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Chapter 11

RIGHT FLIGHT

IT FEELS ALARMIST TO forecast January 6, 2021, as the beginning of a new American conflict. Whenever I say it out loud, it seems hyperbolic, as if I have turned into one of the talking heads on television or radio trying to drum up hysteria for the sake of attention, clicks, or views.

But in a postinsurrection context, where the Big Lie has come to define the Republican Party and a majority of the party's constituents believe the election was stolen from Trump, staid academic reserve just won't cut it for the task ahead of us. This book is about history: the history of White Christian nationalism and my own history in the movement. The Trump years taught us that any prognostication is unstable. Yet the times demand that we follow the evidence and do our best to anticipate what might come next.

While it is impossible to know the future in detail, one thing seems certain: even after Trump is out of the public eye, the MAGA movement he energized on the foundation of White Christian nationalism will remain. Once you open Pandora's box, there is no way to put everything back nice and tidy like you found it. The animus Trump unleashed is not dependent on Trump himself. As a result, there are

already indications of the types of conflict that will characterize our future once he's gone: the intimidation of election workers, the threats against school board members, the attempt to kidnap the governor of Michigan, and the refusal to abide by COVID-19 regulations. They are the little fires all around us that portend bigger blazes—or one big wildfire—in the years ahead.

Yet there's another trend to consider beyond the localized conflicts popping up from Virginia to California to Michigan: The movement for geographical consolidation and de facto secession—what one might call the Make America Great Again Migration. I'm not talking about states officially leaving the Union but of members of MAGA Nation banding together in semiautonomous regions where they take over local government, cultivate Christian nationalist churches, and do everything possible to create a theocratic society where White Christians have all the power. Such a migration is already happening from places like California, coastal Washington, and parts of the East Coast to what is now known as the “American Redoubt”—the region comprising Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, eastern Washington, and eastern Oregon. *Redoubt* means stronghold or fortification. Etymologically, it is similar to *refuge*. The American Redoubt is, in essence, a safe space to which some White Christians are fleeing in order to take refuge from the rest of the country.

And so, when I think of the future of MAGA Nation, I have to return home to Orange County, where I, and this book, began. It's in Orange County, or at least in the ways that my former church friends and classmates *are leaving it* in order to migrate to the American Redoubt, that I see the future of White Christian nationalism and MAGA Nation after Trump.

TEARING DOWN THE ORANGE CURTAIN

When I was growing up, Yorba Linda Bowl was our neighborhood bowling alley. It was nothing fancy. No neon lights or lasers. No

high-tech sound system. Just a musty bowling alley with an equally greasy diner, situated in a strip mall next to a bike shop and a gas station. The sign outside was an analog relic, a holdover from the 1970s, and the shoes for rent were apparently from the same era.

A few years ago, Yorba Linda Bowl went under. It was replaced by Tokyo Central, a modern Japanese market with a sushi counter, ramen bar, and all the Japanese sweets my brothers and I grew up eating at our grandmother's house. Every time I walk the aisles of Tokyo Central, picking out rice crackers and bottles of green tea from the market's huge selection, I am taken aback. When I was growing up in North Orange County, it would have been almost unthinkable that there would someday be enough East Asian folks to support a sprawling market. Dad used to trek an hour away to Japantown in LA on Saturdays to fetch various foods, treats, and Japanese items we just couldn't get closer to home. Sushi bars, noodle counters, and boba shops are now everywhere in my hometown, alongside taquerias and taco trucks. It's not that they've replaced the diners or pizza parlors. It's just that they exist side by side in a way I could never have imagined as teenager.

Orange County's change is a testament to the changing demographics of the country as a whole. Following nationwide trends, the county is more diverse than it's ever been. Communities of color have lived, struggled, and resisted for decades in Orange County. Santa Ana is a majority Mexican city. Westminster and Garden Grove are home to one of the largest Vietnamese populations outside of Vietnam. Yet, on the whole, Orange County has been a White enclave since the Sunbelt migration in the mid-twentieth century. That is changing.

According to the 2020 census, the White population decreased by almost a quarter in the last ten years, while the Asian American and mixed-race populations have grown by a third. There are also more Latinx and Black people than a decade ago. Orange County is also less conservative than at any point in my lifetime. The region that

championed Goldwater, raised Nixon, and paved the way for Reagan voted 53.5 percent Democrat in the 2020 election. When Hillary Clinton won Orange County by 5 percent in 2016, it was the first Democratic presidential victory in the county since the Great Depression. Perhaps most shockingly, in 2018 three congressional seats flipped from red to blue. The Blue Wave broke through the conservative stronghold over Orange County in a torrent of cultural, demographic, and political change. Once the epicenter of the extremist takeover of the GOP and the conspiratorial cosmos of the John Birch Society, Orange County is now a purplish, increasingly diverse, and democratically represented region.

