

# **The Spark**

**Student Journal for Social Justice**

**Special Print Issue:  
Religious Intolerance in  
the Contemporary U.S.**



## The Spark

is a web-based student-produced publication that makes academic work pertaining to social justice issues available for the benefit of others within the Whitman College community. By allowing students to educate other students on issues of political and social importance, we hope to free ourselves from the mire of collegiate apathy and spark the productive intellectual discourse necessary to effect true change within the immediate collegiate sphere.

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## Religious Intolerance in the Contemporary U.S.

*Religion 355 | Fall 2007 | Professor: Melissa Wilcox*

This course explores several important facets of religious tolerance and intolerance in the U.S. today. It begins with the development of religious pluralism and the separation of church and state, but then questions the limits of this separation through examining the evidence for "public Protestantism" in the U.S. The rest of the course examines instances of religious intolerance in the U.S. - both intolerance of specific religions and religiously-based intolerance of specific groups - in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We'll explore the contours of religious intolerance, from hate crimes and violent protest to more subtle events and attitudes in our own communities and our own lives. Equally importantly, we'll also consider ways to combat intolerance in all its myriad forms.

### Further Reading

- Hammond, Phillip E., David W. Machacek, and Eric Michael Mazur. *Religion on Trial: How Supreme Court Trends Threaten Freedom of Conscience in America*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2004.
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- Sells, Michael Anthony and Emran Qureshi. *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
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## Letter from the Editor

*Kim Hooyboer*

The popular accusation of political apathy against the current collegiate generation is reinforced both by poor attendance at the polls and the absence of public political demonstrations in light of the Iraq War. The U.S. Census Bureau<sup>1</sup> reported that 18- to 24-year-olds, despite an 11 percent increase in voting rates between the 2000 and 2004 elections (indicating at least some political response in the post-9/11 state), still trailed every other demographic at the polls with only 47 percent of young adults voting (compared to 77 percent of the 55+ crowd). Furthermore, in comparison to collegiate activities during the Vietnam War, contemporary college campuses are distinctly lacking in public demonstrations against the Iraq War or, for that matter, against any sort of social injustice.

Despite the abundance of sources through which we can educate ourselves on current social and political conditions, college students remain for the most part politically ignorant or indifferent. Intellectual discourse on issues of social justice is confined to the classroom, where it directly affects only a limited group of students. Social justice courses, particularly at Whitman College, seem to effectively incite the students involved, but rarely do productive discourses extend beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, the majority of intellectual discourse within academic studies of social justice revolves around the problems faced in the contemporary world, but neglects the practical solutions that might allow us to effect the necessary change. Simplistically speaking, there are two primary sets of solutions posed by academia. The first is primarily theoretical in nature, calling for a complete overhaul in societal conceptual frameworks: cultural beliefs and attitudes need to change, religions need to adopt a more pluralistic mindset, the concept of tolerance needs to be abolished in lieu of full equality. The second set of solutions depends upon the actions of some external other (whether that be an individual or a group) that, ostensibly, possesses a degree of power which the singular college student lacks. We redirect culpability from ourselves to political leaders or more influential populations, claiming political impotence.

Both of these “solutions” to social justice problems allow students to shirk political responsibility and adopt an institutionalized apathy. Our disillusionment towards individual efficacy in matters of politics and social

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p20-556.pdf>

justice qualifies our inactivity. If we don't feel like we can do anything, why should we care? As students at a small, secluded college, there is a pervasive belief that we have within our control no vehicle through which we can bring about change. The protective collegiate environment meant to foster a social consciousness actually begets a disconnect that justifies political indifference and inactivity. We situate ourselves comfortably in an objective sphere, unconcerned by our own powerlessness.

What, then, can mobilize the collegiate masses? Informed intellectual discourse and a thorough understanding of the actual conditions in the U.S. today seems to be key to initiating a total conceptual revolution. However, extending this discourse beyond the classroom in a productive manner has demonstrated itself to be problematic on this campus. The Race Symposium ended up being not much more than a bureaucratic tool and the Iraq Flag memorial, although moving, was not particularly informative for those not directly involved in its creation.

As such, what might be required of this campus in order to lift itself from the pit of collegiate apathy is a medium through which students can educate themselves on topics that other students have studied. Although it is unlikely that a student not enrolled in a particular class will be able to read all of the works on the syllabus, they might still be able to benefit from quality work that students within the class have produced.

Thus, *The Spark* is meant to serve as an informal vehicle through which students can educate their peers on issues of social justice and, therein, incite the productive discourse necessary to effect change within the immediate collegiate sphere.

## Capitalism and Protestant Dominance

*Kate Farrington*



In an effort to understand Protestant hegemony in the U.S. today, I decided to photograph examples of it in Portland, Oregon the day after Thanksgiving. What I found is at the same time specific to Portland and representative of a wider cultural phenomenon found in the United States. My images were mostly of busy shopping streets and storefront windows containing Christmas trees and “holiday” decorations. Some images were of advertisements appealing to a Christian audience in search of “holiday” gifts or Christmas themed foods and refreshments. What I found

presented me with a strong link between Protestantism and capitalism. But what did it mean and how was it formed? Building on the work of Feldman, Hammond, and Weber, I believe that what I observed illustrates how Protestantism and capitalism mutually reinforce each other to produce an amplified prominence of Christianity in society. This interaction makes cultural Protestantism even more powerful than it would be otherwise and contributes to the Protestant hegemony inherent in American society.

I first want to explore the ways in which Protestantism reinforces or is aligned with capitalism. As is argued extensively by Weber, Protestantism and “modern rational capitalism” are linked (Weber, 25). Weber believes that the Protestant work ethic created by the idea of “the calling” is a major part of what makes western capitalism different than previous forms. The calling is the idea that “the fulfillment of worldly duties is under all circumstances the only way to live acceptably to God” (Weber, 81). In this view, you will please God by living out the duties of your place in the world and by not wasting the precious time given to you. This idea can also be tied to the Calvinist doctrine of predetermination. As is explained by Giddens in the introduction to Weber’s book, because those that are to be saved are predetermined by God, “success in a calling eventually came to be regarded as a ‘sign’...of being one of the elect” (Weber, 5). Success in ones calling, or worldly duties, was viewed as part of being one of God’s chosen people. In Protestant thought, performing worldly duties and endeavors well is not a means to heaven, but is a sign of confidence in the fact that one has been predetermined to go to heaven. As Weber suggests, “in order to gain that self-confidence [of being chosen by God] intense worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means. It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives the certainty of grace” (Weber, 112). This ethic ties in well with capitalism, which traditionally encourages work by individuals and fulfillment of duties in order for personal advancement. The Protestant ideology fits into the mechanisms of capitalism and helps to increase the power and prominence of capitalism in society.

There are many ways in which capitalism reinforces Protestantism. Because Protestantism is the religion of the majority of Americans, the laws of capitalism naturally lead to the exploitation of this fact by businesses. This increases the profile of Protestantism and expands it into the economic sphere. In addition, the secularization of Christmas and other Christian traditions has increased the widespread exploitation of Protestant symbols and customs by capitalist enterprises. By redefining Christian symbols and holidays as secular, they become part of the national culture and therefore become increasingly widespread. As Feldman points out, “when a particular activity is defined or coded as *secular*, the activity

supposedly has been removed from the realm of the religious and is therefore legitimated by the principle of the separation of church and state” (Feldman, 263). The way that this secularization plays out in capitalism is that the newly “secular” religious activity, (such as the purchase of a “holiday” tree) is free to be celebrated by all members of society. An example of the secularization of Christian holidays is given by the Supreme Court decision on *Lynch v. Donnelly* that the public display of a crèche does not violate the First Amendment. The statement by The Court explained, “the crèche in the display depicts the *historical origins* of this *traditional event* long recognized as a *National Holiday*...” (Feldman, 264). Another example of secularization involves a similar situation with the display of a crèche in *County of Allegheny et al. v. American Civil Liberties Union et al.* In Supreme Court Justice Kennedy’s statement, he says, “the Establishment Clause permits government some latitude in recognizing and accommodating the central role religion plays in our society...An approach less sensitive of our heritage would border on latent hostility towards religion...” (Hammond, 105-106). In this light, secularization of Protestant traditions is only right, considering this country’s history. In both cases, the crèche, which is a clear Christian symbol of the birth of Jesus Christ, has been secularized because of its historical context in the national culture. As such, it is accepted as a common symbol recognized by all Americans as part of their national culture. This kind of secularization aids in the widespread commercialization of Christian symbols and traditions.

But what does commercialization of Christianity do for the prominence of this religion in society? Not only is Protestantism profitable, but also its use by capitalist enterprises reinforces its dominance in American culture. Capitalism increases its visibility in society as well as increasing the image of Protestant power for religious outgroups. While walking down a street lined with shops with Christmas displays in the window may not seem incredibly threatening if you are Christian, the message of Protestant dominance that it communicates is overwhelming if you are a member of a religious minority. In this sense, the commercialization of Christian symbols and holidays by capitalist enterprises increases cultural Protestantism.

My piece of digital art communicates this series of ideas and conclusions through symbolism using a combination of images taken by me and obtained from the Internet. Most prominent is a giant spiral, moving towards the center of the piece. In the spiral are a series of images. On the outside, the photographs begin with Protestant imagery of Jesus Christ, crosses, and the Bible to symbolize Protestant presence in society. This then leads into images of money and the economy (symbolized by a graph

of stock market progress), which represent the bolstering of capitalist ideas by Protestant ethic. These capitalism images then progress into photographs of Christian items and products. This is the combination of capitalism and Protestantism: we get lots of Christian *stuff*. All the photos of Christian and Christmas objects were taken by me in the Portland area. These images then grade into more images of Protestant dominance (the emphasis being *increased* Protestant dominance). I show an image of a giant cross as well as an image of the Jesus fish that can be seen on people's cars everywhere. This is to show the visibility and prominence of Christian symbols and ideas in American society.

My final images play with the further implications of increased cultural Protestantism. First is the photograph of a Noah's Bagels advertisement, similar to one I took in Portland of another Noah's ad, which shows a Christmas colored twisted bagel in the shape of a candy cane with the words "Feliz Noshidad" above it. This is disturbing for several reasons. First, it is trying to Jewish-ize the word "Christmas". Second, it shows that even a restaurant that is normally marketed as a traditional New York Jewish bagel shop is caving to the pressure of Protestant dominance. It is due to the pressure of capitalism and of cultural Protestantism that even Noah's feels compelled to market their bagels to a Christian audience. The way to financially survive is to cater to the Protestant majority. The other photograph, which I took while in Portland, is of a sign with a large walking Christmas ornament on it advertising the Macy's Holiday Parade. This is a clear example of the secularization of Christian traditions in order to widen their application to a broader swath of American society. By referring to the event as a "holiday" parade, the people at Macy's conveniently ignore the fact that they are actually talking about a Christmas parade. By calling it a "holiday" they are generalizing and secularizing this Christian tradition in order to attempt to address a wider American audience.

Both of these phenomena lead into the final images, which are meant to represent the deeper Protestant hegemony created by the increase of cultural Protestantism and overall Protestant dominance in society. Because of the amplified visibility of Christianity due to its interaction with capitalism, perception of the United States as a purely Christian nation grows. This is shown by the images of "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency and by the American flag with "In God We Trust" written across it. In the middle of my art piece, everything spirals and fades into an intense white light in the center. This is meant to symbolize everything starting to look the same and the perception that American society really is Christian and should be that way. The fact that the images fade into a bright light is also meant to symbolize that everything only starts to look the

same because we are blinded by the intensity of this common perception. American society only appears homogenously Christian because we are blinded by Protestant dominance and cannot see what is really there.

Protestantism and capitalism mutually reinforce each other and in so doing increase the level of cultural Protestantism in American society. Through Christianity's amplified presence due to its financial viability and secularization by both government and businesses, Protestant hegemony is strengthened. It is partly the intertwining of capitalism and Protestantism that have made Christianity so dominant in American society and culture. Because of Christian dominance, people begin to think that the United States really is first and foremost a Christian nation, not a nation of religious pluralism. It is this kind of mentality that produces thousands of bumper stickers and shirts with large American flags on them that state "In God We Trust". Since when did being American involve being Christian? If we were paying attention, it has been happening all along.

### **Bibliography**

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- Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

## The Discovery Institute and the Center for Science and Culture *Kiva Bell Ellenberg*

In this paper I will expose the religious agenda of the Discovery Institute and its Center for Science and Culture. I will elucidate how they are attempting to discredit the theory of evolution through a public relations campaign that creates a false controversy regarding fairness and evenhandedness, uses language as a political gambit to make intelligent design appear scientific and its proponents repressed victims, and, ultimately, how they are seeking to bring Christian doctrine and theistic thinking into schools, science, and culture.

Bruce Chapman, a former Reagan administration official, founded the Discovery Institute (DI) in 1991 (Benen). It is a conservative think tank based out of Seattle,<sup>2</sup> WA (Forrest, “Understanding the Intelligent Design Creationist Movement” 3). Intelligent design (ID) became the main aspect of the DI. Due to the magnitude of the ID work, the DI created a separate division to work on ID exclusively, called the Center for Science and Culture (CSC).

What exactly is ID? According to the DI:

The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection (“Top Questions”).

The DI’s CSC was originally named the Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture. Renewal was later removed, probably due to religious implications. If science and culture had to be renewed, with what were they to be renewed? This is one of the moves made by the Discovery Institute to re-brand itself in a secular fashion (Barbara and Branch, “Wedging Creationism into the Academy”).

According to the Discovery Institute,

The Center for Science and Culture is a Discovery Institute program that encourages schools to improve science education by teaching students more fully about the theory of evolution, as well as supporting the work of scholars who challenge various aspects of neo-Darwinian theory and scholars who are

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<sup>2</sup> This surprised me. I would not have thought it would be based so close to Whitman, in a fairly liberal area. I guess I assumed it would be somewhere in the South, which just showed me how unaware I am of some of my biases.

working on the scientific theory known as intelligent design (“Top Questions”).

### **Center for Science and Culture Funding**

The majority of the funding for the CSC comes from a wealthy benefactor named Howard Ahmanson, Jr., as well as sources such as the Maclellan Foundation and the Stewardship Foundation (Forrest, “Understanding the Intelligent Design Creationist Movement” 3).

In 1985, Ahmanson is quoted as saying that his “goal is the total integration of biblical law into our lives” (NNDB, “Howard Ahmanson, Jr.”). He was, at one time, a disciple of R. J. Rushdoony, a cleric who preached Christian Reconstructionism and heavily influenced Ahmanson’s thinking.

One of the founders of the Maclellan Foundation said, “The foundation of the Maclellan family has been truly Christian. It is the most valuable heritage we have to pass on to future leaders ministering under this name” (Maclellan Foundation). It is a philanthropic Christian foundation mainly run by members of the Maclellan family. “Each individual and every generation of the Maclellan family has possessed a significant desire to minister and use the gift of giving for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God” (Maclellan Foundation).

The mission statement of the Stewardship Foundation is as follows: “The Stewardship Foundation provides resources to Christ-centered organizations that share their faith in Jesus Christ with people throughout the world.” Their tagline is, “Empowering others to serve in Jesus’ name.”

As you can see, looking at where their funding comes from is very revealing.

### **The Wedge Document**

A DI internal document outlining future plans and goals, known as the Wedge Document, was leaked on the Internet in 1999. This document has probably been the single most destructive thing to the DI and, ironically, it is they who produced it.

The document opens with “The proposition that human beings are created in the image of God is one of the bedrock principles on which Western civilization was built” (“The Wedge” 2). This idea “came under wholesale attack by intellectuals drawing on the discoveries of modern science...” and “[the attackers] portrayed humans not as moral and spiritual beings, but as animals...” “This materialistic conception of reality eventually infected virtually every area of our culture...” and the CSC seeks

to re-open the “case for a broadly theistic understanding of nature.” In big letters in the middle of the page it states: “The Center seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies...”

They “are convinced that in order to defeat materialism, [they] must cut it off at its source. The source is *scientific* materialism” (6). The Wedge Document provides the metaphor for which it is named. They “view the predominant materialistic science as a giant tree [and their] strategy is intended to function as a ‘wedge’ that, while relatively small, can split the trunk when applied at its weakest points.” The thin edge of the wedge are books by DI fellows, such as Phillip Johnson and Michael Behe, that attempt to highlight flaws in evolution by natural selection. The thick edge of the wedge is to provide “a positive scientific alternative to materialistic scientific theories, which has come to be called the theory of intelligent design...” They hope to “reverse the stifling dominance of the materialistic worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.”

The Wedge Document lists their two governing goals. The first is: “To defeat scientific materialism and its destructive moral, cultural and political legacies” (4). The second is: “To replace materialistic explanations for the theistic understanding that nature and human beings are created by God.” It also lists very ambitious five and twenty year goals, such as: “To see intelligent design theory as the dominant perspective in science.”

The Wedge Document lists three phases to facilitate these goals. Phase I includes research, writing, and publication. “Without solid scholarship, research and argument, the project would be just another attempt to indoctrinate instead of persuade” (6). Phase II’s purpose is to “prepare the popular reception of our ideas.” They seek to “cultivate and convince influential individuals...” Phase III addresses the actual conflict. They plan to “move toward direct confrontation with the advocates of materialistic science through challenge conferences in significant academic settings” (7). They also plan to “pursue possible legal assistance in response to resistance to the integration of design theory into public school science curricula.” The Wedge Document explicitly states their religious, specifically Christian, goals and foundation. The idea that the DI and the CSC are secular organization can now be safely dismissed.

Seven years later, the DI saw fit to release a paper, titled The “Wedge Document”: “So What?,” to undo some of the damage created by the Wedge Document. It states that “Darwinian activists” claimed that the Wedge Document “provided evidence of a great conspiracy by fundamentalists to establish theocracy in America and to impose religious orthodoxy upon the practice of science” (1). However, according to the DI,

these “claims were so confused that for a long time we simply ignored them, content to enjoy the notoriety that our somewhat hysterical opponents had conferred upon us.” This counterattack has done little to mitigate the damage done to the ID movement by the Wedge Document.

The “Wedge Document”: “So What?” also makes the claim that the Wedge Document “makes the philosophical significance of [their] work—its challenge to scientific materialism and its favorable implications for theism—known to potential supporters” (2-3). In other words, it was a fund raising document. I, for one, do not buy it. This is not a document about the “philosophical significance of [their] work...” It is a document about the philosophical (religious) reason that underlies everything they do. A clue to this might be the fact that the artwork used is Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam.”

