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Chapter 2

EXTREMISM IS A VIRTUE

THE PRAYER MEETING WAS at six in the morning. It's not easy for even the most pious nineteen-year-old to get up before dawn to pray with a couple dozen folks twenty-five to fifty years their senior. But as a youth pastor at Rose Drive Friends Church in Yorba Linda, California, I was expected to show up to "Early Christians," the prayer meeting on Tuesday mornings as often as possible.

Early Christians took place in the "Fireside Room," a quaint room with a fireplace (seemingly unnecessary in the Southern California desert) adjoining the gymnasium of the church. When we arrived, everyone would fill in spots at the eight round tables, each with six chairs, set up throughout the room. In front of each chair there would be a ten-page packet of typed-up prayer requests, which congregants had submitted during Sunday services two days prior. Most Tuesdays, it was hard to keep my eyes open as each person at my table took their turn reciting one of the prayer requests on the page. Sometimes an elder would have to nudge me awake when it was my turn to pray.

Rose Drive is part of the Evangelical Friends denomination. Friends are often referred to as Quakers, who are historically known

for their emphasis on social justice, pacifism, and a simple way of life devoid of luxury or extremity. Many Friends communities continue to cultivate these virtues. You would have never known these were Quaker priorities, though, by looking at the prayer requests we received from the Rose Drive congregation. The most common were for personal health issues, and after that came those for the military:

“Please lift up our troops, who protect our freedoms from evil forces.”

“Pray for our military that protects the greatest country on earth.”

“Please ask that God would vanquish our enemies and keep our boys safe.”

In my seven years of attending the prayer meeting, I cannot recall one person asking us to pray for peace. We prayed for the armed services and law enforcement dozens of times every week. We “lifted up” requests to God for physical healing and family issues and job promotions. We even prayed for election outcomes: “Lord, please let your will be done in this election, so that abortion might finally be outlawed in this land.” “We pray that your people would rise up and take back their country!” But never for peace. Never for systematic change related to racism, violence, or poverty. Never for our “enemies” in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The congregants requesting the prayers—and the faithful remnant who rose early on Tuesdays to pray—were affluent White folks. They had nice houses with pools and three-car garages as well as boats and cabins. Some were small business owners. Others were defense-industry engineers. There were judges and lawyers, contractors and CEOs. From the pulpit, there were never sermons about the dangers of wealth. Instead, the pastoral team adhered to a silent code surrounding money: “Don’t bedevil it, because we need it in order to make this megachurch go.”

If you listened to the prayers on Tuesdays and the sermons on Sundays, you'd think that Christianity is about individuals and families, about military might and victory. You'd think that it is a force for conservative politics and candidates and a friend of the wealthy and the powerful. In my mind as a nineteen-year-old, this was Christianity. These facets appeared ahistorical. In fact, they didn't *appear* at all. They were the cultural and religious air I breathed—standard, ubiquitous, and thus unapparent. This set of religious-cultural principles was so normalized that it was hard for me or anyone else to notice them.

But as I turned my attention to church history, theology, and philosophy in the ensuing years, I began to realize they were the products of modern politics and culture. Our theology and practice weren't the result of God's revelation to humanity. They were the product of decades of political and cultural backlash. A faith defined by culture wars more than the Bible or Quaker teachings. In this chapter, I recount the origin story of how my church, and much of White American Christianity as a whole, became part of a Christian nationalist conflict waged to halt the expansion of the civil rights and prevent the mainstreaming of religious, racial, sexual, ethnic, and other minority groups in the United States. This is as much a political history as it is a religious one.

Like many megachurches in Orange County, California, and around the United States, Rose Drive Friends Church was founded in the mid-1960s. While it has never been known as an overly political congregation, it was birthed in the midst of the culture wars that set the groundwork for the war White Christian nationalists in particular—and MAGA Nation in general—are currently waging against the rest of the country. It wasn't a historical accident that my church community prioritized individual success, prosperity, conservative politics, and the military might of the United States. It wasn't an aberration that we looked on those who opposed these things as enemies of God, bent on destroying his people and his chosen nation. It was the result of a conservative political-cultural-religious

movement designed to keep White Christian landowners at the top of America's political and economic hierarchies.