The transformation didn't take place through converted hearts and minds, however. Though the Trump years made some Orange Countians rethink their political commitments, the county's shift is not the result of all those old Christian nationalist Goldwater and Reagan supporters becoming born again. The story of Orange County's makeover is a story of White exodus. The county that once defined White flight is now undergoing its own "right flight."

THE ORANGE EXODUS AND THE REDOUBT MIGRATION

As we saw in the first few chapters, in the mid-twentieth century migrants came to Orange County from the South and Midwest in massive numbers. The defense industry boomed after World War II, providing well-paying jobs in a place with great weather, beautiful beaches, and affordable housing. It is easy to see why people like my grandfather picked up their lives and families to head west.

By the 1990s, however, Orange County had become expensive and crowded. The defense-industry jobs dripped away. Many people became tired of commuting two hours one way to jobs in Los Angeles, only to be left unable to buy a home or live beyond paycheck to paycheck. So they began to leave—heading to Portland, Austin, Nashville, and Colorado Springs. This is the story I've always heard

when I go home: a story about friends and neighbors leaving paradise because they were priced out and tired of the rat race.

But when I started paying attention to *where* my former church friends and high school classmates had been moving over the last two decades, an interesting pattern emerged: Idaho was the most prominent destination. By my last count, more than fifty people from my home community have moved to Idaho, more than any other state with perhaps the exception of Tennessee, where Nashville is a major draw.

This migration is apparently not limited to my circles. Boise has seen an 9.3 percent increase in population since 2010. It has gone from “flyover country” to the hottest metro area west of the Mississippi. It was the fastest-growing US city in 2018, and the population growth isn’t expected to slow down during the 2020s. Boise is expected to surpass one million residents by 2040. The expansion continued during the global pandemic, when nearly 200 percent more people moved into the state than left it. Most of the people moving to Idaho are from Washington and California. In 2018 alone, eighty thousand Californians moved to the Gem State.

Longtime residents of Boise worry that the influx of newcomers from these blue states will change the political makeup of the city and the state as a whole. However, Boise State political scientist Jeffrey Lyons found in a study that the Californians moving to Idaho are by percentages more conservative than the state itself: “If anything, Californians coming to Idaho are more conservative than native Idahoans.” Instead of turning Idaho blue, the new migrants are reinforcing Idaho’s staunch conservatism, “and those hailing from California are no exception.”

White Christians from places like Orange County are moving to Idaho because they see it as a haven for conservative politics and “religious freedom.” Kory and Bonnie Martinelli own a real estate company called Live Better in North Idaho. They left California for Coeur d’Alene, which is in the northern strip of the state known as

North Idaho—and what some consider the capital of the American Redoubt—in 2009. Kory Martinelli now advocates for North Idaho as the “best place” to live in the United States. In California, he says, liberal politics were a menace to “our spiritual rights, our family values, our economic stability and our constitutional rights, especially the right to bear arms.” Part of the reason the Martinellis chose Idaho is that it is a highly conservative place with over 20 percent more conservatives than liberals. The Martinellis’ lived experience backs up what the numbers say—the growth in population is moving Idaho to the right, rather than to the left, politically. “North Idaho is a direct contradiction to the theory that population growth turns communities liberal,” Martinelli said. “North Idaho is a conservative culture and it’s only growing more conservative with population growth.”

There’s another important factor at play in the exodus from California: Idaho is 93 percent White. When my White Christian friends and classmates leave California, they not only separate themselves from a democratically controlled state legislature but also the communities of color that have a meaningful place in the state’s politics and culture. They may say that moving is not about race and certainly not about racism. They are adamant that all people, of any background, are welcome to join. But when 93 out of 100 people in their new state are White, they are extending the invitation from a place where their sense of being the dominant group is in no way threatened—where White people are the unquestioned majority to whom all others must adapt and conform.