### The Evolution of Creationism

The DI has learned from the repeated failures of creationists to get creationism taught in public schools. Aware that these efforts have failed due to the constitutional restrictions of the First Amendment, they are taking great care to keep theological arguments out of their work and are trying desperately to appear scientific. That is why the ID movement takes no stand on the age of the earth and other creationist specific claims (Forrest and Branch, “Wedging Creationism into the Academy”).

Members of the ID movement are extremely careful to distance themselves from religion, particularly Christianity, when speaking publicly. For example, Michael Behe, a DI fellow and one of the few practicing scientists involved in the ID movement, is a devout Catholic with eight home schooled children (Benen). However, when asked by the National Public Radio what he knew about creationism, he responded, “To tell you the truth, I’m not real knowledgeable about creationism” (qtd. in Benen). This strategy has been deliberately and systematically employed.

The way in which creation science and ID deny that evolution is a fact is almost identical:

[Creation Science] “Although widely promoted as a scientific fact, evolution has never been proved scientifically. Some writers still call it the *theory* of evolution, but even this is too generous. . . . Evolution is . . . neither fact, theory, nor hypothesis. It is a belief—and nothing more.”

[Intelligent Design] “One misconception concerns the status of evolution as a fact. . . . [I]t is common to hear . . . that evolution is not merely a theory but an indisputable fact. . . . [O]nly in the most trivial sense—change over time—can evolution be considered a fact. . . . If students are to achieve true scientific literacy, they must learn to distinguish fact from supposition” (qtd. in Forrest, “Understanding the Intelligent Design Creationist Movement” 8).

In fact, creationism has evolved into ID through a process of unnatural selection. During the Kitzmiller v. Dover court case, in which Kitzmiller, et al. sued the Dover Area School District for introducing ID into the high school science curricula, Barbara Forrest investigated the ID textbook, *Of Pandas and People*. The publisher of *Of Pandas and People* was issued a subpoena for all drafts of the textbook. Forrest sorted through many drafts to trace the evolution from Creationism to ID. Creationism can be seen moving clearly through the iterations of creation science books:

*Creation Biology* (1983), p. 3-34: “Evolutionists think the former is correct; **creationists** because of all the evidence discussed in this book, conclude the latter is correct.”

*Biology and Creation* (1986), p. 3-33: “Evolutionists think the former is correct, **creationists** accept the latter view.”

*Biology and Origins* (1987), p. 3-38: “Evolutionists think the former is correct, **creationists** accept the latter view.”

*Of Pandas and People* (1987, creationist version), p. 3-40: “Evolutionists think the former is correct, **creationists** accept the latter view” (qtd. in Matzke).

After this, *Of Pandas and People* adapted to its environment and switched over to promoting ID. But, if evolution is true, we should see some sort of transitional species between the creationist and ID versions of *Of Pandas and People*. There is a gap in the record—a missing link, if you will. In investigating the iterations of creationist and ID books, Forrest found this missing link. In a 1987 draft of *Of Pandas and People*, it says: “Evolutionists think the former is correct, **cdesign proponentsists** accept the latter view” (qtd. in Matzke). It appears that the editors of *Of Pandas and People* were simply pasting “design proponents” over “creationists” and this particular paste went terribly wrong. The beginning and end of creationists is intact in this specimen (**cdesign proponentsists**), but it has begun to transition to design proponents (**cdesign proponentsists**). So, this is the missing link, **cdesign proponentsists**, a perfect transitional specimen! Despite their persistence in asserting that evolution is fatally flawed, creationism continues to evolve.

### The Campaign to “Teach the Controversy”

The ID movement is now appealing to American’s sense of fairness (Forrest, “Understanding the Intelligent Design Creationist Movement”). They say that students should hear both sides of the issue. Ask anyone if students should hear both sides of every issue and they will respond with a resounding yes. The problem with this argument is that there are not really two sides to this issue. The American Association for the Advancement of Science issued a statement pertaining to this:

A number of bills require that students be taught to “critically analyze” evolution or to understand “the controversy.” But there is no significant controversy within the scientific community about the validity of the theory of evolution. The current controversy surrounding the teaching of evolution is not a scientific one.

How can they teach the controversy when there is no scientific controversy about evolution? Hence, this is not a real plea for equal treatment; it is a political move to further the ID movement by discrediting evolution and getting their foot in to the public school science classroom. Eugenie Scott says that it “is a deliberately ambiguous phrase. It means ‘pretend to students that scientists are arguing over whether evolution took place’” (NCSE Web).

In the 139-page memorandum opinion on the Kitzmiller v. Dover court case, Judge John E. Jones III (who was appointed by George W. Bush) included his opinion of the “teach the controversy” campaign:

ID’s backers have sought to avoid the scientific scrutiny which we have now determined that it cannot withstand by advocating that the *controversy*, but not ID itself, should be taught in science class. This tactic is at best disingenuous, and at worst a canard (89).

Creation science became ID, and whenever ID gets in trouble they switch to advocating “teach the controversy.” There is no scientific controversy. A partial list of notable scientific organizations who have issued statements against ID follows: the National Academy of Sciences, the American Association of University Professors, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Anthropological Association, the American Astronomical Society, the National Association of Biology Teachers, the Geological Society of America, the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the Paleontological Society, and the Botanical Society of America (“What the Scientific Community Says about Evolution and Intelligent Design”). This is an extremely edited list. In fact, there is nearly unanimous agreement within the scientific community that evolution is the most accurate theory and ID is not scientifically valid. ID proponents have fabricated a controversy to make an emotional appeal to fairness and evenhandedness in order to promote their agenda.

### **Scientific Dissent from Darwinism & Project Steve**

To strengthen the notion that there is a scientific controversy about the validity of evolution, the DI initiated a campaign called “Scientific Dissent from Darwinism.” It is not just dissent; it is “scientific.” It is a list of scientists who agree with the statement: “We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the

complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged” (Dissent from Darwinism). Their website invites people with a “Ph.D. in engineering, mathematics, computer science, biology, chemistry, or one of the other natural sciences” and who agree with the above statement to contact them and be added to their list of “scientific dissenters.” I would question how a Ph.D. in mathematics, computer science, or any other field unrelated to biology gives them expertise in judging the validity of evolution. I guess a Dr. is a Dr. when it comes to scientific dissenting. There are now over 700 of these Ph.D.s. Lawrence Krauss, a professor at Case Western Reserve University says, they are “trying to make it appear like they’re scientists who just disagree with other scientists,” and a “number of them have scientific credentials, which helps, but in no sense are they proceeding as scientists” (qtd. in Benen).

The National Center for Science Education launched a satire of “Scientific Dissent from Darwinism,” called “Project Steve,” named for the late Stephen Jay Gould (NCSE Project Steve). This project maintains a list of scientists named Steve who agree with the following statement:

Evolution is a vital, well-supported, unifying principle of the biological sciences, and the scientific evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the idea that all living things share a common ancestry. Although there are legitimate debates about the patterns and processes of evolution, there is no serious scientific doubt that evolution occurred or that natural selection is a major mechanism in its occurrence. It is scientifically inappropriate and pedagogically irresponsible for creationist pseudoscience, including but not limited to “intelligent design,” to be introduced into the science curricula of our nation’s public schools.

As of December 6, 2007, there were 852 Steves on the list. About 1% of scientists are named Steve, so this represents a significant amount of people. As I said, this is just a satire of the scientific dissent list, designed to illustrate the absurdity of it. Nevertheless, it does an excellent job of portraying how there is not real a controversy.<sup>3</sup>

While Project Steve is lighthearted and attempts to humorously point out the flaws of Scientific Dissent from Darwinism, the dissent list shows the CSC’s willingness to exploit the public’s notion of science for their own objectives. It amazes me that the DI goes to such extraordinary lengths to discredit evolution and pretend ID is science. They are even known to hold ID conferences at universities whenever the opportunity presents itself to make ID seem scientific (Forrest and Branch, “Wedging Creationism into

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<sup>3</sup> Project Steve has taken off on the Internet, with many fans and links from other sites. There are now Project Steve t-shirts and even a Steve Song, a parody of Monty Python’s Spam Song.

the Academy”). In fact, Phillip Johnson, the primary architect of the Wedge Document and strategy, said that it “isn't really, and never has been a debate about science. It's about religion and philosophy” (qtd. in Belz).

### **Free Speech on Evolution Campaign**

The DI insists that dissenters are being silenced—their free speech restricted—saying that “the freedom of scientists, teachers, and students to question Darwin is coming under increasing attack...” (“Free Speech on Evolution Campaign”). Despite this ferocious enemy of modern academia, they proudly proclaim that they are publishing peer reviewed books regardless of the opposition (“Top Questions”). It should be noted that the peers reviewing these books are ID proponents themselves and therefore uncritical of ID, so it is not peer reviewed in the way a reputable peer reviewed scientific journal is. They say that “Free speech and academic freedom are cherished principles in America” (“Free Speech on Evolution Campaign”). ID proponents who have tried to teach ID in universities and public schools have been disciplined or fired. The DI puts a spin on it, accusing academia of limiting their free speech. No one is seeking to censor their free speech in the public arena. They are free to write books, articles, and blogs. They are free to go on the radio, television, and to make movies. They are free to get on a soapbox and yell to people passing by. But, they are not free to preach in academic private institutions that choose to exclude ID. When a university fires or disciplines a professor for preaching, this is not censoring free speech. After all, it is not government action bringing about censorship.

The DI lists four areas in which it seeks to make progress on its campaign for free speech on evolution. The first is public education. They say “the best way to stop bigotry and intolerance is to expose it to public disapproval” (“Free Speech on Evolution Campaign Cont.”). Once again, I could not agree more. It is intriguing that they are accusing scientists and academics of intolerance considering their actions both politically and in academia. The next area is personal assistance, which is just an offer to help creationists/ID proponents who feel their academic freedom has been violated. The third area is legal defense and accuses the ACLU of trying to use the courts to “impose a gag order on honest discussions about evolution...” To my knowledge, the ACLU has only gotten involved when creationism or ID has been introduced into public schools, which is in no way imposing a gag order on honest discussion. It seems they are equating what is being taught in public schools with scientific discussion and debate. The fourth area is grassroots action, where they claim that “pro-Darwin activists from around the country have sent letters trying to intimidate

public officials into denying victims their academic freedom.” The language in this sentence betrays a lot: “pro-Darwin activists,” “intimidate public officials,” and calling the ID proponents “victims.” Once again, the DI is creating an amazing spin using highly charged emotional language to sway the public, making the ID proponent minority seem like the oppressed and the scientific majority seem like the oppressor. It sets the ID proponents up as the clever David who must defeat the monstrous pro-Darwin Goliath.

The DI urges people to help them “defend the rights of scientists, teachers, and students who are being threatened because they dare to raise critical questions about evolution” (“Free Speech on Evolution Campaign”). This is all very interesting because, by most accounts, they are attacking science through their organized campaign of ID and “teach the controversy.” They say “self-appointed defenders of the theory of evolution are waging a malicious campaign to demonize and blacklist anyone who disagrees with them.” The Discovery Institute doth protest too much, methinks.

### **The Language of the Discovery Institute**

It is very telling to look at the language the DI uses when describing ID proponents and evolution proponents. The DI refers to evolution by natural selection as Darwinian evolution or Darwinism. While this is technically correct, it is done so consistently that it raises my suspicion. Evolution is rarely mentioned, instead it is Darwinism. I think this is done deliberately. Darwinism sounds like a religion or religious sect. Christianity is obviously named after Christ. Calvinism and Buddhism—both named after people. Making scientists who support evolution into followers of Darwin makes them seem dogmatic and unscientific, strengthening the idea that evolution is flawed and furthering the cause of ID. They have even referred to academics in support of evolution as “Darwinian fundamentalists,” furthering the comparison to religion (“Free Speech on Evolution Campaign”).

The DI is also careful to call ID the “theory of intelligent design” or “design theory” (“The Wedge” 4). This is important in establishing it as a scientific theory. (I would note that it is a strange scientific theory that tries to establish itself in the public schools before it is accepted by the scientific community.) Obviously, if it is a scientific hypothesis with a lot of research to back it up, it is a theory. Unfortunately for them, there is no such research and it is not considered science by the scientific community, as previously discussed. However, labeling it as science is important to their public and political campaign.

In addition to this, the DI is quick to point out that evolution is “just a theory,” apparently misunderstanding the difference between a scientific theory and the way in which theory is used in lay terms. It is curious that they call ID a theory but are quick to point out that evolution is just a theory. Not surprisingly, they are meticulous in keeping these two claims separate. I could not find a single instance in which they proclaimed ID a theory and dismissed evolution as just a theory in close proximity. They are very careful to not mix the two.

## Conclusion

My investigation of the Discovery Institute, its Center for Science and Culture, and its intelligent design campaign has led to a greater understanding of the importance of the Wedge Document and the evolution which creationism has undergone to become intelligent design. My research has been eye-opening and so I have shared the many ways in which this movement is attempting to manipulate the public. I have explained the DI's campaign to make intelligent design seem scientific by advocating a controversy and publicizing their Scientific Dissent from Darwinism Project. In addition to this, I have explicated their Free Speech on Evolution campaign and illuminated their use of language in spinning the situation to suit their goals. I have exposed them as manipulative religious zealots who are willing to use almost any tactics necessary to promote a theistic understanding of the world in favor of materialism, particularly evolution by natural selection. And, what is perhaps most relevant in terms of religious intolerance, is that while doing this, they proclaim that they are being oppressed and that academia and science are being intolerant and bigoted.

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# Conflicting Jurisprudence in *Lying v. Northwest*

## A case study in Native American Religious Free Exercise

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### I. Summary

In the case that was brought before the Supreme Court in 1988 as *Lying v. Northwest Cemetery Protective Association*, the Court ruled that the defendants, three Indian tribes, did not have legitimate first amendment protection of free exercise against a logging road (often referred to as the G-O road) that the government proposed to build through a tract of land in northern California known to them as “the high country,” overturning two lower court decisions that ruled otherwise. The road would complete a fifty-five mile section of road between two towns, Gasquet and Orleans, and would allow access to the timber stands in the region.

The high country was, indisputably, *the* place in which the Yurok, Karok, and Tolowa Indian tribes practiced their religion. It encompasses some 13,000 acres of public land, including a handful of mountain peaks whose elevation is proportional to the degree of spiritual power said to be located there. Therefore, any road built would have significant aural and visual impact upon these locations, not to mention the impact of the proposed timber harvesting itself. The proposed one-half mile protection zones around the places of greatest religious import failed to satisfy the Indian tribes in pretrial negotiation.

Two lower courts, first the District Court and then the Ninth Circuit, found that the proposed road through this land, which was central to the practice of the defendants’ religion, was burdensome enough to entail first amendment protection, and that, using the ‘compelling interest’ test established in precedents *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963) and *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), the state did not have an interest compelling enough to override first amendment protection and warrant the construction of the road.

The central piece of evidence was a report by a private consulting company, commissioned by the Forest Service, referred to as the Theodoratus Report. Completed in 1979, the report substantiated the Tribes’ claims. Quoting the report, the Supreme Court (majority) wrote, “the study concluded that constructing a road along any of the available routes ‘would cause serious and irreparable damage to the sacred areas which are an integral and necessary part of the belief systems and lifeway of the Northwest California Indian peoples’” (3).

Despite this evidence, however, when the appeal was accepted by Supreme Court, the majority ruled (5-3) that the first amendment offered no such protection, “even assuming that the Government’s actions here will virtually destroy the Indian’s ability to practice their religion” (2). Their argument relied upon an incredibly conservative interpretation of constitutional rights and the Court’s role in protecting them. It should be noted that never once were the *facts* of the case disputed, and, as we see above, the case was ultimately decided explicitly despite them. Ironically, the road was never constructed.

## II. Purposes

In this paper I wish to investigate the Court’s logic which was used to justify such an obvious disconnect between the reality of the situation — the severe burden on free exercise of religion, and the constitutional right which is supposed to protect against this. The logic the Court applied in the majority opinion was not disguised, but admitted openly; similarly, the dissent challenged this logic explicitly. The argument between the two is fascinating. How could there exist such a serious disagreement in method within the Court? Moreover, how can the Court function with such inconsistency in its own self-understanding? Is perhaps the majority opinion only a thinly disguised hypocrisy, hiding ulterior motives? Or perhaps their conservative method is, despite, as they admit, the contingent realities of the situation, justified? In short, as I understand, the question comes down to a question of motivations and ultimately the values which underlie these motivations.

Another no less fascinating aspect of the case before us, which I will also consider, is how the Court relates to Congress, who passes the laws which they interpret. The issue is one of power: Who, ultimately, affects the state of things in our country? For if we are to interpret our first inquiry appropriately, as far as the role of the Court is concerned, we must see them in the larger context of the Government as a whole. *Lying* is situated amidst a string of legislation aimed, in one way or another, at empowering Native Americans. This new trend in legislation began in 1934 with the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), and followed with, most notably, the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA, 1968), and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIFRA, 1978). I will consider mostly AIFRA below, which is most applicable, and figured, albeit not substantially, in *Lying*. It is strange, indeed, that *Lying* cuts so decidedly against the grain of this general Congressional movement.

### III. The Specifics of the Jurisprudential Conflict in *Lyng*

The point of conflict in *Lyng*, as I mentioned above, did not once concern the facts of the case; rather, the conflict turned on an interpretation of the free exercise clause, which states that “Congress shall make no law...prohibiting the free exercise [of religion].” Specifically, the conflict turned entirely on the word “prohibit” and the underlying principle which conditioned this interpretation.

Justice O’Connor, delivering the majority opinion (joined by Justice Rehnquist, Justice White, Justice Stevens, and Justice Scalia), begins her argument with a statement of this principle: “A fundamental and long-standing principle of judicial restraint requires that courts avoid reaching constitutional questions in advance of the necessity of deciding them” (4). It is their opinion that *Lyng* does not warrant the question of the constitutional protection of free exercise because the law at hand is not one that ‘prohibits’ it as such. The law at hand, rather, is one concerning a road, which, *so far as the law is concerned*, has nothing to do with religion in one way or another. The majority’s narrow interpretation of constitutional rights specifically is a narrow interpretation of the word ‘prohibit,’ which they understand to mean, if I may put the matter in my own words, as *expressly* prohibit.<sup>4</sup> The Court delineates the following criteria which would entail express prohibition: (in addition to, literally, express prohibition itself), a) if individuals would be “coerced by the Government’s action into violating their religious beliefs,” and b) if “governmental action [would] penalize religious activity by denying any person an equal share of the rights, benefits, and privileges enjoyed by other citizens” (6).

