

Trump-backed “Rededicate 250” rally: Christian nationalism in the service of dictatorship

Jacob Crosse
17 May 2026

Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving, held Sunday on the National Mall in Washington D.C., was a state-sanctioned Christian nationalist rally. Lasting nearly nine hours, the event consisted of a steady stream of sermons, prayers, musical performances and speeches by top Republican officials and religious figures, all advancing the false and reactionary claim that the United States was founded as an explicitly Christian nation.

The event marked a blatant repudiation by large sections of the ruling class of the longstanding constitutional principle of separation of church and state. It was not an isolated expression of religious sentiment, but part of the Trump administration’s effort, together with the Republican Party and its allies in the Christian fundamentalist right, to cultivate a fascistic movement within the United States.

The rally was organized under the banner of the approaching 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. But its political content was directed against the democratic and egalitarian content of that revolutionary document. Speaker after speaker asserted that rights do not arise from human equality, popular sovereignty or social struggle, but from submission to the Christian God. The implication, stated again and again in religious language, was that those who reject this framework stand outside the moral and political community of the nation.

The lineup underscored the official character of the rally. Top Trump administration officials who addressed the event in person or by video included Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and Vice President JD Vance. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and Senator Tim Scott also delivered sermon-like addresses.

Trump appeared by video message, invoking 2 Chronicles 7, a passage long favored by the Christian right. While the often-cited verse promises that God will “heal” the land if his people humble themselves and pray, the broader passage warns that if the people “turn away” and serve other gods, they will be uprooted, their temple reduced to rubble and disaster brought upon them. In the context of a government-backed rally to “rededicate” the United States as “One Nation Under God,” the message was clear: Americans must submit to the Christian God or face destruction.

At the very moment his message was being played before the

assembled crowd, Trump was using Truth Social to threaten Iran with annihilation. “For Iran, the Clock is Ticking,” he wrote, warning that Tehran had “better get moving, FAST, or there won’t be anything left of them.” The juxtaposition exposed the real content of the event’s invocations of divine blessing and national repentance: Christian fascism at home, imperialist violence abroad.

Immediately after Trump’s remarks, the next two speakers were Christian nationalist pastors Lou Engle and Dutch Sheets. Sheets is a leading figure in the New Apostolic Reformation, whose theocratic “Seven Mountain Mandate” calls for evangelical Christians to conquer the spheres of family, religion, education, media, arts, entertainment, business and government. The WSWWS has previously explained Sheets’ role in popularizing the “Appeal to Heaven” flag, which was carried by Trump supporters during the January 6 coup and has since been adopted by far-right Republicans and Christian nationalist forces.

Engle characterized Trump’s citation of 2 Chronicles 7 as a “covenantal renewal,” declaring that the event was “different than any other solemn assembly” because “the president of the United States has called this day.” He continued: “Biblically speaking, it was when the kings of Israel called solemn assemblies and the people responded, God shifted the nation and poured out his spirit. I believe we are in that moment right now.”

This was an extraordinary statement. Engle openly cast Trump in the role of a biblical monarch summoning the nation to religious submission. The event’s invocation of “rededication” was therefore not simply ceremonial. It was a political-theological claim that the United States must be reordered under Christian authority, with Trump as the central political figure in that process.

Following Engle and Sheets, House Speaker Mike Johnson led the crowd in prayer, declaring that America had been guided by God’s “mighty hand” from the beginning. Johnson, who led the effort in the House on January 6 to object to the Electoral College vote following the attack on Congress from fascists aligned with Trump, denounced what he called “sinister ideologies” that “sow confusion and discord.” He attacked those who teach that the American story is one of “oppression, hypocrisy and failure,” and prayed, “Father, we reject that. We rebuke it, in your name.”