There are no cities in Idaho that show up as blue circles in an otherwise red state, as with Tennessee or Texas or Pennsylvania. There are no deeply rooted immigrant communities that have made inroads in statewide politics, as there are in Arizona, Louisiana, or Minnesota. Parts of Idaho are what Orange County used to be: an unzoned land with a stunning White majority, a homogenous political culture, and by contrast to Los Angeles or San Francisco or Seattle, very little religious pluralism. It is the perfect setting for a self-segregated

White Christian society without the bother of religious, racial, or ethnic minorities.

When I bring up these factors to friends and family, they often scoff. Stop trying to turn this into a big issue, they say. What's the big deal if people want to move somewhere more affordable in order to be around like-minded folks who share their religion and values? This isn't some American crisis. They aren't moving there to be part of some extremist thing or to join a White supremacist church. It's just nice to be able to buy a piece of land, have a bigger house, own guns without pesky regulations, and be in a place where the school district and local government and small-town culture all align with your idea of America.

Then I remind them of who else is moving to Idaho—and why.

AMERICAN THEOCRACY

Californians and others have been moving to the American Redoubt region for decades in order to escape what they take to be the overthrow of American society by leftist politics, the breakup of the nuclear family, and the diminishment of religious freedom. When folks from my high school and former church move there now, they are joining a decades-long caravan of migrants who see the Gem State as the last frontier of freedom left in the United States.

In 2011, James Wesley Rawles, a former US military intelligence officer born and raised in Northern California, dubbed the region including Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and parts of eastern Washington and eastern Oregon the American Redoubt. In a now infamous blog post, Rawles identified this region of the country as the last fortress for traditional Americans to protect themselves against what he predicts will be an economic and political crisis. "I believe that it is time for freedom-loving Christians to relocate to something analogous to "Galt's Gulch" on a grand scale," Rawles wrote.

Rawles was following the lead of Chuck Baldwin, a pastor who was once Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority lieutenant in Florida and

who himself had called for a mass migration to the Redoubt region. “America is headed for an almost certain cataclysm,” Baldwin wrote. “As Christians, we suspect that this cataclysm could include the judgment of God. As students of history, we believe that this cataclysm will most certainly include a fight between Big-Government globalists and freedom-loving, independent-minded patriots. I would even argue that this fight has already started.” Baldwin moved his extended family to Montana and relaunched his ministry there in 2010.

For Rawles and Baldwin, the goal is to create a separate society of American Christians who will defend their families and communities when the next civil war dawns. “I am a separatist, but on religious lines, not racial ones,” Rawles writes in the blog post that now serves as the foundation for the Redoubt Migration. “I’m inviting people with the same outlook to move to the Redoubt States, to effect a demographic solidification. We’re already a majority here. I’d just like to see an even stronger majority.”

For Rawles, separatism and demographic isolation are the antidotes to the tyranny of a federal government and American society overrun by unconstitutional taxation, regulations on gun ownership, and limits to religious liberty. And it’s not an unprecedented move, Rawles says. “Closing ranks with people of the same faith has been done for centuries. It is often called cloistering. While imperfect, cloistering got some Catholics in Ireland through the Dark Ages with both their skins intact and some precious manuscripts intact. . . . Designating some States as a Redoubt is nothing more than a logical defensive reaction to an approaching threat.”

According to Rawles, closing ranks and setting up a *de facto* separate society is a way to prepare for “the Second Civil War, here in America and caused by the gulf between the right and left—or between the godly and the godless—or between the libertarians and the statists—or between the individualists and the collectivists.” For him, this means autonomy from the United States, a seceded state

that is “a stronghold of conservative, traditional values while we see the rest of the United States sink into oblivion.”

While it may be tempting to write off Rawles as an extremist on the fringe, his popularity speaks to the resonance his worldview has with millions of Americans—and the influence it is having on the Redoubt region. Rawles claims his website, *survivalblog.com*, has 320,000 unique visitors per week. He is a *New York Times*–bestselling author. He has five novels and two nonfiction books published by major houses—Simon and Schuster and Penguin Random House.

Others are helping to implement his vision for the creation of the American Redoubt. His son runs Survival Realty, which specializes in off-the-grid properties in the region. There are other “Redoubt Realtors” who specialize in helping “refugees” from California and other places find land. They offer relocation services and consulting for newcomers becoming accustomed to Redoubt life. Todd Savage operates American Redoubt Realty. Each year, he helps nearly three thousand Americans locate properties and make preparations to move to the Redoubt Region. He met Rawles in 2003 and soon moved his family from California to a homestead near Sandpoint, Idaho.

