

God, Power, and Control: Religious Fascism in America (1960–1980)

Introduction: What is Religious Fascism?

Religious fascism is when people use religion as a tool to gain political power and control others. It's not just about having strong beliefs—many people have those. Religious fascism is more dangerous. It mixes religion with extreme nationalism. It says, “Our religion is the only right one, and our nation must follow it, no matter what.” Anyone who disagrees is seen as the enemy.

From 1960 to 1980, religious fascism grew stronger in the United States. Leaders used fear, anger, and faith to push their ideas and control politics. Some of the same strategies used back then are still being used today.

Part 1: The 1960s—A Time of Change and Fear

The 1960s were full of change. The Civil Rights Movement fought for equal rights for Black Americans. Women were demanding more freedom. Young people were protesting the Vietnam War. Many Americans were excited about these changes—but others were afraid.

Some religious leaders saw these changes as signs that America was moving away from “Christian values.” They feared the country was becoming too free, too open, and too sinful. Instead of accepting the changes, they fought back.

Billy Graham and the New Moral Panic

Billy Graham was a popular Christian preacher. He wasn't a fascist, but his messages helped open the door for religious fascism. He believed America was in danger because it had turned away from God. He warned that the country would suffer unless people returned to Christian beliefs.

Graham had powerful friends. He met with presidents like Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and especially Richard Nixon. Graham helped build the idea that good Christians had a duty to shape politics. This idea gave rise to a movement that would grow in the 1970s and beyond.

Part 2: The Rise of the Religious Right

By the late 1960s, conservative Christians began organizing into political groups. They called themselves the “Religious Right.” Their goal was to bring America back to what they saw as its Christian roots.

Reaction to Civil Rights and Desegregation

Many schools were being forced to integrate—meaning Black and white children had to go to school together. Some Christian leaders didn't like this. They created “Christian academies” that were mostly white and didn't follow the new laws.

Even though they claimed these schools were just about faith, the truth was clear: they were often used to keep segregation alive. When the government tried to take away their tax-exempt status, these religious groups got angry and political.

Abortion and Roe v. Wade (1973)

In 1973, the Supreme Court made a big decision in a case called Roe v. Wade. It made abortion legal across the United States. Many conservative Christians were outraged. They believed abortion was murder and said America had turned against God.

This issue helped bring many Christians into politics. It wasn't just about faith—it was about power. These groups wanted to pass laws that followed their religious beliefs. They wanted the government to punish anyone who broke them.

Part 3: Key Leaders and Movements

Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority

In 1979, a preacher named Jerry Falwell started a group called the “Moral Majority.” He believed America was in a moral crisis. He blamed the problems on liberal politics, feminism, the sexual revolution, and the removal of prayer from schools.

The Moral Majority pushed for laws based on strict Christian rules. They wanted to ban abortion, stop gay rights, and bring prayer back into public schools. They worked closely with Republican politicians and helped get Ronald Reagan elected president in 1980.

Falwell and his allies didn't just want to be heard—they wanted to dominate. They believed America was a “Christian nation,” and anything else was evil or dangerous.

Pat Robertson and Christian Broadcasting

Another powerful voice was Pat Robertson, who created the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). His TV show, *The 700 Club*, mixed religion with politics every day. He told viewers that liberals, feminists, and gay people were ruining the country.

Robertson believed America had to be ruled by “righteous men” chosen by God. In many ways, his ideas were extreme. He believed natural disasters were punishments from God for the nation's sins. This idea still pops up today whenever tragedies happen.

Part 4: Christian Nationalism Grows

Christian nationalism is the belief that the U.S. government should follow Christian laws. By the late 1970s, this belief had become very popular in conservative churches.

These churches taught that:

- America was founded by Christians (even though many founders were not very religious).
- God had blessed the United States.
- It was their job to fight against anyone who threatened “Christian values.”

This kind of thinking made it easy to blame problems on outsiders—immigrants, non-Christians, liberals, or anyone who didn’t agree with them.