What this means is that the prayers we received for our Tuesday morning meetings at Rose Drive were the fruit of political and legal battles, Supreme Court cases, presidential elections, and identity politics. Religious communities never develop in a vacuum. They comprise political actors and cultural agents. Thus, to understand why we prayed and what we prayed for on those Tuesday mornings, it's necessary to consider the political and cultural contexts that formed the soil from which the church grew.

My Christianity was shaped by the politics of the 1960s, when White people, especially White Christians, felt like they were losing their country to minoritized groups who had no right to it. In response, they developed a radical political agenda to stop the tides of history. Their staunch libertarianism was a means of preventing the government from making things more fair by expanding the civil rights of those who had been marginalized and excluded. Militarism and rabid anticommunism were ways of envisioning the goodness of God's United States in contrast to the godlessness of communist China and the Soviet Union. Individualist and procapitalist theologies were ways of shirking concern for the underprivileged at a systemic level. The nuclear family became the first principle for defending America, growing good citizens, and promoting individual prosperity.

Christian identity wasn't a later addition to this set of cultural wars, an awkward add-on to a political movement. It was the integrating force. Christianity was the mechanism holding all the components of what would become a 1960s counterrevolution into a cohesive whole.

A WHITE CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST COUNTERREVOLUTION

Modern White Christian nationalists point to the 1960s as the era during which the country really lost its way. While some may point

to the abolishment of slavery as the first American downfall (more on this in chapter 3), for many, the sixties were the time when numerous serpents tempted Americans away from the bedrock values of faith, family, and freedom and toward a new social order, a sexual revolution, and an abandonment of the nuclear family.

“We have to remember that it’s not just the Judeo-Christian tradition where the country was founded, but in the social and in the moral revolution of the 1960s and ’70s,” said Timothy Goeglein, an executive at the prominent evangelical parachurch organization Focus on the Family, in early 2020. In his view, the 1960s were “a frontal assault directly on the Beatitudes, on the Ten Commandments, on the whole body of ethics that forms the Judeo-Christian foundation of the United States of America.”

It’s important to decipher what he means by associating the cultural transformations of the sixties with an assault on Christianity. The 1960s witnessed a sea change in the way American society was ordered. The civil rights movement started in the first part of the decade, with events like the Birmingham bus boycott, and spread to Atlanta, Memphis, and then throughout the South. In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. and Lyndon Johnson shook hands and posed for the camera after the landmark Civil Rights Act was signed into law. While imperfect, the law was the federal government’s attempt to ensure that Black Americans would be treated equally to their White counterparts when it came to schooling, public services, and rights under the law. In 1967, the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* led to the legalization of interracial marriage, paving the way for people like me—a kid with a White mom and a Japanese American dad—to exist as the result of a legal union. Though this may seem like a historical blip, the Supreme Court ruling signaled to White conservatives that the ability to maintain “pure” bloodlines and separation from people of color would no longer be guarded by rules surrounding marriage. Many feared a nation of “mongrels,” or mixed-race people.

Throughout the decade women fought for the Equal Rights Amendment, though it never passed, in the name of equal protection under the law at home and at work. Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the same year President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act. In 1965, President Johnson signed Executive Order 11246, providing provisions against sexual harassment in the workplace. Divorce rates skyrocketed as new forms of family became normalized and women entered the workforce *en masse*. Women burned bras, chanted for equal pay, and lobbied Congress for the right to divorce without penalty. About the same time, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) began working with public school districts to provide comprehensive sexual education for teenage students. Antiwar protesters raged against what they saw as a senseless conflict and the travesties of American imperialism. And in 1969, the Stonewall uprising changed queer history forever, marking a turning point in the quest for recognition and protection of LGBTQ individuals under the law.

In response to these events, since the 1960s conservative Christians have deputized themselves the guardians of the “traditional” family and its patriarchal structure. They envision a familial unit in which the husband-father is the head of household and breadwinner, the wife-mother is a submissive companion who orders the domestic space, and obedient children are raised to think of their dad’s voice as the voice of God. This family patriarchy is then superimposed on a vision for society wherein abortion is banned, the LGBTQ+ community is stripped of rights, women are homemakers rather than professionals, and similarly ordered patriarchal churches teach God’s people the gospel all across the land.