Johnson’s remarks made clear the political target of the rally: the entire body of historical truth concerning slavery, Jim Crow, the genocide of Native Americans, imperialist war and the struggles of

the working class against capitalist exploitation and violent repression. His prayer was a denunciation of any critical examination of American history. The Christian nationalist narrative requires the myth of a divinely ordained nation, one whose crimes are either denied, minimized or sanctified.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio advanced the same line in foreign policy terms. He claimed that the American Revolution was possible only because of divine intervention, asserting that the revolutionaries did what “Christians have always done across place and time for 2,000 years” by placing “their faith in the hands of God.” Rubio went further, presenting the United States as the historical product of the Christian command to “go forth and preach the gospel to the world,” concluding that “the soul of our nation has always been rooted in an ancient faith.”

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, herself associated with an authoritarian religious cult, albeit non-Christian, declared that “the foundation of our independence is our dependence on a supreme soul who is the supreme controller.” She added that “all of us and all of our leaders need to get on our knees and prostrate ourselves before the supreme lord,” acknowledging dependence on him “for our success, indeed, for our survival.”

Vice President JD Vance, the last major speaker, invoked the late Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk to insist that American law and morality derive from Christianity. “All law reflects a morality,” Vance quoted the dead fascist as saying. “Neither law nor morality appears in a vacuum, but ultimately come from religion. And the morality and religion that formed the American consciousness were decidedly Christian, founded on the principles and divinity of Jesus Christ.”

The event had major corporate backing, with sponsors including John Deere, SAP, Salesforce, Exiger and January. Its speakers were overwhelmingly evangelical Christians or conservative and far-right Catholics. No Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or anti-Zionist rabbis were given a platform, underscoring the exclusionary character of the “One Nation Under God” rhetoric.

Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, delivered a video message in which he complained that “the Bible has been removed from our schools” and declared that America had become “morally rotten, completely sick with sin,” citing “transgenderism,” same-sex marriage and “opening women’s locker rooms to men” as examples. Graham’s message was delivered remotely because the theocrat was in Minsk, Belarus, preaching to evangelical Christians with the blessing of President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the former Soviet republic for more than three decades.

Bishop Robert Barron used his remarks to attack the French Revolution, contrasting it unfavorably with the American Revolution. While both were shaped by the Enlightenment, Barron claimed, the French Revolution represented a break with religion and “deified reason,” whereas the American revolutionaries were “almost to a man” shaped by biblical convictions. This falsifies the historical record. The American Revolution was deeply influenced by Enlightenment thought, and many of its leading figures, including Thomas Jefferson, supported the French Revolution in its early stages. Barron’s purpose was not historical clarification but ideological counterrevolution: to sever the American

Revolution from its Enlightenment and democratic content and subordinate it to religion.

Several speakers invoked the civil rights movement, attempting to appropriate its moral authority while ignoring the fact that the democratic gains won through mass struggle, including the Voting Rights Act, have been systematically gutted by the Republican Party. The same political forces claiming the mantle of Martin Luther King Jr. are attacking the democratic gains won through the mass struggles of the 1950s and 1960s.

The atmosphere surrounding the event further revealed its political character. The crowd featured American flags, pro-Trump apparel, QAnon paraphernalia and hats reading “Trump 2028.” U.S. Park Police snipers were photographed on rooftops overlooking the rally, while swarms of police and National Guard soldiers provided security.

The real purpose of Rededicate 250 was to rewrite the American Revolution as a Christian nationalist founding myth and to enlist religion in the service of dictatorship. Trump and the oligarchs he speaks for are turning to Christian fundamentalism not out of spiritual conviction, but because it provides a reactionary ideological weapon against the working class, socialism, historical truth and democratic rights.

The event made clear that the danger of fascism in the United States is not confined to militias or fringe movements. It is being cultivated from the highest levels of the state, financed by major corporations, promoted by Republican officials and sanctified by religious entrepreneurs. Against this, the defense of democratic rights requires the independent political mobilization of the working class, rejecting both theocratic nationalism and the capitalist system that produces it.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)