



Trump's dominionist prayer warriors: Inside the "Prophetic Order of the United States"

(AP/Evan Vucci/Getty/allanswart)

Christian dominionists around the president are interested in bringing US policy in line with "their worldview"

Peter Montgomery

August 11, 2017 9:10pm (UTC)

In the early morning hours of November 9, 2016, God told Frank Amedia that with Donald Trump having been elected president, Amedia and his fellow Trump-supporting "apostles" and "prophets" had a new mission. Thus was born [POTUS Shield](#), a network of Pentecostal leaders devoted to helping Trump bring about the reign of God in America and the world.

Amedia described the divine origins of POTUS Shield during a gathering that spread over three days in March 2017 at the northeastern Ohio church he pastors. Interspersed with Pentecostal worship, liturgical dancing, speaking in tongues, shofar blowing, and Israeli flag waving, Amedia and other POTUS Shield leaders put forth their vision for a Christian America and their plans to bring it to fruition through prayer, political engagement and organizing in all 50 states. Among the many decrees made at the event was that Islam must be "[completely broken down.](#)"

POTUS Shield's leaders view politics as [spiritual warfare](#), part of a great struggle between good and evil that is taking place continuously in "the heavens" and here on earth, where the righteous contend with demonic spirits that control people, institutions and geographic regions. They believe that Trump's election has given the church in America an opportunity to spark a spiritual Great Awakening that will engulf the nation and world. And they believe that a triumphant church establishing the kingdom of God on earth will set the stage for Christ's return. Amedia says that the "POTUS" in the group's name does not refer only to the president of the United States, but also to a new "prophetic order of the United States" that God is establishing.

Conservative Christian leaders are nursing a more-than-half-century [grudge](#) against the federal courts for rulings on school desegregation, separation of church and state, abortion, equality for LGBT people and more. Amedia has spoken repeatedly about a vision God gave him of a giant broom sweeping up and down the Supreme Court building. God, he said, is going to [sweep](#) the entire federal court system of unrighteous judges and "change the laws of the land."

POTUS Shield members are, like other Religious Right figures, ecstatic about the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch and they are sure—because God has told them—that Trump will have at least one more Supreme Court vacancy to fill in the near future. Amedia also insists that Justice Sonia Sotomayor is going to have "an encounter with the living God" that will transform her outlook on the law.

In an appearance on Jim Bakker's television show the week of July 4, Amedia said that he is telling activists to bring cases into the lower courts now, because by the time they get to the Supreme Court, its membership will have changed and it will be more favorable to their causes. "We are going to re-establish the Judeo-Christian doctrines of this country," he declared. "It's coming and can't be stopped."

Amedia, along with fellow prophet Lance Wallnau, had [declared](#) Trump's divine anointing in 2015. Amedia served the Trump campaign as a volunteer "liaison for Christian policy," making him part of the early "[amen corner](#)" of prosperity gospel preachers—like Trump's "spiritual adviser" Paula White—and [Christian dominionists](#) who rallied around Trump at a time when most institutional Religious Right figures were still trying to make Ted Cruz the Republican nominee. Amedia, Wallnau and [others talked about Trump as a modern-day version of King Cyrus](#), an ancient Persian king who was not a believer but was used by God to help the Jewish people. While many conservative hearts sank when Trump's "grab 'em by the pussy" tape was revealed, Amedia and Wallnau rejoiced that God was humbling Trump to prepare him for the greatness ahead.

In January, shortly before Trump's inauguration, POTUS Shield gathered in D.C. to [pray for Trump's family and administration](#) and to "[discern, declare and decree the strategies of the Lord for our nation](#)." Among their concrete goals: [get rid of federal judges whose rulings are not to their liking](#); end legal abortion; stop same-sex couples from getting married; bring "official" prayer and Bible reading into the nation's public schools; and make America the Christian nation they believe it was meant to be.

During the opening session of Amedia's March gathering, POTUS Shield council member Mark Gonzales, head of the [Hispanic Action Network](#) and [David Barton's National Black Robe Regiment](#) project, made the group's Christian-nation goal explicit:

You're gathering us here, in this place, as your leaders, God, to declare your words and to release your power, even more so, God, upon this nation. We're declaring that America belongs to you. We're turning it back to you. ... God, we're refusing to allow Satan have his way with this nation. ... God, we're here to shift the nation. God we're here to put it back on track by your spirit and by your power. ... America belongs to you. America belongs to you. America belongs to you. ... God, you founded us on a Judeo-Christian ethos, and we're declaring that yes, America is and will be a Christian nation, like never before.

Trump and the Prophets: Made For The Era of Social Media?

In March, Oxford University Press published "The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders are Changing the Religious Landscape," by scholars Brad Christerson and Richard Flory. Christerson and Flory use the term Independent Network Charismatic Christianity (INC Christianity) to describe a network of charismatic leaders who are not simply focused on saving individual souls but on transforming whole societies. Many of the people associated with POTUS Shield fit into this category.

The product that INC Christianity is promoting, write Christerson and Flory, “is not primarily the ability to access supernatural power to gain converts and build congregations, but, more important, to participate in the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth in the here and now.”

Christerson and Flory argue that the network model allows charismatic leaders to broaden their influence while remaining free of the bureaucracies and oversight that would come from trying to build a large organization. An individual places him or herself under the spiritual authority or “covering” of an established prophet—getting a spiritual imprimatur in return for showing up at their conferences and sending money up the chain. INC leaders have expanded their “market share” within American Christianity by offering powerful supernatural experiences and leveraging the power of digital media tools to promote their brands as well as their beliefs and practices. Chuck Pierce, whose Glory of Zion Ministries runs a Global Spheres Center in Texas, has about 60,000 people sending him money, more than even the biggest megachurch congregation.

In some ways, Trump’s relationship to traditional political structures mimics these network leaders’ relationship to traditional church and Religious Right institutions: he relies on his charismatic personality; operates his own media; and believes old structures need to be swept away. Trump speaks to his followers “like a televangelist,” says University of Pennsylvania religion scholar Anthea Butler. And, if Amedia is right, Trump also sees his election victory as the result of divine intervention and his presidency as a mission from God. Butler notes that apostolic leaders defend Trump in the same way that religious leaders often defend themselves against their own critics, citing a scriptural admonition to “touch not God’s anointed.”

Christerson and Flory postulate that while INC leaders have a broad ability to spread their beliefs with followers, their political impact could be limited by the fact that they focus more on spiritual warfare and intercessory prayer than on setting up structures to engage in the nitty-gritty work of political organizing.

But POTUS Shield reflects the fact that during the past decade, the lines separating what we think of as the Religious Right—advocacy groups mobilizing conservative evangelical Christians into political action—and the apostolic crowd have been [blurred significantly](#). Opposition to President Barack Obama “united them all,” says Butler.