One might ask whether the ruling in *Lyng* denies the Yurok, Karok, and Tolowa Indian tribes their right to religious practice which is ‘enjoyed by other citizens’ — but this is precisely where the interpretation differs, and we must read closely, because the right in question enjoyed by other citizens is not that of their religious practice. Instead, the right in question is the ‘protection’ against building a road through public land — and this is not a constitutional right enjoyed by all. In the Court’s words: “Incidental effects of government programs which may interfere with the practice of certain religions, but which have no tendency to coerce individuals into action contrary to their religious beliefs, do not require government to bring forward a compelling justification for its otherwise lawful actions (2).”

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<sup>4</sup> The Court never suggests a wording beyond the single word prohibit, for, as I understand, what is meant in the word must be contained entirely in the word. Basically, the Court never admits outright to its narrow usage, although their intentions are quite clear.

Justice Brennan, who delivers the dissenting opinion (joined by Justice Marshall and Justice Blackmun), argues on very different grounds: “The constitutional guarantee we interpret today, however, draws no such fine distinctions between types of restraints on religious exercise, but rather is directed against *any* form of governmental action that frustrates or inhibits religious practice” (10, emphasis added). When Brennan refers to ‘*any* form of action,’ he implies action which, in addition to expressly prohibiting free exercise, might also *effectively* prohibit free exercise. As Brennan argues, “the harm to the practitioners is the same regardless of the manner in which the Government restrains their religious expression...” (15); and again, “in sustaining the challenges to these laws [such as in *Sherbert*], however, we nowhere suggested that such coercive compulsion exhausted the range of religious burdens recognized under the Free Exercise Clause” (13). And there is no doubt that the building of the proposed road would effectively prohibit such exercise, even, as the majority admits, destroying the very possibility thereof.

We can see these two terms, ‘express’ and ‘effective’ in a dichotomous relationship which exemplifies the difference in the Court’s constitutional interpretations. On one hand, the focus is on the law, and on the other, the focus is on the effects of the law. As Brennan rightly argues, the distinction is made between *form* and *effect*. “I thus cannot accept the Court’s premise that the form of the Government’s restraint on practice, rather than its effect, controls our constitutional analysis” (14).

What is at stake here should not be underestimated by whatever side one ultimately takes. For if we step back from the specifics for a moment, what we find is a conflict, which, defined with the borrowed philosophical terms, is the conflict between that which is necessary and that which is only contingent. When the majority opinion grounds their argument in the form of the law, what they are trying to secure is necessary ground. If the form of the law in question is such that it expressly prohibits free exercise, or coerces individuals contrary to their free exercise, it is a law that will, in principle, apply to every particular instance (of that religion). For example, in *Yoder*, Amish defendants challenged a law that mandated highschool education. This law burdened the practice of their religion necessarily, regardless of time or place. However, on the other hand, when the minority opinion in *Lynng* grounds its argument in the effects of the law, they have staked their claim upon something that is only contingent: the law in question concerning the building of a road only implicates free exercise in certain circumstances. It is only due to the particular space, and the particular people who happen to use this space in a particular manner, that the law burdens the free exercise of religion.

The concern for the position in which an effect-based argument would put the court is certainly one reason that the majority opinion shies away from a decision which lends to the case a question of constitutional protection. In O'Connor's words, if the Court has to evaluate every case on the effects of a law, "we would accordingly be required to weigh the value of every religious belief and practice that is said to be threatened by any government program" (9). This, to be sure, is true. The test that the dissent relies upon, established in earlier precedents as the 'compelling interest' test, requires the verification of multiple contingent factors: that that activity which is in question is sincerely religious, that there is indeed a burden on this activity, and that this activity is 'central and indispensable' to the practice of the religion. The verification of said particulars, O'Connor argues, puts the Court in a understandably questionable position. How can legitimate 'centrality' be determined over merely 'an assertion of centrality', she asks, unless the Government be put in a position where it might possibly have to deny this claim to the one who makes it? In her words, "the dissent's approach would require us to rule that some religious adherents misunderstand their own religious beliefs" (9).

Granting the problems of this effects-based approach, I, however, find it appropriate to ask whether the Court can *ever* absent itself from evaluating the contingencies of a case. For example, in *Yoder*, which I mentioned above, did not the Court first have to agree that the Amish lifestyle was sincerely religious and that compulsory highschool education was contrary to their religious free exercise, and that not going to highschool was central enough to warrant the free exercise protection? Indeed, they would have had to answer all these questions, unless the legitimacy of Amish religiosity was assumed — an assumption which merely serves to disguise the fact that the contingent questions of the value of a particular religious claim *have already been made*. Furthermore, this hypothetical should easily emphasize my point: If, for example, someone who was *not* Amish brought a similar claim to court, would the court consider the case? I hardly think so — the defendant would first have to demonstrate the validity of their religious claim and ultimately, the validity of their religion.

It is my opinion then, that the Court is always confronted with at least the problem of verifying legitimate religiosity. However, this does not immediately refute the concern of the majority that the Court will be placed in an unwanted position of having to determine the value of what is and what is not 'central' to a religion. For the test that Brennan wishes to reinstate has a serious and unaddressed weakness. He proposes that the "courts need not undertake such inquiries: like all other religious adherents, Native Americans would be the arbiters of which practices are central to

their faith, subject only to the normal requirements that their claims be genuine and sincere” (17-18). This is precisely what O’Connor refers to as a ‘mere assertion of centrality’ — and, in my opinion, leaves the court in quite another predicament of determining the value of an even more subjective and less empirically verifiable claim: that of sincerity. Is not sincerity also merely an assertion of sincerity? Brennan’s argument collapses here because, as I understand, he takes for granted the question of legitimate religiosity. For when the Court is confronting Seventh Day Adventists, as in *Sherbert*, or the Amish, as in *Yoder*, or Native Americans, as in the case before us, this question is already answered and taken for granted, and the question of sincerity becomes instead the question of whether an individual is verifiably practicing one of these assumed ‘religions.’

What is left, then, of the majority’s argument if we assume that, despite the weaknesses of an effect-based jurisprudence, the rejection of it is similarly weak? If we read between the lines, essentially what is left is the issue of preserving the Government’s autonomy. This is implied in many places, such as when O’Connor writes that “such beliefs [in *Ljng*] could easily require de facto beneficial ownership of some rather spacious tracts of public property. Even without anticipating future cases, the diminution of the Government’s property rights...would be far from trivial” (7); also more generally, here: “the Free Exercise clause is written in terms of what the government cannot do to the individual, not in terms of what the individual can exact from the government” (2); and even more generally, here: “however much we might wish it were otherwise, government simply could not operate if it were required to satisfy every citizen’s religious needs and desires” (7). In all of the above examples, the need to preserve the Governments ability to act as it will, and to preserve for itself, in its greatest possible realization, this space of autonomy against a potential onslaught of claims of an ‘indirect’ burden on free exercise, is clearly manifest.

This conservative attitude may perhaps be justifiable in principle — however, what I want to suggest is that the particular nature of the claim in *Ljng* particularly excited this desire for the maintenance of autonomy. In *Ljng*, the potential free exercise claim requested the preservation of a large portion of public land. Was the Court’s defensive reaction in part a reaction to the degree of this claim, and not only its type? Were the Native American defendants simply asking *too much*? I ask this as an open question, because it is never explicitly addressed, but nonetheless, it is provoked by such statements above that “such beliefs would require de facto beneficial ownership of some rather spacious tracts of public property,” and in curious (and unnecessary, so far as the total argument is concerned) remarks like this one, aiming to justify the Government’s continued

pursuance of the road: “except for abandoning its project entirely, and thereby leaving the two segments of road to deadend in the middle of a National Forest...” (8).

What is implied here is that this is the Government’s space, not the Native American’s: “Whatever rights the Indians may have to the use of the area, however, do not divest the Government of its right to use, what is, after all, its land” (8). Thus the decision is made, in the end, between two values: one on hand, the value of preserving the Government’s autonomy, and on the other, the value of preserving free exercise, however much the Court, rhetorically, tries to avoid directly balancing these two. Such rhetorical dissembling is apparent here in perhaps the strangest and most amazing of the Court’s claims: “Nothing in our opinion should be read to encourage governmental insensitivity to the religious needs of any citizen. The Government’s rights to use its own land, for example, need not and should not discourage it from accommodating religious practices like those engaged in by the Indian respondents” (8). However, though ‘it need not and should not,’ it does. Viewed in this light, it is disconcertingly obvious how narrowly the Court construes constitutional rights — those very rights which are supposed to protect our citizens from the overarching power of the Government.

#### IV. The Court and Congress

A significant reason, I understand, for the Court’s justification of its conservative constitutional interpretation is that it is not the proper role of the Court to resolve the kind of tension between government and citizen found in *Lying*. O’Connor writes, “The Constitution does not, and the courts cannot, offer to reconcile various competing demands on government, many of them rooted in sincere religious belief, that inevitably arise in so diverse a society as ours. That task, to the extent that it is feasible, is for the legislatures and other institutions” (7). If this is so, the reserve on behalf of the Court in *Lying*, as I mentioned in the introduction, indeed seems strange in light of the overwhelming trend in Congressional legislation aimed at empowering Native Americans. For has not Congress not clearly stated its intentions? And what are we to make of the strange concession — ‘to the extent that it is feasible’ — for is this not where the Court needs to step in and make judgments in the grey area where the law’s distinctions break down?

A brief summary of the Congressional trend follows: To begin, it was only in 1924 when every Native American was granted U.S. citizenship. In 1934, the new director the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier, instituted the Indian Reform Act and ushered in the era of ‘the Indian New Deal’,

which effectively reversed the old policy of assimilation and termination which aimed to destroy Native American civilization as it existed, and probably would have (Gooding, 161-162). This policy was justified by the premise that “all Americans should conform to a single, uniform cultural standard” (Kelly, 292). The IRA policy was revolutionary, despite its relative failures of fully achieving Collier’s grand goals of “Indian self-government and tribal economic development” (Kelly, 300). Nonetheless, the IRA established the principles of Native American and Federal Government relations that are only beginning to be realized.

According with the principle of Indian self-government, in 1968 the Indian Civil Rights act was passed, which conferred upon Native American citizens most of the protections enumerated in the Bill of Rights *from their Tribal governments*. To be clear, when citizenship was granted in 1924, the new citizens in principle received these protections from the Federal Government; the ICRA additionally inserted a Bill of Rights into Tribal constitutions, with the purpose of establishing more self-sufficient Tribal governments.

Then in 1978 the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed. This act stated a clear directional intent that a new and active respect for Native Americans religions was necessary on the part of the Government:

Whereas the freedom of religion for all people is an inherent right, fundamental to the democratic structure of the United States, and is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution;...

Whereas the traditional American Indian religions, as an integral part of Indian life, are indispensable and irreplaceable;

Whereas the lack of a clear, comprehensive and consistent Federal Policy has often resulted in the abridgment of religious freedom for traditional American Indians;

Whereas such religious infringements result from the lack of knowledge or the insensitive and inflexible enforcement of Federal Policies and regulations premised on a variety of laws;...

*[It is] Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That henceforth it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonies and traditional rights.*

Upon first reading, it would seem that the ruling in *Lynn* violates the intention of this act entirely, and it is my opinion that it does, but unfortunately this is only the *intent*. For one of the often criticized limitations of AIFRA is that it is essentially ‘toothless,’ in the sense that it does not create any enforceable rights, as both the majority and dissenting

opinions in *Lying* recognize (8, 16). Perhaps in order that the act should actually pass, Representative Udall, who sponsored it, indicated this himself. “The act has no teeth in it,” he said (quoted by O’Connor, 8). This is understandable in light of the tension embodied in the act between the exercise and establishment clauses — for there was significant concern in Congress that the act would confer upon Native American’s special rights, effectively establishing their religion if it were to receive preferential treatment (Michaelson 1984, 95). Instead, all the act required was a revision of departmental policy and a submission of reports to this end. Thus, the *Lying* Court concluded that the Forest Service satisfied AIFRA’s requirements because it commissioned the Theodoratus Report — which, despite the eventual ruling, was the key piece of evidence *against* the Forest Service and an expensive undertaking which may never have been accomplished by the Tribes themselves.

Furthermore, the concern of establishment seems particular urgent when the case involves land, due to the degree of public impact (Michaelson 1984, 99). As I indicated above, this was a substantial motivation, if implicit, in the majority’s ruling in *Lying*. However, what are we to make of the problem that land is an inextricable and essential element in the practice of Native American religions (Michaelson 1984, 105; Trope, 53), and simultaneously the area where the Government is most invested? This conflict, exemplified in perhaps its most extreme form in the particular case of Native American religions, proves to be a crucial and even paradigmatic test case of religious free exercise in general: Because both parties are so committed, it is difficult for either to concede their interests.

To add to the tension already so near its breaking point, there is the additional concern that not only are Native American religions in jeopardy, but the cultures themselves. As many scholars argue, (Michaelson 1983, 112; Gooding, 172) it is difficult and ultimately problematic to separate the two, just as it is difficult to separate land and ‘religion.’ The imposition of conceptual frameworks is not a novel idea, but one which is applicable everywhere indigenous cultures are suffering from post-colonialism. In this case, of course, ‘religion’ is an imposed category, but thankfully this confusion is recognized, by some at least, in governmental rhetoric — for example in the dissenting opinion in *Lying*: “Thus, for most Native Americans, ‘the area of worship cannot be delineated from social, political, cultural and other areas of Indian lifestyle’” (quoting the Theodoratus Report, 10); and as above in AIFRA: “Whereas the traditional American Indian religions, as an integral part of Indian life, are indispensable and irreplaceable.”

However, the solution to this confusion is all but apparent. The reality of the situation is that the two, religion and culture, are almost always implicit in the same thought, and therefore when Native American religions are addressed, there is also the concern for the preservation of Native American culture — toward which, more or less, there is a feeling in the government of responsibility, as evidenced by the general legislative movement. What this amounts to is that when the issue of Native American empowerment is addressed a sort of contingent paradox is arrived at. When religion and culture are necessarily related, heeding the establishment clause puts culture in jeopardy, as in *Lying*, and trying to preserve the culture in any real and substantive sense necessarily entails a certain kind of establishment. For this very reason the establishment clause was notably absent from ICRA; however, considering most cases concern the Federal Government, the problem is not so easily resolved.

## V. Conclusions

Most notably what my research has uncovered is that there is a serious disconnect not only in the Court's internal, but also in the Government's, self-understanding, particularly in the relationship between the Court and Congress. Within the Government there is much tension.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this is both disconcerting and hopeful. On the one hand, it is startling how inefficient the Court's own method is when it feels the need to reevaluate its jurisprudence in every case, not to mention the effective stalemate between Congress and the Court, when the Court effectively nullifies Congressional intent. This is even more startling when one considers that this tension is, if viewed in one way, a product of a mere few individuals who are appointed and not elected for life-terms in the Court, yet still have the power to speak for the Government as if they were entrusted with its voice.

To add to this confusion of Governmental self-understanding, it appears that the roles that have become apparent in this case study are actually reversed from what it seems they should be. The Court in *Lying* ruled that it should not concern itself with the effects of the law. However, this is

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<sup>5</sup> An even more surprising instance of this tension revolves around the case *Smith v. Oregon* (1990), in which the unemployment benefits were denied to a man who was fired for the religious use of peyote. Like in *Lying*, the Court again refused to use the compelling interest test, effectively removing it as a precedent. As a result of this Congress introduced the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (1993) which specifically addressed *Smith* and was purposed to restore this precedent set for thin *Sherbert* and *Yoder*. However, in *Boerne v. Flores* (1997), the Court ruled that Congress overstepped its bounds in trying to dictate the Court's procedure.

exactly what the Court's power is: *to effect the law*. It is the Court's ruling, not Congress's legislation, that makes the difference in the end. So far as the Court and its power is concerned, the form of the law is an illusion; there is no law that actually exists in this country except in its interpretation, enforcement, and thus effect. Congress, on the contrary, is entrusted with writing, i.e. *forming*, the law. Admittedly, I do not propose to be able to resolve either of these issues (Supreme Court jurisprudence and the Court's relationship to Congress). It is my purpose, only, to bring forward the complexity surrounding the matter of Native American religious rights.

However, as I said above, this tension is, in a way, also hopeful. Because it means that things are not static, at least ideologically; and if the ideas are there, then that is a first step. In other words, the issue becomes not one of insoluble hypocrisy, but one of contradiction between competing parties. As Michaelson writes, AIRFA is essentially a "time bomb" (1984, 109), and thus it is merely waiting to be realized. In the end of the twentieth century, apparently, the political climate was inadequate for the Government to come to terms with itself. Yet, if the issue comes to a head concerning land use, as we see in *Lying*, this tension is also hopeful, because coupled with the surging environmentalist movement, for example, a new future may not be so far away. This does not disguise the fact there seems to be a acute breakdown in the negotiation of some very serious issues, and these issues need to be continually brought forward.

What I have found imperative is that we must not forget the complexity that is simplified by a court ruling — easily recovered in the dissenting opinion — which, though perhaps difficult in actuality (due to the nature of a ruling, which eclipses its opposition absolutely), is entirely possible academically. And it seems that academic scholarship is in a unique position to do this, as it conditions a new generation and a new voice, that will, that must, one day be heard by the Government.

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## Representations of Islam in the United States' Presidential Rhetoric, Post-September 11, 2001

*Michela Corcorran*

In the post September 11, 2001 world, Islam has increasingly been the subject of prejudice and unfair judgments. Such opinions hinge on the actions of a very small minority that claim to adhere to the “true” religion of Islam. As a country of immense power and publicity in the world, the United States cannot allow itself to act in a way that furthers such biases. Taking into consideration the government’s authority and persuasion over the people, and its diplomatic relations with the rest of the world, it is essential that our government be a voice of reason and equality, moving beyond tolerance concerning the religion of Islam (a minority in the U.S.), and Muslims in general. However, in the two months surrounding the invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, President George W. Bush employed a rhetoric that linked the events of September 11, 2001, the war on terror, and Islam in a problematic and dangerous way. A large part of his rhetoric is constructed in such a way that it marginalizes Muslims. Taking note of this issue, this paper will assess the president’s rhetoric concerning Muslims in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world in a twofold manner. First, the president’s rhetoric will be focused on in a manner that reveals his continually problematic public language, and thus stance, towards Islam and Muslims. Second, the president’s rhetoric will be contextualized within the broader scholarly discourse on the issue of Islamophobia among U.S. citizens. One may understand, through the expansion of these two frameworks, that President Bush’s rhetoric towards Islam and Muslims (while perhaps in an unconscious way) works alongside emotionally charged media representations and negatively biased public opinion of Islam and Muslims. His rhetoric creates a divide between Americans and Muslims (although these are not mutually exclusive categories) and furthers a sense of Islamophobia and a general intolerance of Islam and Muslims in the post September 11, 2001 world.