“We didn’t quite ‘fit in’ with the changing landscape” in California, Savage told the *Sandpoint Reader*, a local newspaper. “We were libertarian Christians who home-schooled, refused to poison our children through vaccinations, owned evil black rifles and supported what would one day be known as the Blue Lives Matter movement.” On his company website, Savage leaves no room for interpretation as to who is welcome in the Redoubt: “Snowflakes, Liberals, Socialists, Marxists, Communists, and other Tyrants that hate our Constitutional Republic, the Bill of Rights and want to defund law enforcement are not allowed to engage our services.”

The American Redoubt movement isn’t just spearheaded by writers and survivalists like Rawles and his allies in the real estate industry. Elected officials are also leading the charge. Matt Shea was a state representative for a district in eastern Washington that includes

the outskirts of Spokane and borders North Idaho from 2008 to 2020. In 2016, he supported the armed takeover of federal public lands in Oregon. A 2019 report revealed how Shea took part in the effort, led by ranchers such as Cliven and Ammon Bundy, to forcibly occupy federal territories in an effort to reclaim them from the government. The most worrying aspect of the report was the revelation of Shea's desire for an alternative Christian government nearly identical to Rawles's vision for the American Redoubt. According to Ozzie Knezovich, the former sheriff of Spokane County, Washington, Shea and his companions "compiled manuals on everything from how to escape handcuffs to the operation of military weaponry and, according to the report to the legislators, laid the groundwork to form an alternative government that would be poised to take over after the expected fall of the United States government." Knezovich, who has known Shea for decades, is clear that Shea does not want to "preserve America," but instead, he and others "want to start their own country."

This ideal came into clearer focus when Shea's manifesto on biblical warfare was leaked in 2018. In the four-page document, Shea outlines his theory of just war. First, he lays out his vision for government: "Tyranny is never a divinely appointed means of government. A tyrant is someone who rules without God. Tyranny is not a lawful form of government. Godless civil rulers are no more than bands of robbers. When the rule of law dies as sin prevails throughout the land, tyranny is not far behind." The manifesto reads like a theocratic manual for the American Redoubt.

After casting his vision for theocracy, Shea sets the terms for negotiating with anyone who resists: "Make an offer of Peace before declaring war. Not a negotiation or compromise of righteousness. Must surrender on terms of justice and righteousness: 1. Stop all abortions; 2. No same-sex marriage; 3. No idolatry or occultism; 4. No communism; and 5. Must obey Biblical law. If they yield—must pay share of work or taxes. If they do not yield—kill all males."

In a meeting with supporters, Shea clarified that he doesn't see this as a future fight. It's one that has already arrived at America's doorstep: "But the bad guy is already here. How many of you have pulled your trigger on your AR-15 in the fight we are in yet? Not one. But there is a fight. Right now. The war is here. The bad guy is here."

Shea's political career ended when these documents came to light. Somehow, he had become too extreme for one of the most radically conservative parts of the country. But he found a safe landing spot: the church.

Shea is now the pastor of On Fire Christian Ministries and Kingdom Christian Academy in Spokane, Washington, where he regularly preaches the Gospel of the Redoubt. In early 2021, days before the election, he went to US representative Jim Risch's office in Coeur d'Alene. "We're fighting and we're going to continue to fight. We're heading into a war," Shea yelled. "This was not an election! This was an attack on our country! That's what this was." He then made his feelings about democracy loud and clear: "We do not live in a democracy! Democracies are what have led us to this point, where people think they can rob us, loot us, close our businesses down, eviscerate our elections, try to destroy our institutions and our livelihoods and our farms! I don't want to live in a democracy! I love the rule of law."

PASTORING THE MAGA MIGRATION

Shea is not the only influential religious leader doing his part to develop the Redoubt as a Christian haven. Doug Wilson has been building a Christian supremacist empire in Moscow, Idaho, since the late 1970s. Over the last half century, he has made it his goal to make the town of twenty-five thousand into a Christian town where the schools, city government, and businesses are controlled by evangelicals. Wilson is the controversial founder of Christ Church, a congregation that is more than a church. In Moscow, Christ Church has established a day school, a liberal arts college, and a media center

from which Wilson spreads his message via radio, podcast, and his prolific writing. He has written over thirty books. His homeschooling network includes nearly two hundred schools across the country. Crawford Gribben, a scholar of religion who has written extensively about the church and Wilson, observes: “Followers believe that abortion rights and same-sex marriage, among other evidences of what they would see as moral decline, will eventually be repealed. Their goal is simple—the conversion of the people of Moscow to their way of thinking as the first step toward the conversion of the world.”