There were other changes too, of the type that might go under your radar if you aren’t part of a certain subculture or religious community. In 1962, the Supreme Court took on *Engel v. Vitale*. The case concerned the constitutionality of school prayer in public school settings where students were required to participate. It was brought

by Steven Engel and other parents from Hyde Park, New York. The parents took issue with the school prayer that was read over the school loudspeaker every morning: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.”

The court ruled 6–1 in favor of Engel. This meant banning official prayers in public school settings, particularly in mandatory participation contexts.

Potter Stewart was the dissenting justice. “With all respect, I think the Court has misapplied a great constitutional principle. I cannot see how an ‘official religion’ is established by letting those who want to say a prayer say it,” Stewart wrote. “On the contrary, I think that to deny the wish of these school children to join in reciting this prayer is to deny them the opportunity of sharing in the spiritual heritage of our Nation.”

The Christian nationalist rhetoric is subtle but present in this passage. Stewart references “the spiritual heritage of our Nation,” as if it is a given and something that all Americans would presumably want to take part in. There is no recognition that praying to an “Almighty God” would alienate nontheists, most polytheists, and those wanting to keep their religious practice separate from school rituals. There is also no recognition that the Constitution guarantees the separation of church and state—and the freedom from religion.

A year later, in 1963, the court ruled the same way in a similar case. In *Abington v. Schemp*, the court considered the matter of required Bible reading in schools. The case originated in Philadelphia. The Schemp family claimed that the law requiring schools to begin each day with the recitation of ten Bible passages was unconstitutional. Lower courts sided with them. Even when the state changed the law to allow students to opt out of these readings, the lower courts ruled that such readings violated the constitutional prohibition against the government promoting religion or a specific religion. Eventually the Supreme Court ruled 8–1 in favor of Schemp, creating a situation

where it was permitted to teach *about* religion but not to teach such lessons *for* religious purposes.

It should be noted that neither the Engel decision nor the Schemp decision prevented public school students from praying or practicing their faith voluntarily. As a high school student in the nineties, I often prayed with other students before school, held Bible studies at lunchtime, and walked around with a Bible in my arms. I was free to practice my religion. So, too, were Muslim and Jewish students and students of other faiths. But, the court ruled, public schools were not free to impose any type of religion on students or promote religion in general. This protected the non-Christian students, since it prevented school administrators from enforcing or promoting Christianity by praying over loudspeakers or teaching the Bible religiously. In other words, it ended Christian supremacy in favor of the freedom of religion (or no religion) for all students in public schools.

The Engel ruling in 1962 was not well received by the American public. There were protests, letter-writing campaigns, and calls for justices to be impeached. Though it did nothing to outlaw the *practice* of religion, the barring of the *imposition* of religion touched a nerve in the American body politic. The attacks on the court (and the families who filed the case) were malicious and persistent. While mainline Protestant—nonevangelical Protestants who, on the whole, take a more liberal approach to faith, politics, and morality—and Jewish leaders praised the decision, many Catholics and evangelicals viewed it as a sign of the nation's growing godlessness and decay.

Eventually the backlash subsided. But evangelicals, particularly in the South, never forgot when “God was taken out of public schools.” “They put the Negroes in the schools and now they’ve driven God out,” said George Andrews, a congressperson from Alabama, soon after the decision. The court decisions that “took God out of public schools” would remain a rallying cry for White evangelicals and a marker of when the country turned its back on the “spiritual heritage” on which it was founded.

THE SOIL OF EXTREMISM

While the work to expand civil rights for all Americans is unfinished, there is no doubt that these movements and policies reshaped the public square and forecasted a future in which racial and religious minorities, along with women and members of the LGBTQ community, would have an increased stake in the development of American democracy. They also portended a time when “Christian” would no longer be a privileged religious category. Many of us recognize these changes as welcome steps toward realizing the American ideals of equality and freedom for all. But as my *Straight White American Jesus* cohort Dan Miller says, not everyone wins through equality. Those who have benefited from inequality lose their privileged place. They don’t see a level playing field as a positive. They see it as taking away their power and influence. It feels like persecution.

Thus, it’s unsurprising that from the throes of sixties progressivism came the seeds for a conservative counterrevolution—one that fought, and is still fighting, the tides of history in order to “make America great again.” This countermovement was cultivated by White Christians who felt as if their country was being stolen from them by people of color, women, LGBTQ people, and other interlopers upsetting the social and political orders.