### I.

President Bush’s speeches, in the month before and after the invasion of Afghanistan, are conveyed in such a way as to instill a sense of public Protestantism and promote protestant hegemony within the U.S. In looking at the day of September 11, 2001, one may note that President Bush indeed

speaks in a way that highlights a sense of public Protestantism. While one would expect him, as a religious man, to bring faith into his personal way of coping with the situation of September 11<sup>th</sup>, it is dangerous for him to bring his faith into the public sphere on such an occasion. The president spoke that fateful day, quoting Psalm 23 in his efforts to comfort the restless and mournful. The president declared, “Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadows of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.’”<sup>6</sup> Here, the president privileges Protestantism through his use of the unqualified “will” rather than “may” or “can.” If Psalm 23 “will” comfort the American victims (both direct and indirect) of September 11<sup>th</sup>, then these victims must indeed believe in a faith that adheres to the Old Testament of the Christian Bible (or to the Jewish Bible). However, one may infer the president is quoting Psalm 23 as a Protestant tradition because of his publicly acknowledged faith in Christianity. Also, one may note that a few days later the president quoted “scripture”<sup>7</sup> as an encouragement for “every American family and the family of America to observe a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance.”<sup>8</sup> This scripture, found in the Book of Matthew in the Christian Bible, states “Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted,”<sup>9</sup> and is preceded by the president’s call for Americans “to serve and encourage one another in hope and faith.” This rhetoric, clearly associated with the Christian Bible and Protestant tradition, allows for the president to achieve a sense of protestant hegemony, and thus, the marginalization of Muslims.

Further, among the many speeches made by the president concerning the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, one made on the Sunday following the attacks (September 16<sup>th</sup>) was clearly hegemonic in its tone and theme. Throughout the speech President Bush referred to the day that the speech

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<sup>6</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 11, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>.

<sup>7</sup> President George W. Bush, Proclamation, “National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the Victims Of the Terrorist Attacks on September 11, 2001,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 13, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010913-7.html>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

was made as the “day of faith.”<sup>10</sup> While this clearly has religious undertones, one may argue that going along with the theme of the speech which was to have faith in the military, the country, the people, etc., the repetition of the notion of the “day of faith” was simply a rhetorical device used by the President to get his point across. While the validity of this argument holds, one may not ignore the fact that President Bush called that Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, “the Lord’s Day.”<sup>11</sup> This rhetoric carries a significant weight of protestant hegemony in that it was spoken by the most powerful man in the United States, in a public setting, and on Sunday, the Christian day of faith and worship. As such, the president here speaks in a way that marginalizes all non-Christians, including Muslims. Also, the president begins his speech by stating “Today, millions of Americans mourned and prayed.”<sup>12</sup> While these words are expected following a tragedy of the size of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the fact that the president singled out a Sunday (again, in that Sunday is the Christian day of rest, prayer and worship) as the day when “millions of Americans mourned and prayed,” and as the day when “they [Americans] ask for God’s good graces on the families who mourn,”<sup>13</sup> exhibits a sense of protestant hegemony.

Similarly, while the president’s rhetoric attempts to convey a parallel between Americans and Christians (as seen above), one may also note the president’s constant equation of Christians with “the good people of America.”<sup>14</sup> This, however, marginalizes non-Christians, and thus Muslims, in a dangerous way. The president’s rhetoric is formulated in such a way that it equates Christians with the “good people,” and thus non-Christians, and Muslims, with the “evil-doers.”<sup>15</sup> In a similar fashion, President Bush went on to call the war on terrorism a crusade. This rhetoric and specific word choice is extremely problematic. This word has been carried throughout history with unfaltering connotations of a religious war between Christians and Muslims. Thus, one may conclude that since the president conveys Americans as representations of Christian values, he also conveys terrorists as representations of Islamic values. Even while stating “our

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<sup>10</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Remarks by the President Upon Arrival,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 16, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

enemy is not Islam,”<sup>16</sup> President Bush speaks in a way that connects terrorism and Islam (or, at least the Islam outside of the U.S.). He notes that Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda are connected to other groups of radicals and extremists who claim to believe in Islam, such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, thus allowing for thousands of “Islamic” terrorists to proliferate around the world.<sup>17</sup> In such rhetoric, one can indeed see that “the kind and loving people [of America],”<sup>18</sup> and “the evil-doers [trying] to affect our soul and our spirit”<sup>19</sup> are continually at odds with one another in the president’s analysis of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the war on terror, and the role of Muslims in the former two. While the president does, in other speeches, note the peaceful and harmonious teachings of Islam (along with, of course, the peaceful teachings of Christianity and Judaism), “it’s [Islam’s] teachings are good and peaceful,”<sup>20</sup> there is continually an undertone of Islam as un-American.

Although the president notes that some Americans do indeed practice Islam, these Muslims are represented as opposing the fundamental and traditional American way of life and belief system (in that America, as noted earlier, is seen by the president as a Protestant country). This representation is conveyed in a twofold manner when the president says “I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It’s practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends.”<sup>21</sup> Firstly, the president here does indeed accept Muslims. However, he seems to accept only those that are, in effect, “trustworthy” allies (according to which government they happen to live under) from America’s point of view. Secondly, in stating “We respect your faith,” the president further marginalizes Muslims from

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<sup>16</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Radio Address of the President to the Nation,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (October 6, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011006.html>.

<sup>17</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>18</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “President Discusses War on Terror: In Address to the Nation,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (November 8, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011108-13.html>.

<sup>19</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “President Launches Online American Relief and Response Effort: Remarks by the President Supporting Charities,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 18, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010918-1.html>.

<sup>20</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

American society through an us vs. them dichotomy. By noting that “*We* respect *your* faith (my emphasis),” the president promotes the idea of the fundamental differences, and the separation, between the “we” of America and the “you” of Islam. This differentiation parallels his notions that “We [Americans] are the target of enemies who boast they want to kill – kill all Americans, kill all Jews, and kill all Christians.”<sup>22</sup> Here the president clearly excludes Muslims from the people the terrorists want to kill (thus, in a sense, allowing for the American public to group Muslims with the terrorists’ “side” of the fight), while essentially stating that all Americans are Jewish and Christian.

Again, in that the president has declared a war on terrorism (with war connoting, in its simplest definition, that there are two sides of a fight, the good side and the bad side), Jews and Christians are placed on the side of “freedom”<sup>23</sup> and America, or the “we” and the “us,” while Muslims are placed on the side of “fear”<sup>24</sup> and the terrorists, or the “them.” Here the argument comes full circle. The rhetoric once again drifts into an argument of good vs. evil that the president, as noted earlier, is so often heard declaring: “This will be a monumental struggle of good vs. evil.”<sup>25</sup> Once again, a religious undertone pervades the president’s arguments, portraying the age-old dichotomy of good vs. evil, righteous vs. sinful, divine vs. satanic. Indeed, when the President notes that his decision to begin the war in Afghanistan came only after “a lot of prayer,”<sup>26</sup> he, in a sense, portrays his decisions as divinely influenced and thus inherently virtuous and honorable.

## II.

This separation, this either/or argument, is attributed by the president not only to the U.S., but to the rest of the world as well. President Bush simplifies the issue of the war on terror (and, as we have seen above,

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<sup>22</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “President Discusses War on Terror: In Address to the Nation,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (November 8, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011108-13.html>.

<sup>23</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Remarks by the President In Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 12, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-4.html>.

<sup>26</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Presidential Address to the Nation,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (October 7, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

Islam's unwarranted connection with it), calling on every other nation to make a decision between two, and only two, options: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."<sup>27</sup> Here one may note that the president employs a certain Orientalist argument and plays into the notion of Orientalism.<sup>28</sup> As noted earlier, he divides the world into two, the "civilized" West (of which the U.S. is a major force), and the "uncivilized" Orient. Although this issue will be expanded upon later, one may note here the fear present in such notions of Orientalism. In his book *Covering Islam*, Edward W. Said notes such a connection, stating, "Insofar as Islam has always been seen as belonging to the Orient, its particular fate within the general structure of Orientalism has been to be looked at first of all as if it were one monolithic thing, and then with a very special hostility and fear."<sup>29</sup> The argument against such divisive rhetoric is further supported by John Trumbour who claims that although Orientalist notions are not overtly supported in the U.S., they are indeed suggested and believed to be true by a growing number of people in the West:

There is a newer, more modern breed of social scientist who too [like Alfred C. Lyall] finds islam at the heart of the contemporary world's troubles . . . While the U.S. State Department is cautioning against making Islam the new adversary, post – September 11 statecraft highlights a new triumphalism and certainty that there are 'evildoers' against whom the state must remain, if not on a permanent war footing, in perpetual pursuit. The massacre at the World Trade Center has divided the world into those who 'are with us' and those who are 'with the terrorists,' in perhaps the most famous formulation of the early presidency of George W. Bush.<sup>30</sup>

The notion of this division, as seen in the president's rhetoric, proves to be even more problematic when the ideology of us vs. them is equated with the hegemonic rhetoric of Christian vs. Muslim. Indeed, the president engages in such rhetoric, noting throughout his speeches (as seen above) the dangerous sense of a religious dichotomy. Trumbour cites experts on the Middle East who make overt claims of an increasing opposition

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<sup>27</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> John Trumbour, "The Clash of Civilizations: Samuel P. Huntington, Bernard Lewis, and the Remaking of Post-Cold War World Order," in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi, Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 89.

between Christianity and Islam. He notes that Samuel M. Zwemer wrote “The coming struggle . . . is a struggle between two civilizations; between the ideals of the Moslem world and those of Christendom.”<sup>31</sup> President Bush’s powerful sentiments of protestant hegemony and public Protestantism, covertly portraying the West as a Christian nation and its terrorist enemies as Muslim, come much too close to resembling Zwemer’s overt argument above.

This “enemy” seems to perplex the president. He notes that “we’ve [the United States] never seen this kind of evil before,”<sup>32</sup> while also noting a few days later that “we [America] have seen their [the enemy’s] kind before.”<sup>33</sup> The president conveys a sense of confusion as to how he should go about painting this “evil enemy” that is apparently both unknown to, and acquainted with, the United States. Once again, the president plays out the arguments made by Trumpbour. Firstly, this parallel is evident when Trumpbour argues that after the cold war American governmental officials wanted and, in a sense, needed a new enemy to demonize. This modern “enemy,” he notes, has been found in Islam: “the Green (Muslim) menace’ is likely to supplant the Red menace as the driving force of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>34</sup> Later, Trumpbour notes political figures’ and scholars’ sentiments (composed before those stated by George W. Bush in 2001) relating Islam to fascism, Nazism and communism. These arguments are strikingly analogous to those made by the president in his post-September 11<sup>th</sup> rhetoric. Subsequent to stating his notion from above, that “we [America] have seen their [the enemy’s] kind before,” the president relates that “they [the terrorists] follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends:

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<sup>31</sup> Roy P. Mottahedeh, “The Clash of Civilizations: An Islamicist’s Critique,” in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi, Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 143-44.

<sup>32</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Remarks by the President In Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 12, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-4.html>.

<sup>33</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>34</sup> John Trumpbour, “The Clash of Civilizations: Samuel P. Huntington, Bernard Lewis, and the Remaking of Post-Cold War World Order,” in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi, Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 90.

in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."<sup>35</sup> Trumpbour exhibits that a related opinion is also portrayed by Bernard Lewis, who states that,

“The Ulama of Islam are very different from the Communist Party, . . . on closer examination, [however,] we find certain uncomfortable resemblances. Both groups profess a totalitarian doctrine, with complete and final answers to all questions on heaven and earth’.<sup>36</sup>

Trumpbour goes on to note that “At a time when McCarthyite crusaders were routing a large corps of orientalist known as the China hands, Lewis thought it to be an opportune moment to conflate Islam with the putative Red menace.”<sup>37</sup> In a much too close connection back to President Bush's rhetoric concerning September 11<sup>th</sup> and the war on terror, Lewis “shares with Fouad Ajami the distinction of being the [current Bush] administration's favorite academic experts on the Middle East.”<sup>38</sup> As such, one may understand the biased information that the president is receiving from at least one of these “academic experts” to enlighten his decisions and opinions on the Middle East, and thus, on the many Muslims who live there.

Secondly, one may understand from Trumpbour's essay that, in addition to Lewis' emotionally charged claims, the “Clash of Civilizations” concept by Samuel P. Huntington is problematic in its reinforcement of the inequitable concept of a conflict between a geographical area (the West) and a religion (Islam). Again, such a concept resonates with the rhetoric of President Bush, such as when he states “Nations from Latin America, to Asia, to Africa, to Europe, to the Islamic world.”<sup>39</sup> Here the president, like Huntington, relates the secular bodies of continents to the religion of Islam (indeed, Islam, and the Islamic world, is not contained in one geo-political area). When one opposes Islam with the “secularized” west, such as in the conflict that Huntington speaks of, the conversation stops revolving around Islam's religious ideologies found in the teachings of Muhammad and the Qur'an, and shifts to a conversation about the media-formed Islam. That is,

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<sup>35</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>36</sup> John Trumpbour, “The Clash of Civilizations: Samuel P. Huntington, Bernard Lewis, and the Remaking of Post-Cold War World Order,” in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi, Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 101.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>39</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (September 20, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

the arguments of such a conversation drift away from Islam's doctrinal religious ideologies to take up the arguments of the biased media that covers, for the most part, only the small and radical groups that dominate the public sphere and overpower the peaceful voice of Islam. However, one must look specifically at what the religion says, rather than blindly accept generalized opinions about Islam that are heavily influenced by the media, popular opinion and biased authority figures. Huntington's notion of the "clash of civilizations" is indeed one of the cruxes of the notion of the us vs. them dichotomy between the west (or rather, the U.S. Christian Nation) and Islam.

The notion of this unfair dichotomy and the formation of the Muslim "enemy," both elements that we have heard and seen in President Bush's rhetoric, create and perpetuate a societal fear of the "enemy." In other words, they enable Islamophobia. Said notes that Huntington's claim that Islam has "'bloody borders' (p. 34) . . . [stimulates] more fear and less knowledge about Islam"<sup>40</sup> in the public and private arenas. Further, Trumpbour writes that during the cold war, President Truman was encouraged to "'scare the hell out of the country."<sup>41</sup> That is, Trumpbour notes the power of fear in swaying the masses and perpetuating an ideology. Indeed, as seen above, the president's rhetoric plays into these elements of fear and ideology when relating that "there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today's new threat . . . I know many Americans feel fear today."<sup>42</sup> The president, whether consciously or not, indeed perpetuates the said fear of Americans by mentioning it and bringing it to light.

On another level and in a similar fashion to Said's arguments, one may note that Islamophobia in the U.S., although perpetuated by the media and authority figures within the country, is in reality created by the masses themselves. Indeed, "there would be no point in analyzing and criticizing the phenomenon [of media representation] if it were not true that the media are responsive to what we [Americans] are and want."<sup>43</sup> That is, in that the

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<sup>40</sup> Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 43.

<sup>41</sup> John Trumpbour, "The Clash of Civilizations: Samuel P. Huntington, Bernard Lewis, and the Remaking of Post-Cold War World Order," in *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi, Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 91.

<sup>42</sup> President George W. Bush, Speech, "Presidential Address to the Nation," *The White House*, President George W. Bush, (October 7, 2001), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 52-3.

United States as a nation has a specifically American historical and collective memory, there is a need among the general populace to “reform . . . [diversity] in a uniquely American way.”<sup>44</sup> However, alongside this need for reform comes the cultural fear of difference, or, to use an intellectually challenged word, the fear of the “other” (a characterization that seems to have unjustly and disturbingly befallen upon Muslims). When considering this “fear factor” in terms of both its perpetuation by the media and governmental officials, and its creation in the historical and collective consciousness of the people, one may look at recent research done by CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) to further understand these preformed notions. In CAIR’s report on “American Public Opinions About Islam and Muslims” from 2006, one may note the continued misunderstanding and prejudice of Muslims five years after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the rhetoric of President Bush in the months surrounding the U.S.’ invasion of Afghanistan. The CAIR report notes that “approximately one-in-four Americans believes that Islam is a religion of hatred and violence.”<sup>45</sup> Also, CAIR reports that “Almost 60 percent [of survey respondents] said they ‘are not very knowledgeable’ or ‘not at all knowledgeable’ about Islam.”<sup>46</sup> Further, the reports show a general blame put on Muslims for not dismantling these views. Most of the respondents noted that they would rethink their anti-Muslim sentiments if Muslims, in short, acted more like the “true” American. That is, if Muslims acted more like the protestant, white male.

Moving from popular belief to practice, one may see the overarching issue of tolerance and intolerance of Muslims in America. The report shows that while 27 percent of the respondents “are tolerant towards Muslims, only six percent have a positive first impression of Muslims.”<sup>47</sup> However, in that CAIR analyzes aspects of its data through a “Segmentation Analysis,” splitting up majority views towards Muslims as ambivalent, tolerant, somewhat tolerant, and intolerant,<sup>48</sup> the council plays into, and in a sense takes note of, the problem with the rhetoric of tolerance. As Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini point out in their book *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance*, the notion of tolerance is inherently flawed. It is problematic in that it suggests a certain innate

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Council on American-Islamic Relations, “American Public Opinion About Islam and Muslims 2006,” CAIR, Council on American-Islamic Relations, <http://www.cair.com/AmericanMuslims/ReportsandSurveys.aspx>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

difference and inequality between the one who is tolerating and the one who is being tolerated. The latter, in a sense, becomes the “other.” Again, such issues revert back to the president’s us vs. them dichotomy and the hegemony of the “traditional” and specific American historical memory. Further, CAIR’s report shows the lack of a pro-Muslim attitude, or a movement beyond tolerance, among the majority of Americans. The “Segmentation Analysis” highest ranking of Muslims, according to a general public opinion within America, is “ambivalent” – neither rejecting nor accepting the attitudes raised in the reports, but rather answering with an undecided “‘no opinion’ [or] ‘do not know.’”<sup>49</sup> While Jakobsen and Pellegrini apply their argument to the issues surrounding homophobia and religion, the symbolic framework in which they assess the true meaning and “achievement” of tolerance can be applied to any situation in which a minority is seen as “tolerated,” but continues to be marginalized.