Wilson has made waves in the past for his views on slavery. In *Southern Slavery as It Was*, coauthored with Steve Wilkins, Wilson argues that “slavery as it existed in the South . . . was a relationship based upon mutual affection and confidence. There has never been a multiracial society which has existed with such mutual intimacy and harmony in the history of the world.” The authors go on to say that enslaved people enjoyed simple pleasures, “such as food, clothes, and good medical care.”

Just about the time Wilson was setting the foundation for his ministry in Moscow, Richard Butler established a White supremacist church as part of the Christian Identity movement eighty-five miles north of Moscow in Coeur d’Alene. “In simplest terms,” writes Bill Morlin at Boise State University’s *Blue Review*, “Christian Identity believers are convinced that the Bible tells them white people of Northern European ancestry are God’s chosen—direct descendants of Adam and the ‘true Jews.’” Butler left California in the 1970s in order to establish his compound outside of Coeur d’Alene. Soon it became a kind of headquarters that attracted hundreds of White supremacists and also became a central node in the Christian Identity movement. The group flew the Nazi flag, called the property the “Aryan Nations,” and eventually became the host site of the annual Aryan World Congress.

Butler, who was an early California migrant to North Idaho, was eventually shut down after becoming too brazen. When he and

his community marched through Coeur d'Alene waving Nazi flags and other racist symbols, it set in motion events that resulted in the shuttering of the compound. Some Coeur d'Alene residents remain proud that the community didn't allow the hate group to continue to root and grow in its midst—that when they tried to become part of the public square in the town, they were run out.

However, White supremacy has not been rooted out from the area completely. In nearby Sandpoint, America's Promise Ministries carries on the Christian Identity cause in the region. It is, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, a central node in the “informal local network of neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan groups” and White separatist groups. Before he was shut down, Richard Butler used to speak at the church regularly. In 2001, America's Promise Ministries leader Dave Barley said this in a Sunday sermon: “America's greatness . . . didn't come from the blacks. It didn't come from the Asians, and it certainly didn't come from the Jews. They [the Jews] wanted to become a part of our nation because of the light. Now, they want it because of greed.”

In 2017, Boise State Public Radio did a series on the legacy of White supremacist Christianity in North Idaho. They interviewed shocked residents who couldn't believe that White supremacist pamphlets were still being left on cars and shop windows in the present day. The journalists interviewed Cynthia Delmonte, a Californian who relocated to Coeur d'Alene in 2012. She admits that there are still remnants of White supremacist Christianity, but for the most part, the region is just known as a place that is religiously and politically conservative. But near the end of the article, Delmonte comes, perhaps by accident, to an important conclusion: “Everyone's really nice up here, but I wonder how much of that is because I am a middle-aged, white woman?” Indeed, Shawn Keenan, a Native American from North Idaho who was once held at gunpoint by White supremacists, holds a different perspective. “I've been calling this now the South of the North, because I've never seen so many Confederate flags ever here in my life.”

THOSE PEOPLE ALL LOOK THE SAME

When I bring up these issues with my former church friends, they reiterate that for them moving to Idaho was an opportunity to live in a conservative state with affordable housing and beautiful terrain. They didn't move there, they explain, to associate with White supremacists or separatist Christian communities. If they are part of the Redoubt movement, they either don't know it, or they aren't admitting it outright.

But let's look at it from a different angle. What if there were a part of the country known as the epicenter of violent Muslim communities populated by people of Arab descent (which, to be clear, does not exist in the United States)? What if there were expansive networks of radical Muslim separatists who moved to New Mexico in order to prepare for the next civil war and what they saw as the impending doom of American society (which again, does not exist in the United States in any substantive form)? And what if throngs of nonradical Muslims of Arab descent were also moving to the same region—in many cases the very same cities—as these radical and violent communities but claiming that they simply wanted to find a more affordable and amenable place to raise their families and enjoy the outdoors? Would they be given the benefit of the doubt? Would this be viewed as a happy coincidence unworthy of analysis or concern?

This is what is happening in the case of the White Christian migration to Idaho and the American Redoubt. While run-of-the-mill White Christian families from Anaheim, Sacramento, or Seattle may say they have no intention of associating with extremists—and truly believe it—they appear to be completely fine moving to places where extremism is part of the culture and politics of everyday life. Once there, they or their children may be radicalized by dint of exposure and proximity to these radical ideas and figures at school board meetings, city council elections, and debates over state and national policies on guns, land, civil rights, and so on.