In the face of the revolutionary transformation of the structure of American society, family, and gender roles, conservatives felt powerless. Between 1933 and 1968, Dwight Eisenhower was the only Republican to occupy the White House. And Ike, who was president from 1953 to 1961, was a moderate whose “dynamic conservatism” moderated fiscal stringency with a liberal approach to government services and the social safety net. In the wake of the New Deal, Eisenhower became the president of the “Middle Way.” Representative of what some considered to be his liberal tendencies was his infrastructure plan. He transformed car travel by transforming the nation’s roads. The highway system we take for granted today was the result of a Republican president’s willing to spend—and spend big—on government programs.

While the government was doing a lot at home, many conservatives felt as if it wasn't doing enough abroad. Working with his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower felt the best strategy to battle communism was diplomacy and containment rather than embroiling the United States in another conflict (he was already dealing with the fallout from the Korean War). As the Cold War developed, conservative fears led to the demonization of any form of American collectivism as communist or socialist. Invoking the external bogeyman became a way to attack any internal opponent.

By 1963, many on the political right were fed up with compromise. To them it felt as if the country was not stepping forward into a more just and equal society but degenerating into chaos. What they needed in order to take the country back was not a moderate who would further concede to liberals, elites, and negotiate his way around communists. They were tired of Eisenhower's Middle Way. They wanted *their* way. In their minds, they needed a hero who would halt the nation's "progress" and return to its core values. They needed a cowboy.

As historian Heather Cox Richardson outlines clearly in *How the South Won the Civil War*, the cowboy—especially the on-screen cowboy such as John Wayne—became a mythical figure in twentieth-century America. The cowboy was imagined as a rugged White individualist who was self-reliant and never asked the government for a handout. Usually envisioned as a military veteran, the cowboy thwarted enemies of the state—such as Mexicans, Chinese, and Native Americans—without compromise or apology. This paradigm ignored, of course, the large numbers of people of color in the American West and the role of women in frontier society—not to mention the White supremacist violence that maintained notions of a "frontier" in the first place. It also operated as a model for the no-nonsense leader who didn't need fancy degrees or an army of bureaucrats to take sides, draw lines in the sand, and act decisively.

A COWBOY FOR PRESIDENT

All these factors created the perfect storm for an unlikely Republican candidate for president in 1964. Barry Goldwater was the “cowboy senator” from Arizona who promised to reverse the country’s waywardness without hesitation or apology. Like Donald Trump half a century later, Goldwater was never supposed to be the GOP nominee. Conventional wisdom said that Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York, was next in line to challenge the Democratic stronghold on the White House. Heir to the family fortune, Rockefeller was a country club Republican who had previously served as assistant secretary of state under two Democratic presidents. In line with Eisenhower’s centrism, he promised fiscal belt-tightening, coupled with a moderate social program that would be open to debate and compromise when it came to the culture wars. Alongside him were figures like Michigan governor George Romney and *National Review* editor William F. Buckley, whom many considered the intellect behind modern conservatism.

By contrast, Goldwater was viewed as an ideological bully from one of the far corners of the country, part of the rightward fringe of the Republican Party. The northeastern elites of the party didn’t take him, or his southern and southwestern supporters, seriously. It was a grave mistake.

Despite his everyman image, Goldwater was born into privilege as the son of a successful Phoenix merchant in 1909. Yet he projected the aura of a self-reliant frontier man. Handsome and square-jawed, with a booming baritone voice, Goldwater oozed a cowboy mystique that resonated with those who considered themselves old-fashioned American individualists who relied on hard work and determination to pull themselves up society’s ladder. According to his sister, Goldwater may have never read a book cover-to-cover. He dropped out of the University of Arizona after one year in order to join the military and then take over the family business. But his appeal to

voters was instinctual. He emanated a raw magnetism that drew both men and women into his orbit. His campaign put up advertisements with his pictures and the simple caption: “THE MAN.” One of his staffers explained that on the campaign trail Goldwater appealed to men and women through an aura that was “personal, animal, sexual, magic.” In the Arizona senator, the masses saw the opposite of a northeastern elite more at home in a tuxedo or behind a desk than out on the range. They saw the MAN who would fight every battle and thwart all their enemies.

