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September 15, 2018: Who's Afraid of the Russians?

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

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Title: Who's Afraid of the Russians?

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9/15/2018—This blog entry is not about the independent investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election. The Russians broke the law hacking the emails of American citizens and groups, including Secretary Clinton and the DNC. If President Trump solicited that or encouraged that, he committed a crime and should be punished. Certainly impeached and removed from office. (No evidence he did, however. The Russians did this on their own.) We need to protect all our systems from hacking. But what about the other, far more pervasive Russian interference—all those Russian fake ads and disinformation? Do we need to be afraid of that? Have you seen this stuff? There is an example on the page of a review of Alex Klimburg's book, *The Darkening Web*, in the *New York Review*, from April 5, 2018 (review by Tamsin Shaw), which shows an arm wrestling match between Satan and Jesus. The headline says, "Satin: If I win Clinton wins!" Jesus replies, "Not if I can help it!" At the bottom, the ad, on Facebook, says "Press 'like' to help Jesus win!" It's nice that the ad did not associate Trump with Jesus. That was delicate. But as for the ad itself, why would Americans worry about this? At the same time that this was going on, intelligent, well-known Americans on the Right were calling the 2016 election, the Flight 93 Election. Whatever they meant, that analogy had Hillary Clinton as an Islamic terrorist ready to kill Americans at the Pentagon by crashing a plane. That would have justified shooting her. At least in the ad, Clinton herself might be an unwitting agent of Satan. The point is, this is crazy stuff. If it is serious enough to throw a close election to Trump or inflame American society, then the voters are already crazy themselves. It would be like an ad claiming Clinton runs a pedophile ring, which is also something that was around and convinced some Americans. This kind of weird conspiracy stuff is also another reason that Kavanaugh should not be confirmed. In an ideal world, he would be rejected purely for his astoundingly bad judgment—urging the investigation of President Clinton for Vince Foster's murder or going into serious debt over baseball tickets. It seems to me there is something wrong with this guy and it is not about *Roe v. Wade*. Anyway, the point is, don't worry about Russians inflaming Americans with crazy stories. We should be worrying that Americans listen to this stuff.