Looking back at the presidential rhetoric concerning the events surrounding September 11<sup>th</sup> and the war on terror, one may note that President Bush, a few days after September 11, 2001, indeed stated that “This is civilization’s fight. This is a fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.”<sup>50</sup> However, as Jakobsen and Pellegrini note, tolerance is not equitable with freedom. Rather, the notion of toleration “establishes a hierarchical relation between a dominant center and its margins.”<sup>51</sup> As such, whether it be a conscious effort or not, the president (as portrayed throughout this paper) may perpetuate and implement such hierarchical relationships within the context of the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world. Thus, one may note that Jakobsen and Pellegrini’s argument allow for these issues of language and action to come full circle, reverting back to the president’s rhetoric of us, the Christian Nation of the United States, and the West in general, vs. them, Muslims.

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## Creating Identity: The Fragmentation of White Racist Movements in America

*Teal Greyhaven*

“We are not white supremacists... We are not atheists... We’re not nationalists... We’re not Klansmen, we’re not Confederates—we are Creators” (“What a Creator is Not”). So declares Ben Klassen, author of *Nature’s Eternal Religion* and founder of the one-time Church of the Creator. His self-proclaimed religion teaches that the white race is the pinnacle of life on Earth and that the popular acceptance of non-white people today is the product of a Jewish-designed conspiracy which must be dismantled if the white race is to survive. In this the Creativity Movement, as it is known today, has everything in common with countless other racist organizations, including Aryan Nations, the National Socialist Movement, Christian Identity, the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, Scriptures for America, and the American Nazi Party. All of these groups share in the belief that the white race is currently engaged in a dire struggle for survival against a Jewish juggernaut. Despite this, Klassen and his followers today vehemently insist on distinguishing Creativity from these other organizations. In so doing, they may have sealed the fate of their religion, which by all accounts today is in shambles.

Creators, as they call themselves, would almost certainly deny that they share any significant ideologies with Christian Identity, the National Socialist Movement, or the other groups just listed. Identity, after all, is based on Christianity, which Creativity staunchly disavows. National Socialism is based on nationhood, which Creativity blames for innumerable pointless white deaths. Nonetheless, all these groups are united in their opposition to Jewry and their desire to see the white race triumphant. How then, one must ask, can so many people who all want the same thing insist on such profoundly different approaches to achieving it? If the white race is engaged in a fight for its very existence against a common enemy, why do so many white racist groups like Klassen’s consistently emphasize the differences between one another?

This paper focuses on the Creativity Movement and Christian Identity, and specifically Kingdom Identity Ministries (KIM), for these two groups are perhaps more opposed to each other, while still sharing a fundamental contempt for Jews, than any other pair of white racist movements. KIM teaches that white, Anglo-Saxon peoples are the true descendants of the

twelve tribes of Israel, and that Jews are the spawn of Satan. KIM believes that the United States of America will be the site of Christ's return, which can only occur after a great war cleanses the Earth of Satan's descendants once and for all. Creativity, meanwhile, teaches that all the races of the world evolved naturally through Darwinian survival, and that the white race is the most highly evolved and glorious subspecies on the planet, while the Jews are rungs lower on the evolutionary ladder. Nonetheless, Creativity says, the Jews have survived through deception and trickery for 5,000 years, and now they are nearing completion of their scheme to destroy the white race by infecting it with non-white lineages; white people must therefore band together or face destruction through racial inbreeding.

The end in both cases, if white people do not rise up, will be the extinction of the white race. Given this, could not the two groups agree to reconcile their ideologically divergent approaches for the sake of defeating a common enemy? It seems that the proclivity to separatism, which Klassen confirms *is* one principle of which Creativity approves ("Race & Reason"), overwhelms even the focus on combating Jews for these two groups. More than this, though, the emphasis on self-definition over compromise and collaboration suggests that the publicized aim of many white racist groups may in fact be secondary to a less tangible, individualistic goal, and that is to provide identity.

### **The Evolution of Creativity**

Between 1973 and 1982 Ben Klassen wrote three books that would form the backbone of his new religion, the Church of the Creator (COTC). Of these, the seminal work was *Nature's Eternal Religion*, which in 511 pages laid out the tenets of an openly racist belief system that quickly became a national, then international, religion. For many years few people joined COTC, but by the late 1980s Klassen's persistent propaganda had found converts as far away as Sweden and Australia (ADL). Some of the newcomers were virulently activist, and in the 1990s a series of crimes committed by COTC members would eventually help bring about the group's collapse. In May of 1991 a COTC reverend murdered a black Gulf War veteran, and the family of the sailor sued COTC for \$1 million (CNC, "Creating a Commotion" 10). In July of 1999, COTC member Ben Smith went on a 3-day rampage, killing a black man and a Jew and injuring nine other people before shooting himself (AJC/CNC). A few years later, COTC lost a copyright infringement suit from an unaffiliated Church of the Creator, which had trademarked the name some years earlier, and COTC grudgingly changed its name to the Creativity Movement. Then Matt Hale, the group leader after Klassen and in the late 1990s the lifeblood of the

entire organization, was arrested in 2003 for plotting to murder the judge who had ruled against COTC (ADL, “Creativity Movement in 2005”). When Hale was sentenced to 40 years in prison, the Creativity Movement was crippled.

Many people today still stand by Klassen’s original vision. In January of 2007 longtime Creativity adherent Thomas Darwin created the Creativity Alliance, an online resource that articulates Creativity’s tenets and goals in great detail as well as providing downloads of Klassen’s most influential written works. Out of the sprawl of instructions in these texts, one of the most critical declarations is that “Christianity is Jew-oriented and believes in the Jews being the Chosen People... We are proud to be the enemies of Christianity” (Klassen, *Nature’s Eternal Religion* 274). Creativity is wholly derisive of religions that emphasize “spooks, demons, devils, and fairies” in general, and of Christianity in particular (Klassen, “Race & Reason”). Throughout his many books and speeches, Klassen attacks the fallacies of Christian doctrine, generally on a level that most high schoolers could counter. In response to the notion, “Love your enemies,” Klassen demands, “If some burglars, armed to the teeth with knives and pistols, were to break into your house and assault you and your family, why should you love them?” (*Revised English Bible*, Luke 6:27; Klassen, *NER* 109). By invalidating such basic tenets of Christianity as this one, Klassen argues that the entire religion is a poorly designed sham concocted by Jews to confuse the white race.

Love is not intended for one’s neighbor, but hate, Creativity openly professes, is “a normal healthy emotion with which Nature has endowed all of its higher species” (Klassen, *NER* 306) In theory, however, the Creativity Movement remains non-violent; its website states, “We do not promote, tolerate nor incite illegal activity” ([creativitymovement.net](http://creativitymovement.net)). “It is important to remember that we are fighting a Propaganda War,” urged COTC member Ben Smith in 1998, “so...legal street actions are the only offense we need right now” (qtd. in AJC/CNC). He would shortly go on his 3-day killing spree. The thinking within Creativity is that the Jews cannot be defeated directly; the best plan of attack is therefore to first convert the millions of white people who have been corrupted by Jewish deception into thinking that all races are created equal.

In this focus on propaganda and recruitment, Creativity is exactly like Kingdom Identity Ministries and any number of other actively self-promotional groups. “Our main priority is straightening out White people’s thinking,” Smith adds (qtd. in AJC/CNC). If the hundreds of millions of white people on Earth were united in opposition to Jewry, revolution would be a simple task. The trouble is that the Jewish brainwashing machine has

been so effective that most white people now abhor the Creativity cause. Creators therefore recognize that the white race is seriously endangered. Theirs is a mission of utmost importance, for at stake is nothing less than the survival of the most noble race on Earth, which is under siege from a devious subspecies whose most effective weapon has been the destructive fabrication known as Christianity.

### **Christ's Kingdom and the Satanic Jews**

Christian Identity shares with Creativity the belief that the battle between whites and Jews is paramount in the world today, but it frames this conflict in definitively Christian terms, in direct opposition to Creativity. While earlier British forebears of Identity existed well before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was Wesley Swift and his Church of Jesus Christ Christian, founded in 1946 and inaugurated as such in 1957, that laid the groundwork for what is today Identity, broadly speaking, which includes Kingdom Identity Ministries (Robinson). In the 1960s the group easily attracted adherents on the far right of American religion and politics, and by the 1990s it was the largest religion-based white supremacist network in the country. Like Creativity, Identity attracted many extremists who brought notoriety to the group by committing crimes in its name. In 1983, Gordon Kahl shot and killed two U.S. Marshals who had come to arrest him for a parole violation; a four-month manhunt ended in Arkansas where Kahl killed a local sheriff before being gunned down (ADL, "Christian Identity"). In 1999, the same year as Ben Smith's rampage, Buford Furrow, a former Aryan Nations security guard, went on a shooting spree at a Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles, wounding four children and an adult (ADL, "Christian Identity"). These events and others brought mass criticism to Identity, but the organization is still strong today, though its membership is nowhere near its mid-century high of 50,000. As with many white racist movements, the internet has revitalized KIM, providing an anonymous forum for the free dissemination of its teachings.

Chief among those teachings is a set of Christian beliefs, many of which most mainstream Christians share and some of which are unique to KIM. In the first place, KIM believes that the Bible is the given word of God; that Jesus is His incarnate son; that salvation comes through faith, not works; and that Jesus rose from the dead and will return to Earth. It also believes that white, Anglo-Saxon, and Germanic people are the true children of Israel; that Adam is the father of the white race only; that Jews are the "seed" of Satan; and that on the day of Christ's return ("the day of reckoning") all Satan's children will be washed from the Earth (*KIM: Doctrinal Statement of Beliefs*). While Creativity strives to separate itself from

Christianity, KIM emphasizes “the unbridgeable chasm between Christianity and Judaism” (Kadach). Jesus and Christianity under KIM, as with many evangelicals, are “the way, the truth, and the life” (*Revised English Bible*, John 14:6); KIM meanwhile opposes Judaism, the original religion of the Jews, for it represents death (*DSOB*). Whereas Creativity is openly hateful and condemnatory, KIM is built on “Christian love” and insists that it does not teach hatred of non-white races, for “God Himself made the races different, and He found it to be good; He loves all of His creations in their proper order” (*The Liberal Guilt Complex*).

However, KIM believes that Jews are not just another race and therefore do not deserve God’s love; they are rather the descendants and servants of Satan. The “two-seedline” narrative argues that Jews came from two sources: in the first place, like other non-white races, they existed before Adam and the arrival of the white race; secondly, the first white Jew was Cain, born unto Eve through a sinful union with Satan. As children of Satan, Schamber and Stroud note, Jews “think, behave, and act like the Devil, their father” (22). “They are depicted as wicked and sinful, impervious to reform or salvation” (Schamber and Stroud 22). This mythological one-dimensional-ness, in the KIM worldview, accounts for all possible Jewish behavior; Jews, per their very nature, are constantly working to bring about Satan’s reign over Earth.

Despite the casting of Jews as irredeemable evildoers, there are few explicit suggestions in official KIM literature as to what in particular should be done about the Jews. The promise of a second coming in which the white race will be “raised immortal” allows for a certain level of inactivity and confidence that the Jews will eventually be defeated; however, KIM, like most of Identity, is post-millennial, meaning it believes Jesus will not return “until after the Tribulation,” leaving the final battle between good and evil up to the white faithful (ADL, “Christian Identity”). The fight against Jewry is therefore of utmost importance, as it is with Creativity, for in the balance is not merely the survival of the white race on Earth, but the eternal survival of the white race in the kingdom of the Lord.

### **Identity Through Separation**

Both groups, then, share the belief that Jews are taking over the world and threaten the existence of the white race. They also believe that the white race is the noblest of all the races, that the vast majority of white people have been grossly deceived, and that it is their duty as Christians and Creators to re-educate the white mainstream. Both cast this mission in the framework of a grandiose and climactic confrontation in which the fundamental conflict of the world will come to a head once and for all.

With all this in common, why are the two groups so diametrically opposed to each other?

The grandeur of the struggle between good and evil is a familiar trait of many mainstream evangelical denominations, so it is not surprising to find an emphasis in Identity Christianity on the epic scale of the battle against Jewry. However, Creativity too casts the conflict in grandiose terms: “We must, at all costs, free ourselves from this tyrannical Jewish domination, and wrest control of the White Man’s destiny” (Klassen, *NER* 347). Despite his criticism of the religion, Klassen does not balk at painting the scope of the war in terms not only superlative but Christian: “Our future looks rosy beyond anything that has ever been imagined before. In fact, a *heaven on earth* would not be too expansive a description of the exciting future that awaits us” (*NER* 353, my italics). If there is one thing non-theistic beliefs are rarely accused of, it is sensationalism; atheism is often denounced by Christians and other monotheists for being dull and nihilistic. Creators, they would remind us, are not atheists, but they do share with atheism the disavowal of the existence of super-human beings such as God or angels. Despite this, the rhetoric of Creativity, like that of KIM, seems designed to make its adherents feel they are participating in a struggle worthy of the most fantastical Hollywood blockbuster.

The two groups present the predicament of white people as unique and all-important. The nature of the world according to each diverges profoundly from the other’s view, but functionally each organization fulfills a similar psychological role for its adherents. The KIM Christian lives in “a difficult time in history. We are moving into a time of tribulation... Those who have built their lives on Jesus Christ and His Word will endure this time of great testing” (Gayman, qtd. in Schamber and Stroud). The Creator lives in a time when “the White Race will either rally and unite...or it will be miserably and savagely destroyed by the colored peoples of the world. We must now either make this planet forever secure for our race, or miserably perish” (Klassen, *NER* 19-20). By joining with either group, the white adherent finds solidarity, camaraderie, and a driving purpose to life.

“Fear is at the center of these groups,” Raphael W. Ezekiel postulates, “fear and a sense of isolation. Belonging to the group affords comradeship within struggle. The mythical ‘white race’ is the larger family for which these spiritual orphans long” (Ezekiel xxv). The feeling of belonging, however, is not possible without also distinguishing oneself from that to which one does not belong. Clearly, the white racists who subscribe to the groups in question separate themselves from Jews and non-white people, but they also distinguish themselves from other white people, and from other white racists. “There is nothing that unites a group more firmly than

hate for a common enemy,” Klassen declares (*NER* 306). Hate being well within the purview of Creativity, Klassen has no problem accepting Christians into the scope of those which Creators find solidarity in despising. The more there are who are not a part of a group, the thinking seems to go, the greater may be the solidarity within the group. KIM Christians, accordingly, separate themselves not only from the broad mass of white Americans but also from white Christians who have misunderstood the story of the Scriptures.

“We believe strongly in separatism,” Klassen declares, “and we believe it to a degree further than is commonly accepted” (“Race & Reason”). And how. Since Hale’s arrest in 2003 Creativity has splintered into a disordered array of individuals and small groups. Some remain loyal to Klassen’s original doctrine; others advocate Hale’s more activist stance; still others have split from the movement entirely. As for Identity, since the 1960s the ideology which began with Swift and the Church of Jesus Christ Christian has influenced or helped create not only KIM but the Aryan Nations, Mission To Israel, Folk And Faith, Yahweh's Truth, Scriptures for America, and the White Separatist Banner, to name only a few. Rather than representing an overall growth in membership, however, the proliferation of these groups indicates only the increasing fragmentation of the white racist movement, which has not gained significantly in numbers in the past 20 years. What these groups lose in potency as they divide and multiply, they seem to make up for in solidarity and an increased sense of identity. Perhaps that is what matters most.

Ezekiel further theorizes, “Organized white racism is about a mood—lonely resentment—...and the primacy of power in human relations... People will find some way to make their lives meaningful, and if nothing richer is at hand, racism...will do” (Ezekiel 321). The unifying element within these disparate groups, in the end, may be that each fulfills a need for its members, a need which by its very nature demands separation and even opposition. As can be found throughout religious denominations everywhere, a movement tends to have natural breaking points as it progresses, at which its adherents separate into smaller factions, each articulating a new and slightly different approach to what is still the same overall ideology. The phenomenon is not unlike the isolationist inclination of adolescents to disown something once considered “cool” as soon as a certain number of people all agree that the item is indeed “cool.” Identity, anymore, is forged with regard to external reference points, and in an age of constant identity-seeking it becomes necessary to continually redefine one’s relation to such reference points. This at least is the pattern among modern white supremacist groups, who not unlike some Protestant churches have

developed a proclivity for internal disagreements and fragmentation. The white racists of KIM and Creativity are separatists in the religious and national sense, certainly, but they are also identity separatists, with a lowercase “i”; their members define who they are in part by their separation from myriad other white racist movements. In the end, the humanitarian reader may take comfort in the fact that these groups’ insistence on separation has done little more than fragment them and further their own ineffectiveness.

## Conclusions

“The Church of the Creator is not a white supremacist organization,” Klassen insists (“What a Creator is Not”). “We don’t want to rule any inferior race. We don’t want to exploit the niggers or anybody else. We just want to have control of our own destiny” (“What a Creator is Not”). The same may be said of Kingdom Identity Ministries, which advocates neither dominion nor violence expressly; yet the two groups remain irreconcilable. Hatred of Christianity is too much a defining component of Creativity; belief in Almighty Jesus is too integral a belief for KIM. In the broader view, the operative element in Klassen’s statement is less his emphasis on what COTC is not, and more the single word “control.” In any white racist movement it is a loss of control that threatens the white race, and above all a loss of control at the hands of the Jews. The end goal of Creativity is to control the Earth through white rule, but simple membership in the group gives one an identity, which is control over the *self*.

“The white racist movement is about an idea,” Ezekiel claims, but in its nuances the idea is not the same to all the groups, even if to the mainstream observer all white racism looks homogenous (Ezekiel xxix). “Hate for a common enemy,” namely the Jews, is indeed the basic rallying force for the white racist movement in America, but far from unifying everyone, it has provided only a common target for the movement’s general animosity (Klassen, *NER* 306). Meanwhile the many white racist groups throughout the country, including KIM and Creativity, remain as separated as ever. As such, they have become less and less effective at spreading their messages, and further fragmentation will only hasten their demise.