“A lot of good people are going to get sucked into that vortex,” Sheriff Knezovich says. “And they are going to wake up and go, ‘I didn’t buy into that. I didn’t buy into breaking away from the United States and forming my own country, because ultimately that’s what the Redoubt stands for.’” For Knezovich, the promise of liberty through authoritarian religion and governance is an illusion. “They’re using religion once again to suck people into come live wherever everybody believes the same way you believe. . . . You might think you are going into something where you will have freedom and liberty. No. You are going into tyranny. And the day you step out of line they will slap you back in line.”

None of this is meant to indict all Idahoans or others in the Redoubt states. Many people in Idaho have fought hard to root out White supremacy, welcome diversity, and create safe places for all people to live. There are people of color in Idaho. There are LGBT communities in the Gem State. There are progressives and independents and hippies and all kinds of Americans. My point is not that Idaho is unilaterally populated by White Christian supremacists. My point is that many White Christians are fleeing to Idaho because they envision it as a welcoming place for radical conservative politics, extremist libertarianism, and Christian supremacy—and they are making inroads in local government, state government, and throughout the religious culture of the region.

What scares me about how migrants imagine the Redoubt as a haven for a segregated MAGA Nation free of liberal politics and the complications of religious and racial diversity? It’s the foundations of their vision: self-separation, geographical removal, intentional homogeneity, outright Christian supremacy, and the belief that America is on the precipice of civil war in which some believe there will be a need to “kill all males” who do not yield to their demands. Unfortunately, the extremism that has long plagued the region serves as a mechanism for radicalization and the entrenchment of antidemocratic views.

JUDGMENT IS HERE

In the mid-twentieth century, the Sunbelt Migration transformed American politics, religion, and culture. White Christians' movement from one area of the country to a largely "unzoned" area laid the foundation for the New Religious Right and its takeover of the GOP. It seems that in the twenty-first century, the Redoubt Migration may have the potential for a similar effect. Only this time, the goal is not to take control of a political party. The goal is to prepare for the collapse of the United States and the chance to rebuild a theocratic state. Even after Trump is no longer part of American public life, the movement to make America great again will remain. And it may be more extreme than even he could have ever imagined.

"No one wants to believe that their beloved democracy is in decline, or headed toward war," writes scholar of international relations Barbara Walter in *How Civil Wars Start*. Yet "if you were an analyst in a foreign country looking at events in America—the same way you'd look at events in Ukraine or the Ivory Coast or Venezuela—you would go down a checklist, assessing each of the conditions that make civil war likely. And what you would find is that the United States, a democracy founded more than two centuries ago, has entered very dangerous territory."

My cohost Dan Miller and I say similar things on *Straight White American Jesus* regularly. In our view, if one looks at the state of American democracy from the outside, it's a country wherein one of the two major political parties is giving in to the impulses of authoritarianism, xenophobia, propaganda, and conspiracy in order to leverage power. If it means maintaining their cultural supremacy and minority rule, they are willing to place all their hopes in a wannabe autocrat like Trump.

Researchers around the world are coming to the same conclusion. "The United States, the bastion of global democracy, fell victim to authoritarian tendencies itself, and was knocked down a significant

number of steps on the democratic scale,” states the International IDEA’s Global State of Democracy 2021 report. The authors of the report go on to lump the United States in with India and Brazil as undergoing “democratic backsliding,” creating “a witches’ brew for the global health of democracy.”

At this point, the question for me is less about where we are and more about where we are headed. The history recounted in the foregoing chapters should make it evident that White Christian nationalists have been preparing for war since Barry Goldwater lost the 1964 election, if not before. Now is the time for those of us who value multiracial democracy, free and fair elections, and majority rule to admit that blithe prescriptions for dialogue and understanding won’t cut it. One side has been readying for conflict for sixty years. It’s time for the rest of us to admit that the normal ebbs and flows of American politics have been usurped by the forward march of MAGA Nation. What lies ahead is not a contest for electoral majorities or policy initiatives. It’s a test of democracy’s resilience in the face of an apocalyptic threat.

“I believe personally that America is already under the judgment of God,” says Chuck Baldwin, the pioneer pastor of the Redoubt movement and a key figure in Falwell’s Religious Right. “It’s not that judgment is coming. Judgment is already here.”

