti-government tone of the culture war fights since 1973.

Fast forward thirty years to the first decade of the twenty-first century: The messengers and day-to-day “issues” changed but the volume of the anti-government “debate” and anger originated with the anti-abortion movement. “Death Panels!”, “Government Takeover!”, “Obama is Hitler!” and all such “comments” were simply updated versions of “pro-life” rhetoric.  And ironically, at the very same time as the Evangelicals who began the anti-abortion crusade (along with conservative Roman Catholics) had thrust themselves into bare knuckle politics over Roe, they also (I should say we also) retreated to what amounted to virtual walled compounds.

Evangelicals created a parallel “Christian America,” our very own private world, as it were, posted with “No Trespassing” signs. Our new “world” was about creating a Puritan/Reconstructionist-style holy-nation-within-our-fallen-nation.

This went far beyond mere alternative schools and home schools. Thousands of new Christian bookstores opened, countless Evangelical radio programs flourished in the 1970s and 80s, and new TV stations went on the air. Even a “Christian Yellow Pages” (a guide to Evangelical tradesmen) was published advertising “Christ-centered plumbers,” accountants and the like who “honor Jesus.” New Evangelical universities and even new law schools appeared, seemingly overnight with a clearly defined mission to “take back” each and every profession – including law and politics – “for Christ.” For instance, Liberty University’s Law School was the creation of the late Jerry Falwell, who told me in 1983 of his vision for Liberty’s programs: “Frank, we’re going train a new generation of judges and world leaders in the law from a Christian worldview to change America.” This was the same Jerry Falwell who wrote in America Can Be Saved: “I hope I live to see the day when, as in the early days of our country, we won’t have any public schools.”

To the old-fashioned Goldwater-type conservative mantra of “big government doesn’t work,” in the 1970s the newly-radicalized Evangelicals added “the US Government is Evil!” Our swap of spiritual faith for the illusion of political power – I say “illusion” since even in the 70s and 80s the real power was in the hands of the Billionaire Lynch Mob -- meant that we would tell people how to vote, but that we didn’t want our kids going to school with theirs. We’d wind up defending not just private schools and home schooling to “protect” our children from the world, but also private oil companies and private gas-guzzling polluting cars, private insurance conglomerates and so forth.

The price for the Religious Right’s wholesale idolatry of private everything was that Christ’s reputation was tied to a cynical political party owned by billionaires from the fast-food industry, raping the earth (not to mention our health), to the oil companies destroying our climate. It only remained for a Far Right Republican-appointed majority on the Supreme Court to rule in 2010 (Citizens United V. The Federal Election Commission), that unlimited corporate money could pour into political campaigns – anonymously -- in a way that clearly favored corporate America and the super wealthy who long since were the only entities served by the Republican Party’s defense of the individual against the government. The “individuals” turned out to be Exxon, the Koch brothers, Rupert Murdoch, McDonald’s and Goldman Sachs et al.

**Conclusion**

It’s a question of legitimacy and illegitimacy. What the Religious Right, including the Religious Right’s Roman Catholic and Protestant “intellectuals” (like my father) did, was contribute to a climate where the very legitimacy of our government, even any government, is up for grabs. Then the internet came along and Fox News came along and Rush Limbaugh, Michele Bachmann et all came along and no fiction was too fantastical to be believed as fact. We passed into a high tech stone age, myth superstition and outright lies gained a new currency.

Following the election of our first black President, the “politics” of the Evangelical, Roman Catholic and Mormon Far Right was not the politics of a loyal opposition, but the instigation of race-tinged revolution first and best expressed by Rush Limbaugh when he said, “I hope Obama fails.” All that happened in the midterm election of 2010 was that the corporate interests (unleashed by the Supreme Court), the Republican Party leadership and the Tea Party built on and/or cashed in on, the “biblically-based” antigovernment passion.

This was the politics that won in the Republican gains in the 2010 midterm elections. This was the logical conclusion of the process of delegitimizing the Federal Government that was launched by the Reconstructionists, the anti-abortion movement and of course is fed by the “Left Behind”/Christian Zionist apocalyptic revenge fantasy.

The Billionaire Lynch Mob’s only sacrament is fear. Their reward for cashing in on white religiously-believing middle class American’s addiction to Bronze Age biblical mythology is to walk away with our country. And fear-filled white Americans don’t get anything in return, unless you count their fleeting visceral pleasure of putting “that uppity black man” in the White House in his place.

*Frank Schaeffer is a writer and author of many books including* [*Crazy for God: How I Grew Up as One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0306817500/ref%3Ds9_simh_gw_p14_d0_i2?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=center-2&pf_rd_r=0W1K664DZTXN8ZQD9ZNV&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=470938631&pf_rd_i=507846)