Most groups like Creativity are in a pitiful state today, and those that are still active are seeing a steady decline in membership and interest. Before much longer, one can only hope, the specifics of this analysis will no longer be relevant. Creativity may fade out with its imprisoned leader, and KIM may break off into a new set of groups or continue to operate on the fringes of American culture. What may be gleaned, regardless, from the discord between these groups is recognition of the astonishing variance between possible approaches to one conclusion, and of the truth that

purpose, broadly speaking, may not always be as simple to discern as we think. While KIM and Creativity share a common goal, namely defeating the Jewish conspiracy on Earth, their approaches to doing so are so divergent that they effectively preclude collaboration and thus hinder the actual achievement of that goal. Meanwhile, in so far as the real value of each group may be that it serves as a sort of identity safehouse for its members, the stated goal of defeating the Jews may naturally take a backseat to the psychological security of a group's members. And while we may not be concerned with the emotional stability of people who consider a majority of the world's population subhuman, we can at least take heed of what may prove to be their fatal flaw; for when identity is made to depend on negation, only division and isolation can result.

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## Separation or Death<sup>1</sup>: One Hundred Years of White Supremacist-Black Nationalist Alliances in America

*Dana Johnson*



*© Eve Arnold / Magnum Photos*

On February 25, 1962, George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party, and ten of his “storm troopers” arrived at the Chicago International Amphitheater, where twelve thousand Black Muslims were gathering for a convention organized by the Nation of Islam (NOI). Placed in the front row, Rockwell and his fully-uniformed companions sat and listened as Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad addressed the crowd. Then, Rockwell himself was invited to the podium. “You know that we call you niggers,” he said. “But wouldn’t you rather be confronted by honest white men who tell you to your face what the others all say behind you back?”<sup>52</sup> Despite receiving a mixture of applause and ridicule, Rockwell

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<sup>1</sup> The title of the paper is a reference to the name of a speech given by Malcolm X at a Nation of Islam rally in Washington D.C., June 25, 1961, and attended by American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell.

<sup>52</sup> *Chicago Sun Times*, February 26, 1962, quoted in William H. Schmalz, *Hate: George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1999)

had the approval of Muhammad, whom he had just deemed “the Adolf Hitler of the black man.”<sup>53</sup>

The picture painted here is astonishing. One struggles to imagine two more disparate parties gathering together nonviolently, let alone with smiles and applause. Yet what happened in Chicago on that day is not singular; over the last one hundred years white supremacists and black nationalists have come together repeatedly and often for the same sorts of reasons. This paper is an attempt to loosely trace a history of such encounters, from Marcus Garvey and the Ku Klux Klan to Grand Dragon Tom Metzger’s donation to Louis Farrakhan and the NOI. Meanwhile, I will use the writings and speeches of a number of the leaders involved to see if there is an underlying logic to these gatherings. Granted, the history that I attempt to reconstruct here will not be a complete one. Not only would such a task be next to impossible, it would also be tiresome to both the reader and writer. But neither have I been selective, using only examples that support the hypothesis I will put forward. Instead, I have selected three examples because they are the most documented or involve leaders with the most accessible writings, and also cover the broadest period of time. What is revealed throughout these examples is that is an underlying logic to these encounters, a logic that is, well, “insanely logical.”<sup>54</sup> In each of the examples I will highlight, both parties share the common goal of establishing separate, racially-pure nations and have decided that forming an alliance, even with the racial inferior to whom their hate is directed, can quicken the fulfillment of this goal. As I will show, this separatism is an often complex concept that can be justified in a number of ways – for instance, theologically or practically – and the formulation of the racial problem at hand, nor the conception of the final objective, are entirely consistent throughout the examples. Nevertheless, a consistent pattern remains behind these bizarre encounters.

In June of 1922, Marcus Garvey traveled to Atlanta to meet with Imperial Kleagle<sup>55</sup> Edward Young Clarke of the Ku Klux Klan. Garvey had sought to strengthen his Universal Negro Improvement Association’s (UNIA) influence in the South, but the Klan’s widespread power made any inroads difficult to achieve. Realizing the bargaining power he had in the situation, Clarke agreed to let Garvey to sell stock in the variety of

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<sup>53</sup> Martin A. Lee, “Strange Bedfellows: Some American Black Muslims make common cause with domestic neo-Nazis and foreign Muslim extremists,” *Intelligence Report*, Spring 2002. <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?sid=82>.

<sup>54</sup> “The Messenger Passes.” *Time Magazine*. March 10, 1975.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,917218,00.html>.”

<sup>55</sup> The title “Imperial Kleagle” designates Clarke as being head of recruitment for the Klan.

businesses his organization had started - Universal Printing House, Negro Factories Corporation, Black Star Line – under the guarantee that Garvey would also work to weaken organizations like that NAACP that were fighting for civil rights and integration.<sup>56</sup> Why would Garvey agree to help fight those that were trying to improve the social status of his fellow African-Americans? And why would he make that agreement with an organization that robbed, beat, raped, and murdered the people he sought to liberate? Likewise, what would motivate Clarke to risk undermining the social hegemony his race held in the southern states by giving more power to the UNIA? From Garvey's account of the meeting (no such account exists from Clarke's perspective), the two did little more than mutually reinforce their similar, already-held racial ideologies. As Garvey recounts, "I asked [Clarke] whether he was interpreting the spirit of just a few people who make up his organization or not, and he said 'no; we are interpreting the spirit of every true white American; but we are honest enough to say certain things that others do not care to say.'"<sup>57</sup> Later in the speech, Garvey describes a moment in the meeting when he asks how the Klan feels about blacks who want to be President, followed by the same questions as regards a senator or congressman, and once again, what percentage of white Americans the opinions of the Klan represent. The question-and-answer here seems to be merely for rhetorical effect, and after Garvey notes that once again Clarke claimed to speak for all whites, he states: "Mr. Clark [sic] did not tell me anything new; he told me what I discovered seven years ago. He told me the thing that caused me to have organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association four and a half years ago."<sup>58</sup> That "thing" was a deep belief that humans are inherently racist. In the second volume of *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, first published three years after his meeting with Clarke, he writes that racial "self-preservation [...] naturally is the first law of nature [...]. What must

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<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, the exact deliberations of the meeting have never been published. As a result the information here comes primarily from a speech given by Garvey a couple of weeks after the fact ("Speech by Marcus Garvey, Liberty Hall, July 9, 1922," *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. IV, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 707-715), while the specifics of the agreement mentioned here come from a letter written by Walter F. White, Assistant Secretary of the NAACP, to his lawyer (Walter White to Lewis R. Gravis, August 28, 1924, DLC, NAACP, footnote 2 to "Cable by Marcus Garvey to Chairman, Liberty Hall, Atlanta, 25 June 1922," *Garvey Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 679-680.) The source of the letter makes the information about the NAACP potentially inflated or perhaps entirely false, but for my argument the specifics of the agreement are less important than the ideological statements from Garvey's speech.

<sup>57</sup> "Speech," *Garvey Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 711.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 712-713.

the Negro do in the face of such a *universal attitude* but to align all his forces in the direction of protecting himself from the threatened disaster of race domination and ultimate extermination? [my emphasis]<sup>59</sup> In America, blacks were both disenfranchised and severely outnumbered. Combined with the inherent “self-preservation” in whites, they could be deceived by the whites that dominated society into supporting integration, which would only lead to their “mongrelization” and eventual elimination.<sup>60</sup> For Garvey, the solution to the problem – an all-black Africa, an all-white America – was the only reasonable one for him under such circumstances. With some logic, then, Garvey admired the Ku Klux Klan for its explicit recognition of the incompatibility of the races. By joining forces, the two could quicken the polarization of America and the subsequent exodus of blacks to “Motherland Africa.”<sup>61</sup> Though the explicit beliefs of Clarke are unavailable, one can imagine that they differ only in their formulation of the problem (as a Klansman, Clarke may or may not have expressed his ideology from a more theological position). Regardless, the agreement never seems to have materialized; within two years Clarke was in jail for soliciting a prostitute, and once word got out that Garvey had met with the Klan, the UNIA became embroiled in a dispute that the organization never recovered from.

With that we jump ahead to the 1960’s and the Nation of Islam’s alliances with various white supremacist groups. I have already mentioned briefly George Lincoln Rockwell’s attendance at an NOI convention in 1962, but instead of focusing on it for my analysis I would like to address a separate encounter. The NOI’s first friendly contact with white supremacists occurred in 1961, when Elijah Muhammad sent Malcolm X and Jeremiah X, a local Muslim leader, to meet with the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta. At the meeting the two sides established an agreement by which the Klan would abstain from attacking mosques in the South in return for a guarantee that the Nation would not participate in the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>62</sup> Muhammad and his associates recognized the power of the Klan in the South, both in sheer membership numbers and behind the scenes with politicians and policemen. Thus, like Garvey, Muhammad felt that his position was the only reasonable one for overcoming the disenfranchisement of his race. Further, *both* sides of the alliance were

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<sup>59</sup> *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Amy Jacques-Garvey (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 2.35.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.47; 2.4, 25, 38.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.52.

<sup>62</sup> Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 152-153.

aware of the disastrous consequences that a successful Civil Rights Movement would have for the “purity” of their race (also like Garvey, though he may not have called it this), and thus an alliance could help to combat this from both sides of the racial fence. But the Klan and the NOI took a different line of reasoning than the UNIA for their separatist agendas, both using not the language of science but that of divinely superior and inferior races. It is through this lens that their alliance can be understood further, but this claim needs to be clarified.

Garvey understood racism to be a part of human nature, and thus he saw separatism as the “natural” solution to racial strife in America. When the black race had its own territory, it could focus its energies on building its prestige and thus improving its image in the eyes of other races.<sup>63</sup> But until then, success for blacks in America was dependent on a social structure created and controlled by whites, which not only prevented blacks from having self-determined lives but also deceived them into participating in a society that would see their extermination before it gave them equality.<sup>64</sup> While Garvey saw God as the reason behind this unavoidably racist predisposition in human beings, he did not believe that one race was superior to any other.<sup>65</sup> Instead, racial superiority was determined by the most accomplished civilization at any one time – civilizations were first and foremost racially defined – and a race’s standing with God was determined by how well it maintained its “purity.”<sup>66</sup>

In contrast, both the NOI and the KKK grounded their separatist agendas on a theology of divine preference among the races. While full explanations of each groups’ theology are not possible here, a few basic points should be made to differentiate them from each other, and both from Garvey. Muhammed came onto the scene in the wake of the black nationalist discourse that Garvey was so elemental in developing. But Muhammad also considered himself to be a bearer of the words of Allah and of the prophesied Mahdi – a man he met in Detroit named W. Fard Muhammad. Elijah Muhammad preached a complex theology that he claimed was the final revelation of God and the capstone of the teachings of the Abrahamic traditions. This theology claimed to fill in the ambiguities of the Qur’an in particular, but also went radically beyond them, arguing

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<sup>63</sup> *Philosophy and Opinions*, 1.26.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.25.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.38, 62; 1.32.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.20-21, 2.18-19, 62. Also, in reading Garvey it seems that the line between race and nation is a fairly ambiguous one, as he uses the language of each interchangeably. Unfortunately I cannot expand on the issue further, but it would be an interesting matter to look into.

that blacks were the first human beings and that a scientist named Yakub, actually the Devil, used “special birth control” to develop slowly lighter-skinned people until he the white race was created. Yakub and his followers were banished from black civilization for their experimenting, and have ever since sought to deceive and destroy God’s true chosen people – the black race.<sup>67</sup> From this perspective, separatism is an obvious philosophy; if one’s blood was divine why would one ever consider tainting it with the blood of Satan? Much like Garvey, Muhammad saw value in allying with white supremacists in order to free his people from the lies of the dominant race, but the consequences were cosmically significant: despite his or her divine lineage, a black person deceived by the descendents of Yakub into race-mixing would spend eternity in Hell.<sup>68</sup>

The KKK has never had a figure like Muhammad (either Elijah or W. Fard): generally, they have never been led by someone claiming to be a messiah figure, and more specifically to the time of the 1961 agreement, the organization was not structured around one seminal figure whose writings we could examine to understand Klan theology *en total*.<sup>69</sup> Further, it is not clear from sources who exactly organized or attended the meeting from the Klan side, and thus we cannot turn there for exegesis of Klan beliefs. However, one text provides invaluable insight into Klan theology of that era, especially in relation the NOI. This is a letter written to a gathering of NOI members from Imperial Wizard J.B. Stoner in 1957. The letter begins abruptly: “Infidels: Repent of Mohammedanism or burn in hell forever, throughout eternity.”<sup>70</sup> Stoner immediately presents Muhammad and his followers with a stark ultimatum, and follows this statement with a series of biblical passages denoting Christ as the sole means of salvation.<sup>71</sup> But as the letter goes on, it becomes clear that the issue for Stoner is not so much with the religious identity of the members as the underlying connection to their race. “Islam is a product of the colored race,” he writes. “Islam is a dark religion for dark people [...] Christianity, the one and only true religion, has only been successful in white nations among white people [...] Christianity prevails in every white nation, even when outlawed, but does

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<sup>67</sup> See Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Secretarius Mems Publications, 1997), esp. Ch. 5, 29 (quote from Ch.29 under heading #7). Accessed from [http://www.seventhfam.com/temple/books/black\\_man/blkindex.htm](http://www.seventhfam.com/temple/books/black_man/blkindex.htm).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 92, heading # 8.

<sup>69</sup> This statement suggests that the writings of Elijah Muhammad defined NOI philosophy exclusively during this time. I do not mean to take the claim to such an extreme level. Still, I believe the point still stands that the Klan did not have its own Muhammad.

<sup>70</sup> J.B. Stoner to Muslim Convention, Feb. 1957. Quoted in Muhammad, *Message*, Ch. 139, header 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, header 5.

not appear to have roots in any colored nation that could withstand tribulation. Therefore on a racial group basis, it would appear that only the superior white race is capable of appreciating Christianity and that the dark inferior races prefer a heathen religion like Islam.”<sup>72</sup> Stoner’s words on the connection between religion and race become the historical evidence that Stone then uses to prove the truth of a biblical passage (Acts 16:31) that prophesies America to be a white Christian nation.<sup>73</sup> The connection suggested is therefore Christian/white/American and Muslim/black/somewhere else, and the one Stoner believes is superior is clear. Still, the religion-race connection is not automatic. A black person can become a Christian and avoid damnation – this is why white missionary work is critical.<sup>74</sup> Thus the relation between whites and blacks is not Evil-Good, as with the NOI, as it is superior-inferior. The place of separatism lies in the prophecy of America: God has promised to establish it as an all-white utopia. Those that support integration fool themselves and others into thinking otherwise, while those in opposition, like the NOI, expedite the process.<sup>75</sup>

What is clear in this examination is that both the KKK and the NOI of the 1960’s differed greatly from Garvey in their motivation for separatism, but the two allies also differed from each other in their theologies. Still, one final piece of the examination is missing: the role of anti-Semitism as a motivating factor for the alliance. Both groups have a well-documented history of strong anti-Semitic rhetoric, though the Klan probably more so than the NOI, and the 1961 meeting between the two sides reportedly saw Malcolm X blame the whole Civil Rights Movement on a Jewish conspiracy.<sup>76</sup> But each group’s anti-Semitism was only one part of its larger understanding of race. From the perspective of the NOI, it has already been mentioned that their primary enemy was the white race, descendents of Satan, and thus were Jews involved in some conspiracy they could only be one part of a larger, white-dominated power structure that exploited blacks. As regards the Klan, their goal in the pact was assistance in fighting integrationists, and if Malcolm X was right about the conspiracy, then the pact would be all the more advantageous because the Klan would be working to separate itself from both races at the same time.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., headers 6-7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., header 20.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., header 7. Stoner writes that missionary activity has been “instrumental in saving the individual souls of millions of colored people in spite of their racial weakness and racial inferiority [...] If GOD had only wanted one race, He would have created one race.”

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., header 13.

<sup>76</sup> Clegg III, *An Original Man*, pp. 152-153.

Lastly, we turn to a more recent encounter between the NOI and white supremacists. In 1985, founder of White Aryan Resistance Tom Metzger attended an NOI rally held by Louis Farrakhan, leader of the re-formed NOI, in Los Angeles, donating \$100 to the group while there.<sup>77</sup> Why? At a white supremacist gathering later that year organized in support of Farrakhan, Metzger explained: “America is like a rotting carcass. The Jews are living off the carcass like the parasites they are. Farrakhan understands this.”<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, others at the gathering expressed similar feelings. Art Jones from Chicago explained: “The enemy of my enemy he is my friend. I salute Louis Farrakhan and anyone else who stands up against the Jews.”<sup>79</sup> The consensus support for Farrakhan was coming in response to a number of anti-Semitic comments that Farrakhan had made, including calling Judaism a “gutter religion” and proclaiming that Jews were liars when they espoused themselves, and not blacks, to be the true progeny of God.<sup>80</sup> From the words of the supremacists it seems that their support for the NOI leader was based on a belief that in him they had an ally in the black community for their struggle against Jews. Like its role in the 1961 agreement between the NOI and the KKK, anti-Semitism cannot be understood here as distinct from the role of separatism. Instead, it makes it clear that the separatist goal of white supremacists is not limited to the groups’ relationship to blacks. Their separatist agendas extend much more broadly, and when one is fighting for power over a multitude of races, the ways in which these agendas intertwine can be complex. This is certainly true when the races are placed in a hierarchy of inferiority, and an alliance with a race less inferior may benefit the supremacists in combating a more inferior one.

In the case of the Farrakhan’s NOI, the leader claimed that his relationship with the white supremacist groups did not go beyond one of shared separatist values: “There is no linkage of myself with the KKK or any of these groups that you name. But I must tell you that I have got respect for any white man who wants to keep his race white, ‘cause I certainly wanna keep mine black.”<sup>81</sup> As far as anyone can tell, Farrakhan’s anti-Semitic feelings were not motivation enough to form an alliance with white supremacists. The point remains, however, that such feelings seem to

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<sup>77</sup> Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 277.

<sup>78</sup> Wayne King, “White Supremacists Voice Support of Farrakhan,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1985, Sec. 1, Page 12. LexisNexis Academic. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Gardell, *In the Name*, pp. 279.

have informed his ideology. While the point should be made here as with white supremacists that Farrakhan's separatist views extend beyond merely his relationship with whites (separatists want to free themselves from *all* other races, not just one), the point should also be made that organizations like the NOI, nor people like Farrakhan, are static entities. Instead, that we may find differences in their ideologies over the years merely tells us that they are constantly evolving. That Farrakhan did not act on his beliefs leads me to my final remarks.

