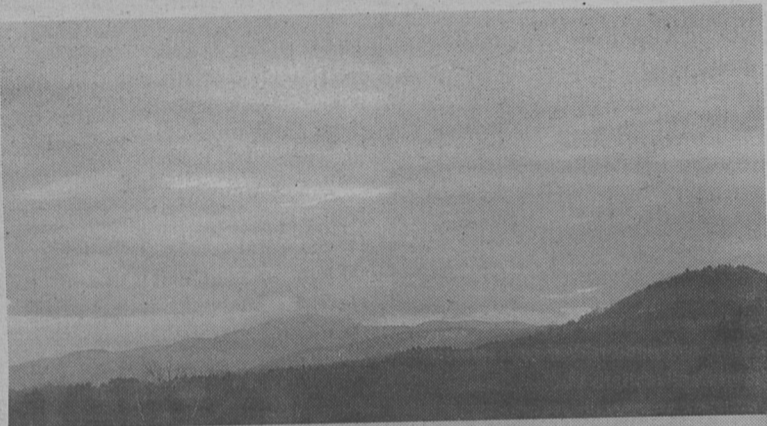
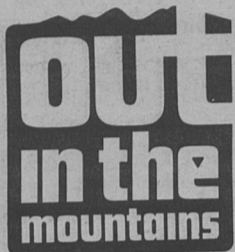


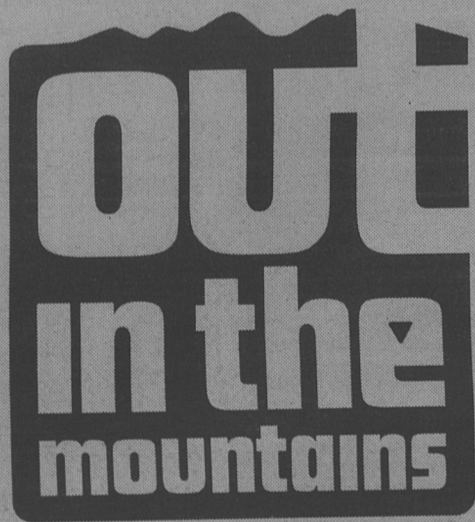
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a e BOOKS

Exposé of "Religious Right" Totalitarianism:

Will the Religious Right Define Our Political Future?

REVIEW BY
REV. SARAH FLYNN

Michelle Goldberg is a senior writer for *Salon* and in that capacity has written extensively on the culture war that has shaped American politics in recent decades. *Kingdom Coming* is her first book and is disarmingly written in that she avoids the speculations that are so dear to conspiratorial theorists of both the political right and left. She does not allow her own progressive values to substitute for doing her journalistic homework. The book reports, often through personal interviews, on the ideological advocates of Christian nationalism and the beliefs of the more extreme members of this movement that America as a Christian nation should be dominated by Christians sharing the same evangelical convictions.

This well-documented book is an expose' of how the religious right has actively set upon the task of taking the country back to its mythical origins as a Christian nation. Goldberg shows how they are doing it by examining their methods, some of which are sure to startle the reader into realizing just how far these religious zealots are willing to go in fabricating a parallel universe of institutions that pretend to be responsible organizations, but in reality are propaganda mills for their theological beliefs. Goldberg points out the great irony of how the religious right first decried the work of Postmodern philosophers as destroying the basis for Western civilization, and then in an about face used the conclusions that there is no such thing as an objective reality to debunk every scientific conclusion that contradicts their biblical world view and values. Thus they contest the theory of evolution with that of creationism, and later, intelligent design; they dismiss data about the effectiveness of condoms in favor of abstinence only; and are simply not open to reason because they have al-

ready determined what the truth is according to their reading of the Christian Bible.

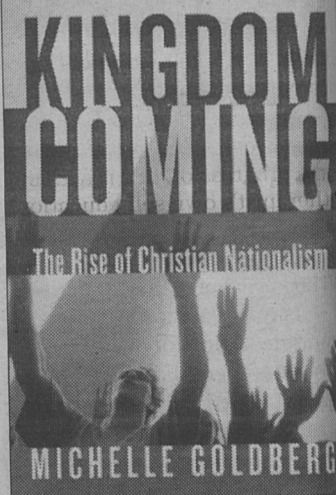
One might be tempted to ignore such religious ranting were it confined to the inflammatory rhetoric of evangelical Christian preachers. Goldberg shows us the inroads this religious ideology has made into the mainstream. The media has been influenced to include their extreme views on a wide range of issues, even though the basis of their positions on topics like the environment and global warming lacks scientific credibility. All in the name of balance, these masquerading 'professionals' offer up discredited 'evidence' to sow doubt in the public mind about matters for which the prevailing scientific evidence is not in doubt.

Perhaps the most unsettling revelations have to do with how the Bush administration has aided this totalitarian ideology by appointing its advocates to leadership positions and redirecting federal funding to support these operations.

It is to the credit of Goldberg that she does not yield to the temptation to paint this political analysis in terms of an impending theocratic revolution. She believes that while our democratic institutions are being eroded by this assault, they remain strong enough to withstand any direct moves to take over the government short of an economic meltdown or national disaster. That reassurance, however, makes her revelations all the more disturbing. It is clear she is not overstating the facts to create a panic among the Left. That makes what she has written all the more persuasive. Goldberg's book is a wake-up call to progressive religious people and secular Americans that fundamentalism is no longer an unsophisticated faith of the heartland, but has become the ideology of a powerful political movement allied with the Republican Party, which it increasingly controls.

Those who value the American ideals of inclusion, plural-

ism, and equal justice would do well to read this book and come to know exactly what they are up against if they are to prevail in the culture war for the soul of America. In the next to the last chapter of the book, Goldberg offers some suggestions as to how this might be done. But she herself has made one of the most important contributions in



Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism by Michelle Goldberg
W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.
New York, NY 2006
Hardback \$23.95

providing a well-written, documented summary of what is going on.

While Goldberg refers to this movement as 'Christian nationalism' in that not all of its exponents espouse 'reconstructionism' or 'dominionism,' the impetus behind the movement seems to be that as it gains strength and momentum. This totalitarian impulse becomes all the more dominant and apparent, and so the title of the book *Kingdom Coming* rightly suggests that this movement will not be satisfied with winning a few battles in the culture wars, but in fact aspires to nothing less than a theocratic state governed by a Christian elect. ▼

➔ Rev. Sarah Flynn lives in Burlington.