In many ways Goldwater’s strategy became the blueprint for Republican success in the late twentieth century and beyond: deemphasize one’s economic privilege, foreground individualist capitalist success and self-reliant manhood, and throw in a good dose of anti-intellectualism and antielitism. This is the perfect mix for a GOP frontrunner who can appeal to “real Americans” and their “old-fashioned values” of individualist capitalism, anticommunism, and de facto racial segregation—even if, like Goldwater, you grew up wealthy, or, like Donald Trump, have a golden toilet in your penthouse apartment.

It was those values that Goldwater tapped into to best Rockefeller, the prototypical aristocrat, for the Republican nomination. Whereas many Americans viewed the New Deal and Eisenhower’s “dynamic conservatism” as the keys to mid-twentieth-century American prosperity, a vociferous minority viewed the vast and wide government spending programs as an unjust redistribution of wealth that favored those who didn’t deserve it—namely, racial minorities and women—and left landowning White men behind. This, coupled with the Cold War and the perceived threat of communism, gave rise to a renewed effort to curb the role of government and institute a libertarian vision of society.

“Throughout history, government has proved to be the chief instrument for thwarting man’s liberty,” Goldwater wrote in *The Conscience of a Conservative*. “Government represents power in the hands

of some men to control and regulate the lives of other men. And power, as Lord Acton said, corrupts men. ‘Absolute power,’ he added, ‘corrupts absolutely.’”

According to Goldwater and his libertarian followers, government’s role was to maximize freedom by keeping foreign threats at bay, administering justice, and enabling the exchange of goods and services. Beyond that, it should allow citizens to exercise their conscience when it comes to issues of individual morality. Social safety nets were for socialists. Government programs were an oxymoron. The best government was the least government—especially if the government was going to be in the business of creating laws to redistribute wealth and change the rules of the public square.

Libertarian ideals also proved to be a convenient way to formulate opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the active desegregation of schools. While Goldwater maintained that racial integration was important, he refused the right of government to implement laws that would ensure it happened in communities and states. He maintained support for integration as an idea while railing against desegregation through law. Goldwater said on the campaign trail that the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case that led to school desegregation was “not based on law.” He also argued that the integration of schools should not happen by force but by choice. Goldwater would preface statements like this by assuring the crowd and the press that he thought that the races should live side by side in an integrated society. “I am not prepared, however, to impose that judgment of mine on the people of Mississippi or South Carolina,” he would pivot. “That is their business, not mine. I believe that the problem of race relations, like all social and cultural problems, is best handled by the people directly concerned.”

As the historian David Farber notes, by taking this line Goldwater was signaling to White segregationists that he would not get in their way in the battle to halt school integration in particular and

government-backed laws and programs to end White supremacy in general. It was a classic libertarian move: claim that the government should have no hand in changing culture or society without recognizing that it was government that had stacked the deck against certain people in the first place. It was not a matter of not wanting the government's intervention; it was a matter of who would benefit from it and how.

While Goldwater was against government trying to help improve certain people's lives at home, he was blunt about its duty to take overreaching action abroad. In the early 1960s, he bemoaned the diplomatic foreign policy positions Eisenhower and then Kennedy took with regard to the Cold War. He wanted the United States to admit it was at war and then act accordingly. This is how he put it in *The Conscience of a Conservative*: "Either the Communists will retain the offensive; will lay down one challenge after another; will invite us in local crisis after local crisis to choose between all-out war and limited retreat, and will force us, ultimately, to surrender or accept war under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Or we will summon the will and the means for taking the initiative, and wage a war of attrition against them."

On the campaign trail in 1964, the Arizona senator claimed nonchalantly that he thought Ho Chi Minh and the Vietcong in Vietnam could be stopped if the military was willing to use low-grade atomic weapons to clear the forest. This set off a firestorm in the press, which framed the senator as a hawk who would embroil the nation in atomic warfare. While many were outraged, Goldwater's supporters were overjoyed to have finally found a fighter they could believe in.