As I have attempted to show, black nationalists and white supremacists made alliances throughout the twentieth century, and throughout the sides were motivated by a separatist ideology. The differences among the actors involved lay in their formulations of the racial problem at hand – be they scientific, theological, or practical – and even in this regard there were at times some remarkable similarities. But despite the number of examples I came across, the rarity of such events must be stressed above anything else. The leaders who entertain the idea of mixing it up with their enemies always run the risk of causing a rapid fallout within their organizations. As mentioned above, Garvey's meeting with the KKK played a large part in the downfall of the UNIA. Both the KKK and NOI risked a great deal in their 1961 agreement, and thus met in secret: both were fighting against the Civil Rights Movement, and any leak that the two were joining sides could greatly diminish the credibility of the organizations in the eyes of those who still held out hope for segregation or separation. By 1985, white supremacist groups existed on the fringes of society, and thus had little to lose by supporting Farrakhan, but Farrakhan at that time was and still is walking a fine line between his often hate-filled rhetoric and his much more widely respected social work in the black community. (Most notably, the Million Man March in 1995, while in 1985 Farrakhan had only recently reorganized the NOI, as well as just established People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth (POWER).) Farrakhan has much at stake whenever he does anything publicly. Thus is not unreasonable to think that he or any other black nationalist or white supremacist leader is aware of the history of dicey deals that I have recounted here when they must decide whether or not to affiliate with an organization of the opposite race.

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## The theological justifications for 'Christian' racism and why Jesus must be central to combat them

*Hilary Davis*

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others,  
you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”  
(Matthew 1:1-2)

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly  
they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.” (Matthew 7:15-  
16)

"The finality of revelation is not primarily an increase in speculative knowledge or  
practical knowledge  
but shared life." - Sandra M. Schneiders<sup>82</sup>

Jesus' injunction on judging paired with his caution to beware of false prophets, whose ferociousness can be recognized as the offspring of their inner life, leaves the watch-woman in a tenuous position. How does one recognize (and point out, academically) the evil ideologies garbed in the nomenclature of “Christian theology”, without falling into the trap of self-judgment? At the same time, how does a Christian who finds herself in the position to judge what strikes her as *idolatry* against Christ not make the same mistake that Christian theologians in Germany at the time of Hitler largely made, namely, *condoning* evil? These are the tensions the current author finds herself in as she tries to tackle the job of writing about "Christian" white supremacy or nationalism. As faith, Christian Identity (the term I will use to encapsulate a larger array of white supremacists who identify themselves as such religiously, from violent racists to subtler members) founds itself on a logically coherent worldview. While the *effects* of white supremacy (racist acts) can be analyzed from a number of secular vantage points, the purpose of this paper is to draw out the ways which, from a theological perspective, Christian Identity's name - identity grounded in Jesus Christ - holds true or false. This will involve examining the ways Christian Identity uses a specific and thorough exegesis of scripture to justify (and sanctify!) racism. It is only circuitously, through an analogy to racism of theologians in Germany during WWII, that I hope to unveil the

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<sup>82</sup> *The Revelatory Text*, 45.

deep hermeneutical and theological tragedies of the racist assumptions in the "Christian" Identity, a religious identity that in reality risks missing the person of Christ Jesus.

### I. What is "Christian Identity"?

Christian Identity came to light as part of the radical right in America in the 1960s and 1970s, its members coming to most prominence in active hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. However, its roots can be traced back to a British movement of the nineteenth century known as Anglo-Israelism,<sup>83</sup> which understands people of Anglo-Saxon heritage to be the direct descendants of the ten tribes of Israel that were "lost" during the Assyrian captivity of Israel in the eighth century BCE. The belief that white (specifically: Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Germanic) people constitute the modern-day Israel of the Bible is the foundational belief for all movements connected with Christian Identity. The expressions of this identification, however, range from non-violent separatism (people who believe that races are equal but should not inter-marry or share worship) to politically activist, often violent movements which consider other races inferior and see the Jews, specifically, as the offspring of Satan. The Aryan Nations in Hayden Lake, Idaho, for example, include the following in their creed of faith: "We believe that the Canaanite Jew is the natural enemy of our Aryan (White) Race. This is attested by scripture and all secular history. The Jew is like a destroying virus that attacks our racial body to destroy our Aryan culture and the purity of our Race."<sup>84</sup> In contrast, a separatist like Dan Gayman, former pastor of the Church of Israel in Schnell, Missouri, sees races as each marked distinctly by the Creator for different purposes on earth. He sees Christianity as linked inherently with Anglo-Saxon skin the way Islam is linked with Arab skin,<sup>85</sup> which poses a bizarre spin on pluralism: all races are created to have unique relationships with God, and Gayman can only speak for what God has to say to his race - that is, in the Bible. The existence of large populations of Christians of other ethnicities (Hispanics, Blacks, Koreans, to name a few) are anomalies not accounted for in his theology. He credits the successes of the white race with its historical faithfulness to Christian morality, as summed up by his interviewer:

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<sup>83</sup> Swain, Carol M. *The New White Nationalism*, 48.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>85</sup> We will ignore the obvious preposterousness of this analogy, along with many sociological issues this paper raises, for the sake of pursuing the theological questions at hand.

Anglo-Saxons . . . have displayed historically a superiority over other races in science, technology, philanthropy, and economic organization, but this superiority . . . [is the] result of their greater adherence to Biblical morality and the special graciousness by virtue of which God allows them to meet the demands of Biblical faith.<sup>86</sup>

The *causal* connection Gayman sees between adherence to biblical morality and God's physical blessing on the faithful is characteristic of Christian Identity beliefs.

While the groups that can be categorized under the heading "Christian Identity" are diverse and often practice within very localized congregations, all adhere to certain theological presuppositions. They believe in the inerrancy and literal application of the Bible, and interpret Scripture in a specifically racialized way. Their interpretations and applications rely not merely on the Bible as a singular text, but also on knowledge of etymology and biblical languages, and on a vast array of historical-archaeological study. Within the Bible itself, their theology tends to stress the End Times as portrayed in the book of Revelation, the Old Testament emphasis on "seedline" (i.e. genetic) blessing from Adam to the twelve tribes, and Jesus' indictments of the Jews of his day. Unlike "fundamentalists," who also have an apocalyptic bent and preach the literal inerrancy of Scripture, Christian Identity does not believe in a "rapture" in which Christians will be swept up from disaster by the returning Christ; rather, they see themselves engaged in an age-old battle to bring the Kingdom of Christ to earth, a battle involving sacrifice and even martyrdom.<sup>87</sup> In that sense, Christian Identity is not so divergent from orthodox Christianity; there have always been martyrs for the faith. The racialized nature of the kingdom, as will be discussed, diverges on several counts.

The key etymological work Identity theology has done in interpreting biblical language is its distinction between the words "Israelite" and "Jew," the important theological claim being that Jesus was not a Jew; rather, "Jesus Christ's whole ministry was one constant battle against the evils of Judaism."<sup>88</sup> The evidence that supplies justification for this distinction between Jesus-as-Israelite and Jesus-as-Jew is the fact that God promised numerous blessings to the Israelite nation which, if we look at modern-day Jews, have not been fulfilled. Looking at white nations, on the other hand,

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<sup>86</sup> Swain, *Contemporary Voices of White Nationalism in America*, 205.

<sup>87</sup> Preaching at Christian Identity revivals has described biblical heroes in terms like the following: "the 'survivalist' Noah, the 'militant' Samson, the 'tax protestor' Gideon, the 'right-wing extremists' Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the 'racist' Phinehas and the 'paramilitarist' Christ" (Bushart, Craig and Barnes, *Soldiers of God*, 93).

<sup>88</sup> Compare, Bertrand L. *Your Heritage*, 27.

we see the promises to Israel fulfilled in *these* nations, the *Christian* nations. As stated by the Church of Jesus Christ Christian in Hayden Lake, “When we find the people to whom God has fulfilled all of His promises and prophecies to Israel, we have found Israel! . . .When we realize that WE ARE ISRAEL, the Bible becomes full of meaning for us: it is our history, it contains God’s promises to US!”<sup>89</sup> It makes sense, seeing how blessed with resources American whites are and given the fact that God’s Old Testament promises must be literally fulfilled somewhere, to look at history and trace the connection from Israel to America. *Just how much* sense it makes to look at *the Bible* in light of the facts of worldly inequality will need to be determined on more theological grounds, however.

## II. Christian Identity Doctrine

Christian Identity shares with orthodox Christianity most core beliefs (i.e. those which would be found in the Nicene or Apostles' creeds which are used by Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches worldwide), but its additions to the orthodox creeds determine its justification of racism and clarify its specific biblical hermeneutic. The beliefs Christian Identity’s doctrine shares with orthodox Christianity include the following: God is one in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth as Messiah to redeem his people through his death and resurrection, and ascended to heaven to rule. He will return to judge each person and to establish his kingdom on earth. All have sinned, and salvation comes to individuals by grace through their faith in Christ the Savior. Water baptism is a sign of this conversion and of the eternal life Christians will enjoy. These beliefs, found in “Kingdom Identity Ministries Doctrinal Statement of Beliefs”, depart from orthodox creeds with the following doctrinal statements, which become progressively unorthodox, but follow one logic (I have omitted the biblical references used to justify each of these claims, and only include claims to which all Christian Identity theologies would adhere, excluding, for example, more controversial claims specifically about the nature of the Jews):

- “The history, covenants, and prophesy of this Holy Book were written for and about a specific family of people who are children of YHVH God.”
- “The Holy Spirit is sent . . . thus identifying the children of Israel in this world.”
- “Yahshua the Messiah came to redeem (a word meaning purchase back according to the law of kinship) only His people Israel.”
- “His bride, the wife of the Lamb, is the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.”
- “God chose unto Himself a special race of people that are above all people upon the face of the earth.”

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 3.

- "The New Covenant was made with the Children of Israel, the same people the Old Covenant was made with."

- "The White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and kindred people [are] God's true, literal Children of Israel. Only this race fulfills every detail of Biblical Prophecy and World History concerning Israel and continues in these latter days to be heirs and possessors of the Covenants, Prophecies, Promises and Blessings YHVH God made to Israel. This chosen seedline making up the 'Christian Nations' of the earth stands far superior to all other peoples in their call as God's servant race."

- "The United States of America fulfills the prophesied place where Christians from all the tribes of Israel would be regathered."<sup>90</sup>

Many of these statements, especially the earlier ones regarding the notion of a "chosen people," do not contradict orthodox doctrine. However, we can see that their inclusion in a doctrine - going far beyond the fundamental doctrine regarding the Personhood of God - of the *nature* of the chosen people moves from a metaphorical understanding of God's chosen "race" to a very literal one.<sup>91</sup> What this logic relies on is a literal correlation between Old and New Testaments, which is made clear in what I would argue to be the most important theological departure encapsulated above: "the New Covenant was made with the Children of Israel, the same people [as] the Old." While orthodox theologians see the work of Christ bringing a "new covenant" in which there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" because all have "clothed [themselves] in Christ,"<sup>92</sup> Christian Identity sees nothing startlingly new about Christ's coming or his work on earth. Rather, the person of Jesus is the essential key to the realization of promises God had already made to his chosen.<sup>93</sup> So while Jesus remains at the linguistic front of the creed, he loses his structural centrality to the creed, especially when we compare this creed to the structure of the Nicene or Apostles' creed, which derive the nature of the Church directly from the Person and work of Christ.<sup>94</sup> The Kingdom

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<sup>90</sup> [www.kingidentity.com/doctrine.htm](http://www.kingidentity.com/doctrine.htm)

<sup>91</sup> Not surprisingly, the statements of faith all begin "We believe..." - where 'we' is the white race - in contrast to the Nicene or Apostles' Creeds which begin each statement of faith with "I believe".

<sup>92</sup> Galatians 3:28

<sup>93</sup> According to Gayman, "the other 15% of the Bible, the New Testament, is a book that simply confirms the pledges, covenants, and promises made to the Israelites of the Old Testament" (*Contemporary Voices*, 207).

<sup>94</sup> The Apostles' Creed, for example: "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

Identity Creed, in contrast, centers itself on the question of identifying the chosen people: Christ's job on earth was essentially to do this. His work was both to rule out who was *not* Israel (Identity theology often cites passages in John in which Jesus is very scathing toward the Pharisees and the passage in which he says that "only my sheep hear my voice"<sup>95</sup>) and to do the spiritually atoning work of dying for the sinners *within* Israel.

What seems to be at stake in the claims Christ is a figurehead of a racial Israel and that there is no fundamental disjunction between Old and New Testaments, between the way God related to different races in the Old and the way Jesus Christ interacted with different races in his day<sup>96</sup> - that God in the Old Testament and the Son as Jesus are both racists - is the authority and sacredness of Scripture. According to Gayman, "The Bible, as given by God, is a complete whole. It stands or falls in one piece. It declares the whole counsel of God and it required nothing short of the whole book to declare it."<sup>97</sup> That is, if the prophesies of the Old Testament are not literally fulfilled, God's word *as such* stands at risk, totters as only relatively important. The joy in embodying the literal fulfillment of prophesy, inversely, is that it proves God's faithfulness as attested by Scripture and the truth of Scripture itself:

What is the worth of our identity with Israel? It proves God to be unchangeably faithful. It proves the Bible to be literally and historically true. It proves that God is working today, as the prophets have all foretold he would ... it proves that Jesus Christ did what he came to do, confirm the promises made to the fathers.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, if we see the fulfillment of what God promised Israel now, we see ourselves as living the literal fulfillment of biblical prophesy and so prove God true. For example, in view of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 35:11 that his descendents would form one nation comprising many

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen." We see here that the Church's identity flows directly from the identity of Christ as judge, which he derives in turn from his relationship to the Father and his conception into earthly life by the Holy Spirit. One could argue that the Trinity is the subject matter of orthodox statement of belief, while the believer is the subject of Christian Identity doctrine.

<sup>95</sup> "Salvation . . . was never offered to the Jews as a preferred class, for you will remember that Jesus Christ taught only in hard-to-understand parables when there were Jews around" (Comparet, 30).

<sup>96</sup> I would argue that while it is possible to read Christ's words toward "the Jews" as such, it is hard to reconcile this ideology with his *actions* toward minorities of his day; see, for example, his cross-cultural interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4 and his portrayal of the Samaritan as the "good neighbor" in Luke 10:33.

<sup>97</sup> Comparet, *Your Heritage Part II*, 5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

nations, we can see Anglo-Saxons as the only fitting fulfillment of this description.

Given that the Christian Identity's doctrines rely on the faith-claim that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, spoken as a whole for all those to whom it would [*truly*] apply for the rest of history, similar to the faith claims made by any other Christian who receives the Bible as God's revelation, is it really fair to categorize Christian Identity as unorthodox? Isn't it just one more in a series of bizarre interpretations relying on faith claims that are bizarre to begin with? If not on secular grounds, on what theological grounds might we see the significance of their approach to the Bible so as to draw distinctions with orthodoxy that will help us understand what kinds of faith claims are genuinely coherent? It is my personal conviction that only by focusing on Christology - by examining not only *that*, but *how* and *why* Jesus figures in any religious belief and activity - that we can locate the life of that religion as *Christian* or not. The question of Christology, in turn, will necessitate a brief touch upon hermeneutics.

### III. An analogy to Aryanist Germany- How theologians missed Christ

One thing already becoming apparent in our cursory examination of Christian Identity doctrine is the fact that Christ plays a very specific role - Savior of the white people *against* the threat of the non-chosen, for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy - within the overarching narrative of Israel's history. Rather than reading the Old Testament in light of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ as narrated and explicated in the New Testament (in the gospels and epistles, respectively), as orthodox theology does, Christian Identity reverses this approach - reading the New Testament in light of how it fits with history up to that point. Christian Identity, in light of two millennia of Christian theology, really is an anomaly in how it understands the causality of how the revelation of truth to each believer works. Rather than the revelation of Christ to persons determining the relevance of the Bible as a whole, the relevance of the Bible as such determines *that* Jesus fulfills of the prophecies that already apply to "my" (i.e. the white!) race. For an outsider, it is easy to see how the hegemony of racism allows all other activity (such as the reading of Scripture) to fall into coherency with racism. But if the Bible is supposed to be sacred text, the word of God - and if Christ has been revered for so many centuries by so many followers as (among other things) the Prince of Peace, Lord of all peoples, tribes and tongues, and the embodiment of Love - why in this case is he read so narrowly? To understand how Christology is thus subverted we will examine a case-study of another subculture that championed a white

Jesus - that of anti-Semitic theologians in Germany before and during WWII.

In the articles “Theologians and Nazis” and “The Aryan Christ,” Jason Byassee and Alan Davies, respectively, examine what happened in Germany when intellectuals used Christ as a symbol for something other than himself.<sup>99</sup> Davies claims that “German theology was always motivated by the search for a synthesis between the Christian faith and the German soul, its twentieth-century expression has frequently erred in favor of the latter.”<sup>100</sup> Theologians influenced in their hermeneutics by the Enlightenment<sup>101</sup> favored removing the “cultural baggage” from the Jesus of the text that showed him to be particularly Jewish, so that he might resonate with the German soul better, culminating in the claim that given his *noble spirit*, Jesus could not have been a Jew. In retrospect, we can read this desire to de-Jewify Jesus as the result of fear of Jews “weakening” Germany and the desire of theologians to see Christianity in Germany “unemasculated.” Emanuel Hirsch was particularly interested in the idea of *Volk*, the “German essence” that infused the German people and their arts, which he considered to be “as essential to God’s work as Israel was to any Jew or Christian.” This claim has two possible implications. Insofar as Germany is like Israel *in that they were both nations called by God for specific purposes in his total redemptive plan*, Hirsch’s comment is not particularly problematic. However, if he makes the (more likely) analogy that the German *Volk* is as essential to God’s work as the *idea of a chosen people* is to any believer in the total schema of redemption theology, it falls into the trap of idolizing one’s cultural identity over a divinely-revealed and given identity *in Christ*. According to Davies, Hirsch’s theology amounted to narcissism:

Narcissism, surely one of the final causes of all racism, is evident in the rise of the Aryan Christ from the commencement of the entire process. . . . To aryanize Christ was a form of deifying the Aryan race which the imagination of Western humanity had invented as a synonym for itself, or another mode of

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<sup>99</sup> I.e., when scholars looked into “Jesus Christ” to find a figurehead for any specific (and historically contingent) cause - much as people today might say “Jesus is the ultimate social justice activist” - rather than making a [theological] statement such as “Jesus is the Son of God” that tries to express who he was, is, and is to be as his unchanging self. The purpose of icons in worship, for example, is to show Jesus as Himself so that the contemplator is drawn into the eternal person, Christ Jesus.

