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The **Democratic Strategist** is a web-based publication edited by three leading American political strategists and thinkers—political theorist William Galston, polling expert Stan Greenberg and political demographer Ruy Teixeira. It seeks to provide a forum and meeting ground for the serious, data-based discussion of Democratic political strategy.

The **Democratic Strategist** has three editorial goals—(1) to provide an explicitly and unapologetically partisan platform for the discussion of Democratic political strategy, (2) to insist upon greater use of data and greater reliance on empirical evidence in strategic thinking and (3) to act as a neutral forum and center of discussion for all sectors of the Democratic community.

As **The Democratic Strategists'** editorial philosophy states, the publication will be "proudly partisan, firmly and insistently based on facts and data and emphatically open to all sectors and currents of opinion within the Democratic community".

**A  
DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST  
STRATEGY MEMO**

**THE DEEPLY DISTURBING COVERT  
AGENDA BEHIND GLENN BECK'S  
"RESTORE HONOR" RALLY.  
HOW DEMOCRATS SHOULD PREPARE  
FOR THE COMING OFFENSIVE OF  
"BLACK-ROBED REGIMENTS"  
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BY ED KILGORE

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**TDS STRATEGY MEMO – THE DEEPLY DISTURBING COVERT AGENDA BEHIND GLENN BECK’S “RESTORE HONOR” RALLY. HOW DEMOCRATS SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE COMING OFFENSIVE OF “BLACK-ROBED REGIMENTS” COMMITTED TO “PUTTING GOD BACK IN CHARGE”**

*By Ed Kilgore*

According to almost everyone in the mainstream media Glenn Beck’s “Restoring Honor” rally this past weekend was a largely a noncontroversial event focused on religion, not politics. But I really have to wonder if these visibly relieved observers of Beck’s rally actually listened to the same speech I did – all 56 minutes of it.

For most of its length, it was, without a doubt, one of the more vacuous and cliché-ridden speeches I have ever heard, with vague injunctions to the crowd to look to the future, take responsibility, love their children, get right with God, and stand up for their values. It even ended with that most clichéd secular popularization of a fine old hymn, the bagpipe version of “Amazing Grace.” The attendees could have heard a better-crafted and more instructive sermon in virtually any of Washington’s houses of worship.

So was it all just a Beck-a-ganza aimed at marketing his “brand” at the expense of any real purpose?

I might have thought so, until the final portion of his speech, when he started talking about “black-robed regiments” of clergy who, in Beck’s typically distorted reading of history, were the vanguard of the American revolution against godless Britain. Now, after more than two centuries of national infidelity, they were being re-mustered by Beck himself as embodied by the clergy sharing his rostrum.

They represented, Beck asserted, 180 million Americans, and they were determined to put God back in charge of the country.

Beck’s political aim was further made plain during a warm-up event for the Mall rally, a Friday night Kennedy Center show called “America’s Divine Destiny,” where Beck joined with a formidable array of theocrats ranging from “Christian America” historian David Barton to Christian Zionist John Hagee to celebrity Chuck Norris. The whole idea, speaker after speaker suggested, was that religious folk needed to take back America from godless elites and reshape the country, forcibly, along biblical lines.

Beck’s rather frank appeal to theocracy – a non-sectarian theocracy, to be sure, but one that enshrined a “firm reliance on Divine Providence” as involving very clear rules of individual and national behavior – was the real, if sugar-coated, thrust of his Saturday address. And in fact, the bland nature of most of his speech ironically reinforced its radical intent. Anyone who shared any sort of commitment to basic moral values, religious piety, or patriotism ought to go along with what people like Glenn Beck and his allies consider the obvious implications of such commitments in politics: a hard-core conservatism recast as a restoration of faith and national honor.

Beck's game was best revealed not on Saturday, but on Sunday, when he attacked President Obama's religion as a "perversion." During an interview on "Fox News Sunday" Beck claimed that Obama:

"...is a guy who understands the world through liberation theology, which is oppressor-and-victim..."

"People aren't recognizing his version of Christianity... it's all about victims and victimhood; oppressors and the oppressed; reparations, not repentance; collectivism, not individual salvation. I don't know what that is, other than it's not Muslim, it's not Christian. It's a perversion of the gospel of Jesus Christ as most Christians know it."

What Beck is really attacking here is the idea that anyone can be godly who doesn't believe God's Will on this Earth happens to coincide pretty much precisely with the agenda of the right wing of the Republican Party, circa 2010. While Beck and other speakers unctuously claimed Martin Luther King as a devout fellow Christian, it did not escape the notice of many veterans of the civil rights movement that every one of Beck's attacks on Obama's "perverted" Christianity could have also been applied, without the slightest alteration, to the deeply progressive "social gospel" theology of Dr. King. All the banalities of Beck's "Restoring Honor" speech depended on identifying all religious piety with his brand of social, economic and racial conservatism and any liberal or moderate deviation with religious "perversion".

The key question this presents for Democrats – as well as for everyone else who is unwilling to passively accept Beck's conservative political theology – is how best to respond. The answer, I think, lies in noting one key fact: Beck could easily have chosen to organize a full-throated, blood and thunder Christian Reconstructionist call for holy civil war against secularism and liberalism. But, instead, he opted for a very carefully muted and non-threatening event.

This suggests that Beck and the other key religious right figures who joined him are not prepared to launch a belligerent frontal attack right now. They are probably afraid – quite correctly – that a too-rapid unveiling of an aggressive theocratic agenda will drive away vast numbers of American Christians who are sincere and devout in their faith but basically inclusive and tolerant in their outlook. The conservative religious figures behind the rally all went along with the strategy of keeping the event vague and non-confrontational because they want to build a renewed theocratic movement "below the radar" for a while, and convince moderate Christians of their benign intent, before unveiling an overtly political agenda of Christian reconstruction.

This has important strategic implications. It suggests that the covert theocratic agenda of this coalition needs to be emphatically pointed out to the American people at every possible moment and that the American tradition of religious freedom and tolerance needs to be energetically counterpoised to their agenda at every possible opportunity. The fundamental fact is that most Americans – even most sincere and devout Christians – don't want to live in a "Christian Nation" theocracy and they need to be shown that this is indeed the covert agenda of Beck and his ominously named "Black Robed Regiments"