

## Alabama's I.V.F. Ruling Shows Our Slide Toward Theocracy

If you don't think this country is sliding toward theocracy, you're not paying attention.  
(...)

For instance, on Friday, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that frozen embryos are children and that destruction of those embryos, even by accident, is subject to the state's Wrongful Death of a Minor Act. In his concurring opinion, the chief justice, Tom Parker, wrote, "Even before birth, all human beings bear the image of God, and their lives cannot be destroyed without effacing his glory."

The ruling could mean less access to reproductive care in Alabama if specialists in the field of in vitro fertilization simply choose to practice in states that don't threaten their efforts.

There have been cases before in which embryos were destroyed as a result of negligence, but the Alabama decision significantly ups the ante. It essentially turns cryopreservation tanks into frozen nurseries.

The idea is absurd and unscientific. It is instead tied to a religious crusade to downgrade the personhood of women by conferring personhood on frozen embryos.

I called Sean Tipton, the chief advocacy and policy officer at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, who told me: "One of the points in the abortion debate is, 'Is it really about abortion or is it about controlling women and controlling sex?' And this clearly exposes the idea that it's not just about abortion." He said, "There is no more pro-life medical treatment available, ever, than in vitro fertilization, and this decision clearly threatens the ability for that to continue." (...)

Now Trump is reportedly talking privately about supporting a national 16-week abortion ban, with some exceptions.

This is what many of his supporters want, and many of them believe he has been singularly chosen by God to advance their theocratic aims. It's one of the reasons that they overlook Trump's glaring flaws and the fact that Trump himself is not a particularly religious man.

It's worth noting that many of the right's efforts, including on the issue of abortion, are led by men who want births but can't give birth, reflecting an imbalance between power and expectation that may carry over to a younger generation. A fascinating new report from Pew Research found that although men and women 18 to 34 "are about equally likely to say they want to get married," 57 percent of young men say they want children one day, compared to just 45 percent of young women.

Abortion is just one front on which this religious fight is being waged. As of last week, the A.C.L.U. was tracking 437 anti-L.G.B.T.Q. bills being considered by state legislatures.

Then there's the alarming effort by conservative groups to transform and reshape the federal government in ways that curtail American freedoms, but also, according to Politico, to bring Christian nationalist ideas into a second Trump administration.

To those advancing these ideas, the will of God counts more than the will of the American people, even when Americans object or disagree. (...)

Charles M. Blow, *The New York Times*, 21 Feb 2023.