**The “Second coming of God” equals Donald Trump?**

By Debra Wines

Last week, Wayne Allen Root, a right-wing radio host, declared, according to a tweet from Donald Trump on August 21, 2019, “President Trump is the greatest President for Jews and Israel in the history of the world, not just America, he is the best President for Israel in the history of the world…and the Jewish people in Israel love him…”. This declaration falls in line with what the far-right evangelical Christians have claimed since Trump’s presidential win. According to them, Donald Trump was God’s “chosen one” to lead America into greatness. I am sure I was not the only American to wonder why. There were several Republican leaders who had better qualifications to run the country than a morally corrupt, egomaniacal and narcissistic con-man like Donald Trump. I think I may have found an answer and it is equally frightening as is Donald Trump.

It is a secret organization, founded by a Norwegian immigrant by the name of Abraham Vereide.He formed his organization as a counter response to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, during the Great Depression. Mr. Vereide claimed to have a great commitment to Jesus Christand he used that commitment to reach out to religious, political and business leaders in the Seattle, Washington area. His first meetings usually including breakfast, prayers and the teachings of Jesus. Religious teachings were not his only goal, he helped business leaders with their opposition to unions. The workers were organizing for better wages and working conditions, which would impact the bottom line of company owners.That is still an issue Mr. Vereide’s group supports for its members.

This group known as “The Family” or “The Fellowship Foundation” isstill very secretive about their members, funding and their influence as it was when it first formed. Their first public exposure came when they were able to hold their first National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C.,in 1953, during Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency and the growing concerns over the Cold War and Communism. In the late 40’s and early 50’s, The Family was beginning to attract more government and military officials, along with leaders from banking, manufacturing and defense industries, all in the name of Jesus, brotherhood and fellowship. For many years, a gentleman named David Coe,was a leader in the organization.Many insiders described him as the most influential man in Washington, D.C. that the public never heard of, because that was what he and The Family wanted.

The National Prayer Breakfast for 66 years has grown, from a one-day event with a couple hundred people to a weeklong extravaganza for thousands of politicians, business and religious leaders, and foreign dignitaries and diplomats. The Fellowship Foundation also organizes and sponsors National Prayer Breakfastsaround the world now, including Russia.

The Family and The Fellowship Foundation becamefurther “exposed” when Jeff Sharlet, a research scholar at New York University’s Center for Religion and Media, in 2009, wrote; *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism of the Heart of American Power.*The book detailed his observations at The Family’s center, The Cedars, in Arlington, VA. He was able to write about his own experience in what he termed a “cult” of young men who essentially were being “groomed” to spread the Jesus “teachings” as interpreted by their founder Abraham Vereide and his followers. Mr. Sharlet was able to access historical documents, teachings and policies before the Fellowship Foundation declared them “inaccessible” to the public.They currently have a website, which makes for interesting, as well as somewhat disturbing reading.Mr. Sharlet’s book is also the basis for a 5-part documentary series, called “The Family”, currently on Netflix.

On the surface, their beliefs and mission seem rather innocuous until you dig deeper and discover the amount of influence they have with members in our government and business leaders, along with their counterparts worldwide. I would not condemn everything they have accomplished, but I must say those few things seem more “accidental” than what they had originally intended to do.

Their prayer meetings have been held in the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Pentagon, various government departments and judicial offices. That is no easy feat. It is one thing to hold their prayer meetings with business leaders but it becomes somewhat concerning that this particular “secret religious” group has easy access to our government officials on a regular basis. Their original “members” were influential white males. Women were included in basically supportive and subservient roles. They have never been accused of promoting human rights even though they claim to follow Jesus’s teachings to care about the poor and underprivileged. One of their “missions” is to ban and punish members of the LBGTQ+ community, here and inother countries.

None of the groups affiliated with The Family or Fellowship Foundation claim to be an “organized religion”, yet they claim tax-exemption status on “religious” grounds. Important and influential men are secretively involved in this group and I am sure no one will examine their tax-exemption status too closely.They have been allowed to insert “religious” beliefs into many aspects of our legislature while ignoring the separation of church and state, because they have powerful connections.

These groups have spread their version of Jesus’ teachings by using what they call “cells” of followers throughout the world. Their “cells” don’t just operate in democratic countries, the have used their network of “friends in high places” to interact with dictators and pseudo-elected leaders.

Well-known, right-wing Evangelical preachers, with very close ties to The Family, further their “cause”, by endorsing andcontinuously supportingeverything Donald Trump does or says. The Family believes Donald Trump is the perfect example of God taking an imperfect man and raising him to great power, in Jesus’ name. Amen. That certainly explains how and why Donald Trump has been called the “Second Coming” by so many “Christians” even though Mr. Trump is the antithesis of everything I ever learned about Jesus and his teachings.