The insurrection on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 demonstrated the fragility of democracy and the great American experiment. This insurrection also lifted the veil on the danger of exploiting the emotions of hate and fear to manipulate and mobilize persons to act against their nation, government, and fellow citizens. The exploitation of fear and anger has been used by politicians and religious leaders to advance agendas and ideologies that are opposed to the very ideals on which the democratic republic of the United States was established upon. The dangerous convergence between political ideologies and religious ideologies that are susceptible to being used and exploited, willfully and unwilfully by ambitious individuals with a self-serving agenda.

This paper therefore will seek to discuss this issue in the following ways:

(1) Identify historical and recent instances of politicians and religious leaders using “faith” or “God” in their rhetoric to willfully manipulate persons emotions to mobilize them against the “enemy” or “other”

   a. A historical instance would be the rhetoric used to condone slavery. U.S. politicians and U.S. Catholic leaders. A contemporary instance would be the convergence of right wing politicians and U.S. Catholic Bishops who have worked to advance their common interests while negating and violating the rights of others. (This complicity between U.S. politicians and U.S. Bishops contributed to the attack on the U.S. Capitol).

(2) Examine the areas of convergence between political and religious ideologies in the United States in order to articulate the clear and present danger that this convergence creates for all persons.

   a. The use (or misuse) of the First Amendment right to Freedom of Religion to advance particular moralities of one religious group over all other groups by politicians, Catholic leaders and entities, as well as legal and political think tanks

   b. Elaborate and provide evidence that the convergence between religious and political ideologies leads to the negation and violation of rights of others. For example religious exemptions that allow “faith – based” entities to discriminate against persons on the grounds of “religious convictions,” “moral convictions,” and/or “matters of conscience.”

(3) Lastly, this paper will close with a call for further study and reflection on the “Great American Experiment” and the need for a plurality of voices (religious and non – religious) in the public square. In order to establish a “more perfect union:” all voices must be included in the public discourse, the rights of all persons must be respected fully, and all should remember the national motto, E Pluribus Unum. Out of many, one, this foundational motto should guide the national conversation on matters pertaining to the rights of all. Private entities and particular groups should never be given priority over all others and they should never be given the power to impose one set of beliefs, morality or practice over all others. Rather, in order to form a
“more perfect union,” we must all remember that this is only achieved when all voices are included and the rights of all are guaranteed and equally protected.