Part 5: How This Connects to Today

A lot of what we see today started during the 1960s to 1980 period. Here are some examples:

Then: Roe v. Wade sparked outrage.

Now: The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022. Some leaders today want even stronger bans, and they still use religion to justify it.

Then: Religious leaders blamed national problems on sin and outsiders.

Now: Some leaders still say things like natural disasters or shootings happen because the nation has turned away from God.

Then: The Religious Right formed to influence elections.

Now: Religious political groups are powerful. They help write laws, run candidates, and even try to control school boards and libraries.

Then: Christian nationalism was rising.

Now: It’s a major part of far-right politics. Some people believe the U.S. Constitution should be replaced with the Bible. That’s very dangerous for a country built on freedom of religion.

(Continued in next message...)

Here’s the second half of your 5,000-word article on religious fascism from 1960 to 1980, continuing from where we left off:

Part 6: Tactics Used by Religious Fascists

Religious fascists didn’t take over with violence. They used media, fear, and emotional messaging to gain followers and push their ideas.

1. Creating a Moral Crisis

They convinced people that America was falling apart. They said things like:

- “God has been kicked out of schools.”
- “Abortion is destroying families.”
- “Our kids are being taught lies.”

Even if those things weren’t fully true, the message worked. When people feel afraid, they’re more willing to follow strong leaders—especially ones who say they speak for God.

2. Using TV and Radio

Leaders like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson were on the radio and TV every day. They created their own networks to spread their message. Instead of relying on facts, they used emotion. They told stories of suffering, fear, and “evil forces” trying to take over.

This kind of storytelling worked well. It made people feel like they were part of a special, holy mission to save the country.

3. Creating Enemies

Religious fascism needs someone to blame. In the 1960s to 1980s, they often blamed:

- Feminists
- Gay people
- Teachers
- Liberals
- Non-Christians

These groups were painted as dangerous. Leaders warned that they were trying to destroy America. This “us vs. them” mindset made people easier to control.

Part 7: Fighting Back—Voices of Resistance

Not everyone agreed with these ideas. Many religious people spoke out against using faith to control others.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. King was a minister, too. But he used his faith to fight for justice and equality—not control. He believed God wanted love, fairness, and peace—not hate and fear.

Dr. King's message was very different from the rising religious right. He stood for civil rights, nonviolence, and helping the poor.

Liberal and Progressive Christians

Some churches fought back against religious fascism. They taught that Christianity was about love, service, and care for the weak. They said using religion to gain power was wrong.

Groups like the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association warned that mixing church and state was dangerous. But their voices were often drowned out by louder, angrier leaders.

Part 8: Looking Back, Looking Forward

The years 1960 to 1980 set the stage for a long-lasting movement. By the end of that period:

- The Moral Majority was influencing national elections.
- Christian TV networks had millions of followers.
- Church and state were getting more tangled.

These ideas didn't go away. In fact, they got stronger. The seeds planted during this time helped shape today's political and cultural battles.

Part 9: Why This Still Matters

Religious fascism is still a danger today. We see it in:

- Politicians who want to pass laws based on their personal religion.
- School boards banning books that talk about race, gender, or different faiths.
- People claiming that America should only serve Christians.

These ideas go against the First Amendment, which promises freedom of religion for everyone—not just one group.

How to Spot It Today

Watch out for messages that:

- Say there's only one "real" religion.
- Blame all problems on a certain group.

- Try to control what people read, say, or do in the name of faith.
- Use fear and anger to get votes.

Not all people of faith are like this—most are not. But when religion is used as a weapon, we should all pay attention.

Final Thoughts

The period from 1960 to 1980 was a turning point. Religious fascism didn't fully take over, but it found a strong foothold. Leaders used fear of social change to bring people together under a banner of God and country. They weren't just preaching from the pulpit—they were writing laws, running schools, and electing presidents.

And it didn't stop there.

The effects of that movement are still with us today. If we want to protect freedom—for everyone—we need to understand how these ideas started and how they spread. That's the first step in cutting through the noise.