Though he was not an overly religious man, Goldwater wrapped his cowboy libertarianism in a Christian myth of the nation. According to him, the difference between real conservatives and socialist-leaning others was that the former understood that each person is a unique spiritual creature. Emphasizing both individualism and a

religious conception of the human being, Goldwater used the Christian mantle to tie together the libertarian, anticommunist, and anti-civil rights threads of his platform. In his acceptance speech at the 1964 GOP convention, he proclaimed that it was time to return to “proven ways—not because they are old, but because they are true. We must, and we shall, set the tide running again in the cause of freedom . . . under a government limited by laws of nature and of nature’s God.” He even said that if communists refused to believe in God, there could be no coexisting with them. One side would have to go.

One of the ingenious moves that Goldwater made was linking freedom, individuality, and capitalism to religion and labeling their opponents as the opponents of God and the United States. “Those who seek to live your lives for you, to take your liberties in return,” he wrote. “This Nation was founded upon the rejection of that notion and upon the acceptance of God as the author of freedom.”

God, nation, freedom: the holy trinity in the Christian nationalist theological pantheon. What’s critical to notice in Goldwater’s approach is that the politics come first. The foundations of the belief system are not Christian love or neighborliness but individualism, capitalism, and Whiteness. The *political* shapes the *theological* to its needs, forming a Christianity in line with nationalist and racist priorities. Religion is the vehicle. Politics is the engine.

THIS IS THE GOSPEL

By the time I converted to evangelicalism in 1995, these ideals had become the shadow doctrines of White American evangelicalism. While they weren’t outlined in church handbooks, they were the unspoken cultural joists holding up White evangelical practice, as ubiquitous as they were invisible.

Every Tuesday at the early morning prayer meeting, we prayed for the military but never for peace or for our enemies. We asked God to protect our families but did little to protect the poor,

vulnerable, and marginalized in our community. Our congregation was overwhelmingly of European descent. Becoming an evangelical actually made me *more* White because my mentors, my elders, and all the cultural contours of my life were White. My Japanese American family and customs became *other*, a foreign add-on largely incompatible with my new life in the Rose Drive community. The Japanese American element of my identity was not a part of me to celebrate but one to suppress into the background. The message was that it was okay to be a person of color, just one who didn't disrupt the church's mission by calling attention to racial identity or the need for racial justice.

Affluence was celebrated in our church through silence. No one spoke of it. No one dared denounce it. When I took the youth group to swim parties in the summer, they were at houses with trampolines, swimming pools with waterfalls and fancy slides, and full-court basketball setups in the backyard. On Sundays, the American flag was displayed proudly in the worship sanctuary, just to the side of the stage where the choir sang and the pastor preached. On the Fourth of July we sang both patriotic ballads and hymns as if they were one and the same.

Moreover, we viewed "other types of Christians" as neither really part of the kingdom of God nor real Americans. Any perspectives on the gospel that prioritized social justice were viewed as a slippery slope to communism and as diminishing Jesus from a divine savior to be worshipped to a social reformer to be admired. One youth group mom told me once that she sent her kids to a private Christian school because she wanted an environment that taught "zero tolerance" when it came to other religions. Even *learning* about other religions, neutrally, was not something she wanted her for her kids. Tolerance, in her mind, is not a Christian virtue.

But she hadn't come up with this idea on her own. Her zero-tolerance policy for other religions—or at least for her children even

learning about them—belonged to a whole universe of White Christian nationalist ideas about education and how to raise a new generation of real Americans.

MODERATION IS A SIN

Goldwater won the Republican nomination for president on the promise of conflict. In his acceptance speech, he vowed to fight the culture wars surrounding civil rights, foreign policy, and the role of the federal government with ferocity and without compromise. “I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice,” Goldwater boomed to a raucous crowd in San Francisco. “And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.”

These infamous words from Goldwater’s 1964 acceptance speech remain as jarring today as they were when he delivered them. As soon as he uttered that pithy sentence, his followers knew they had chosen the right man for the job. His defense of extremism and castigation of moderation stood in stark contrast to Eisenhower’s “Middle Way” and put the Democrats on notice that a great battle was on the horizon.

What neither the noisy convention crowd in San Francisco nor Goldwater himself knew at the time was that the appetite for extremism—as well as the allergy to moderation—would characterize the spirit of the GOP and the White Christian nationalism that fueled it for the next sixty years.

And it just so happened that the epicenter of this counterrevolution was in my backyard.