<sup>100</sup> “Aryan Christ,” 577.

<sup>101</sup> Post-Enlightenment readings didn’t have “hermeneutics” as such - didn’t have an account for approaching sacred texts specifically as sacred - but approached the Bible primarily as an historical document (see Schneiders, 22)

making God in the image of humanity. . . . more willing to emphasize Jesus' humanity than his *Jewish* humanity.<sup>102</sup>

We can see the parallels between the aryanizing German Christians and Christian Identity in their desire to identify Christ as a figurehead for their race's superiority. What the German theologians got away with at the time was more subtle insofar as Germans at the time already equated Christianity with German culture, much as Gayman points out that "until the turn of the twentieth century, until the year 1900, almost all of the philosophical and religious beliefs of the Church of Israel, as we practice them today, all the moral standards and the theology that the Church of Israel embraces today, were basically the moral standard of America."<sup>103</sup> The German theologians did not go so far as to read "Germany" as "Israel" into the Bible; their theological slip was more of a compromise than a theoretically consistent racism. That is, they desired so strongly to wed German culture with Christian *ideals* that they seemed to forget the person of Jesus, making claims like Hirsch's that "there is absolutely no contradiction to make it difficult as a German to be a Christian or as a Christian to be a German", which clearly contradicts Jesus' insistence that his disciples be in but not of the world.<sup>104</sup> Both rely on the white group's perception of its place in world history as somehow "special" and thus displace *Christ* as the starting point of all theology, divorcing their biblical hermeneutics from the crucial meaning of God's revelation to humankind in Christ. In response, then, two assertions of faith become important: first, that *Jesus was a Jew* affirms his absolute difference from "us" and so implies our inability to adopt him for our intellectual or cultural crusade; secondly, *that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us* (John 1:14) **must** be central to understanding "God's Word" as revelation and must determine the biblical hermeneutic.

#### IV. Where is Christ?

In this section I will attempt to outline my understanding of a proper biblical hermeneutic in light of an orthodox Christology in order to shed light on what is fundamentally perverted by Christian Identity, my fundamental claim being the following: ***That Jesus came as flesh because that was how God wanted to reveal himself*** must be fundamental to all the rest of our reading of the Bible as scripture. Identity hermeneutics are revealed in the following:

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<sup>102</sup> "Aryan Christ," 578.

<sup>103</sup> *Contemporary Voices*, 228.

<sup>104</sup> John 15:19, John 17:6 etc.

The Israel Truth is the key which opens up the Bible from the first promise made at the Fall, until Jesus delivers up the finished Kingdom to the Father. It may be likened to a spiritual thread which runs through almost every chapter of Bible history, every doctrine, symbol, promise and covenant. The thread which, when found, makes possible the unraveling of most of the mysteries of the Word.<sup>105</sup>

My claim is that “the thread which, when found, makes possible the unraveling of most of the mysteries of the Word”<sup>106</sup> cannot, in a *Christian* theology, be *anything* but the person Jesus Christ. No ideology, no theme, no thread of logic, stands in his place where revelation concerns itself. The heart of God’s revealing his eternal personhood as human in “the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us” is that the agency involved in humans understanding divine revelation is *the Word’s*, not ours.<sup>107</sup> His choosing to reveal himself *as Jesus* is the key to understanding *revelation as such*, and so the revelation of Scripture. Part of the problem of the Identity approach to the Bible as a sort of map to, or puzzle of, the truth of reality, is that it suggests that the Bible, as “the Word of God,” is *the only Word of God*, limiting God’s revelation to literal speech.<sup>108</sup> In fact, it is only *because God chooses to speak to people* at all that the Bible exists as Scripture, as an instance of the Word. Jesus Christ, however, *is* the eternal Word (*Logos*) from whose revelation all others flow, and it is to seek him that we search the Scriptures.

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<sup>105</sup> Comparet, 6.

<sup>106</sup> If such an “unraveling” of mystery is indeed commanded by the Word, in itself a contentious claim.

<sup>107</sup> Karl Barth makes the point that any understanding of how God reveals himself to people cannot be understood as contingent in any way on human experience (such as the expectation that God must fulfill his promises in a given way, as with Christian Identity’s restricted understanding of prophesy) but must assert the good of divine freedom choosing to reveal God to people: “In His Word becoming flesh, God acts with inward freedom and not in fulfillment of a law to which He is supposedly subject” (*Church Dogmatics 1.2*, 135); in this way we concern ourselves with “a miracle, an act of God’s mercy” (136). Furthermore, the significance of his becoming “flesh” (in the Greek of John’s gospel) is that he not only lived the human genome, but lived as dependent, weak. His choosing to be baptized (Luke 4) can be read as his identification with the human (“fleshly”) need for repentance.

<sup>108</sup> Whereas in fact the Bible is replete, albeit *through* written language, of God’s “speech” communicated through all of creation without literal words. Psalm 19, for example: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” The obviously metaphorical nature of God-language as proclaimed by the cosmic canopy should indicate that “his Word” *cannot* be *confined* to the literal words of the Bible.

Given (what I claim to be) the centrality of how God self-revealed himself in flesh, as Christ, it makes sense that the inversion of the centrality of Christ within a “Christian” doctrine would culminate in the claim that Christ was not Jewish - i.e. that the *specificity of how* the gospels (according to orthodox readings) present him being revealed in flesh is overturned. Once the definitive Christ-moment of divine-to-human revelation has been overturned, we do not need the living Christ in order to have the meaning of Scripture revealed to us, and so the Biblical text takes on fixed meanings. My claim would be, then, that if history, or sociology, or any kind of intellectual work other than the work of theology is allowed prior to biblical exegesis, our hermeneutics will be disastrous where religious faith is concerned. Any religion that wants to take its sacred text seriously as a site (perhaps the infallible one) of God’s revelation must determine, or assert faith in, the prior possibility for God revealing God to people. In *Christian* faith, this possibility - indeed, the possibility of doing theology - has been determined and given by the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Son of the eternal Trinity, who indwells our flesh. In her work on scriptural hermeneutics in *The Revelatory Text*, Sandra M. Schneiders poignantly describes why, based on a relational (i.e. Trinitarian) theology, Christian hermeneutics *must not* fixate, as Christian Identity does, on a non-relational form of Bible reading:

Scripture is normative for theology because it is a primary symbolic mediator (not the only one) of God’s self-revelation. This self-revelation has all the complexity and ambiguity of any personal self-disclosure. Theology is not the business of describing accurately (not to mention exhaustively!) the nature, attributes, operations, and designs of God, which are finally unknowable to humans. It is a disciplined reflection on the Holy Mystery that attempts to say, in coherent ways, what (little) it can see, in the hope of guiding the vision of others. But if we recognize that we never come to a complete and definitive knowledge even of another human being with whom we have daily and intimate contact, that just when we think we really understand at least some characteristic of the person she or he says or does something that makes us realize we have not fully understood, surely we must acknowledge that the mystery of God so far transcends our relational capacities that our knowledge will never be exhaustive or even relatively commensurate with the mystery.<sup>109</sup>

Christian Identity would have to fundamentally disagree that God’s self-revelation is mysterious - claiming that “God’s word” is clear and proscribes specific directives on human behavior. But not only does such an attitude lack the iridescent humility of Schneider’s caution,<sup>110</sup> but it

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<sup>109</sup> *The Revelatory Text*, 57.

<sup>110</sup> A humility that seems almost *too obviously* necessary to any monotheistic faith in which people seek to serve Creator God . . .

might actually miss the essential fact in which faith finds itself caught up: that God in Christ is constantly revealing himself in embryonic mysteries to human flesh.

### **Conclusion: For the Word-Flesh!**

Christian Identity, as racism, is egregious in the way all “isms” are egregious: they point to the totalizing capacity of human intelligence which, while perhaps being our highest form of genius<sup>111</sup>, also indicates the height of our pride. Race becomes a relevant limit on a theology of redemption partially because of ignorance of relevant facts (for example, the Identity view of white history as demonstrating the race’s superiority technologically lacks knowledge of the way that Chinese history is replete with technological advances, probably at the fault of American textbooks), but mostly because people allow culturally-conditioned information to influence their theological understanding in the first place.<sup>112</sup> Both problems point to a pride that does not seek to depend on the source of revelation for theological explication: namely, God in Christ. The substance of Identity theology deals with eschatology - the effects of Christ’s identity on the future of humankind - before beginning in the source of the eschatological Christ as he is revealed: in the Incarnation. Insofar as Christian Identity gives some credible and some incredible interpretations of Biblical passages, they are no different than any other Christian sect. But insofar as those interpretations point to the fact that they have avoided the theological issue of revelation itself, they miss the revealer who came as an ethnic minority, an out-of-wedlock baby who spent the first two years of his life as a refugee in Egypt. The God who chose to displace himself from power iconoclastically surely cannot be the God whose Scripture reveals nothing but clear-cut power dynamics! If the story Scripture tells is to find us in its mystery, *it* must find *us* as ones lost but nascently [now] found.

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<sup>111</sup> Plato saw the capacity for holistic thought to be the defining characteristic of the philosopher kings and queens, those wise souls who would be able to both contemplate the form of the Good and put justice into practice politically.

<sup>112</sup> This is true also for people who don’t identify as racist. In a sense, Christian Identity merely affirms the inequality by which many American Christians are already living and from which they benefit, without any reference to the radical theology that supposedly underpins their faith.

## A Recipe for Religious Intolerance

*Mary Simpson-Stanton*

Religion is problematic at Whitman College. From in-class discussions of using the Tanakh and Christian New Testament as Core texts, to vitriolic and gut-wrenching listserve debates over the propriety of a student group trying to evangelize on campus, the conversation comes up over and over again. In the conversation about religion, many assumptions are made about what “religion” means, what the appropriate role of religion on a college campus is, and what the “norm” is at Whitman.

According to Adam Kirtley, Whitman’s Stuart Religious Counselor, about fifty percent of the Whitman Student Body arrives here “identifying with some specific faith background,” and seventy percent consider spirituality to be important to them (qtd. in Smith, 2007). While the proportion of Whitman students who identify with a specific faith is significantly lower than the national average, it is still about half of the campus.

Why, then, does the overwhelming discourse on campus about religion seem to be so anti-religious? This is the question I will attempt to answer in this paper. There are three main facets to my analysis, which I will present one-by-one, and build them together to make a multi-dimensional theory of why the discourse has evolved the way it has. First, I will introduce theories about apostasy and spirituality over life-course, specifically how college-age persons tend to relate to religion. Second, I will discuss what factors in an individual student’s life experiences may contribute to their views on religion. Lastly, I will bring the previous two facets into a discussion of campus-identity formation.

A friend of mine has ascribed to a half-dozen different religions since he was fifteen. My own mother, now a Methodist minister, identified as Buddhist for a while when she was in college. Just as the late-teenage and early-adult years are expected to be times of experimentation and rebellion in the realms of sex, drugs and rock-and-roll, a period of experimentation and rebellion in the realm of religion is not unexpected.

In the late 1960’s and the 1970’s, sociologists of religion were particularly interested in the religious rebellion of college students. In what seems to be a classic work, Caplovitz and Sherrow examine potential mechanisms which lead to the apostasy of college students. Apostasy they define as the abandonment of either a set of religious beliefs and practices, or the abandonment of the religious community (30-31). Traditional

definitions use only the first characteristic, that is, they name apostasy as the rejection of a set of beliefs. It should be pointed out here, as well, that the word apostasy isn't traditionally used to describe the conversion to another religion or set of beliefs.

Both Caplovitz and Sherrow's 1977 work and Hunsberger's 1980 article draw connections between college students' relationships with their parents, how religiously they were raised, and their apostasy rates. Again, this makes the point that apostasy or religious rebellion is assumed to be in direct relationship to rebellion against parents.

Other research, including Campbell and Magill's 1968 study and Kubre's 1971 study, look at religious involvement in general among college and university students. Kubre used the Glock scale of religiosity to determine which of Glock's five dimensions of religiosity (ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, experiential, or consequential) were the strongest for college students. He found that college students were most likely to have high ideological connections to religion, like having religiously-based ethics or moral beliefs, and least likely to have high ritualistic connections, which were measured by frequency of religious practice like church attendance.

Campbell and Magill also used Glock's religiosity scale, but investigated how intellectualism in general influenced ideological, ritualistic, experiential and consequential religiosity among college students. They found that persons with high intellectual values are more likely to have low religiosities, but in their conclusion remark that because much of this sort of research is done on college students, there may be changes in these findings if the same study were conducted on older groups (93). Here they are referring to the assumption that young adults are differently religious than older adults.

All of those studies were conducted while my parents' generation was in their college years. Much has changed in the past forty years, especially in the area of sociological research on religion. Measures of religiosity are more diverse, with an understanding that for many people spirituality is very important without necessarily being connected to a particular denomination. Also, scales like Glock's which are based primarily on Christian constructions of religion, have fallen out of favor.

Barry and Nelson wrote in 2005 about religion and transition into adulthood, recognizing that religiosity can't be measured solely in either practice or belief. They took into consideration religious culture, practice, certainty and importance, and also belief in God. These variables gave them a well-designed measure to use for young adults in a period of transition, both exploring and negotiating their religious beliefs.

So according to the research, it is rather well-accepted that college students go through a period of less religious practice, disassociation, or even

apostasy. But what does that mean for a college campus? Valerie Lopez wrote an article in the Whitman College Pioneer in 2006 about her own disassociation from the religion of her childhood:

Later on, education became my catalyst; I decided to disaffiliate myself from a religion because I acquired a better understanding of myself and the world around me. Not that education itself leads religious believers astray, but it challenged my own preconceived ideas and inevitably led me to come up with my own “working conclusions.”

This reconstruction of morals and “working conclusions” is something that students tend to do while reinventing their lives as independent of parents and home. This is reminiscent also of religious beliefs being included in “symbolic toolboxes” from which to construct new meaning (Hervieu-Leger, qtd. Barry and Nelson 246).

Not only are some formerly-religious young adults reconstructing their religious ideals in college, those who are apostates in the fullness of the term may be actively antagonistic to the religions to which they subscribed. But what may be even more important in the religious antagonism are other causes of anti-religious sentiment like past experiences with religion, and conflation of religion with other ideals

In the year 2000, my roommate was kicked out of her church for dressing like a Goth. When I met her, she still identified strongly as Christian, but also had a strong antagonistic feeling toward any group she associated with the kind of church which had kicked her out. She would not have fit neatly into any of the categories relating to apostasy and spirituality, because her strong anti-Christian opinions did not overwhelm her equally strong belief.

Therefore, another facet will come into play here. A person’s past interactions with religious institutions, their identification of religion as necessarily connected to other social beliefs, their personal identification with commonly persecuted groups all have an affect on how they view religion on campus, and from that, the threat the individual perceives from religion.

First, to past interactions with religious institutions. Some students were raised in a religion, and then excluded from it for some reason or another. My roommate was dressing like a Goth, which her church saw as unacceptable. Another friend of mine would have been kicked out, had he come out of the closet as gay. Someone else might have had a negative experience with somebody trying to convert them to a different religion. Another could have been ambushed by anti-abortion protesters outside her school. Another could have seen a parent or relative excluded from the church for leaving an abusive partner...the list of possibilities goes on and

on. Any of these experiences could have an extremely negative impact on an individual's feelings toward institutionalized religion.

Institutionalized religion itself, primarily Christianity, is also tied in many minds to a whole string of other modifiers. Roman Goerrs pointed out one of these strings of modifiers in a Pioneer column: "Too often Whitman students seem to think that people like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson represent all Christians...." Falwell and Robertson are public personalities attached to the Christian Fundamentalist movement, which is becoming highly politicized these days. Christian fundamentalism is also associated with the political party which it supports: the Republican Party. Following a chain like this, the word Christianity has come to imply the evangelical, non-denominational, fire and brimstone, all gays are going to hell, patriotic, intolerant, "you're with us or the terrorists", republican, flag-waving, Passion of the Christ watching, pro-life/anti-choice, "moral values"-focused ethos of the neo-conservative. Thus, a person who associates Christianity with this string of other concepts, and happens to disagree however intensely with any one of them will feel that intensely opposed to Christianity.

Now, if that Whitman student, who sees the word Christian and thinks all those other adjectives is asked to name some things that "Christians" don't like, they might come up with a list like this: atheism, bisexuals, Catholics, Choice, democrats, the environment, feminists, the French, Goths, gays, Jews, lesbians, liberals, Mormons, nature-lovers, progressives, queers, scientists, transgender or transsexual persons, and women. Because Christianity is conflated with all those other identities, the things and people which "Christians" supposedly dislike make a very long list.

If that student, who already affiliates Christianity with that long string of modifiers, happens to identify with one of those groups that "Christians" do not get along with, ze is going to feel threatened by Christianity. Even if this student has not had any direct negative contact with religion in the past, if ze identifies strongly as LGBT, ze is most likely going to feel afraid of or persecuted by the amorphous Christianity which "hates" LGBT persons. If ze has had negative experiences with the Church in the past, that fear or feeling of persecution will be even more reasonable to hir.

On top of that, the stereotyped, conflated Christianity is also one of evangelism, and a student opposed to that link will feel threatened by any attempt to convert hir. This was seen clearly during the Whitman Christian Fellowship's (WCF) January 2006 rather mild-mannered evangelism campaign. The campaign was entirely paper-based, with no face-to-face proselytizing. Nevertheless, there was an extreme outcry on the students' listserv against this attempt to "force people to convert", that it was an

“invasion of privacy” and a “violation of [the students’] right to not read propaganda”. While this kind of rhetoric seems a bit extreme and almost ludicrous on its face, it was putting a voice to a gut reaction against a perceived threat that these students felt.

To summarize up to this point, a person’s past experiences with organized religion, conflation of “organized religion” with that string of conservative-Christian modifiers, identification with persecuted groups, and perception of threat from “the Christians” combined make it highly probable that an individual will feel antagonism toward Christianity. These factors are most likely to be influential for individuals who are either apostates of a childhood religion, or who have not been raised in a religion at all.<sup>113</sup>

What happens at Whitman, then, is a gathering of students who have all sorts of backgrounds, but fifty percent of whom do not identify with any institutionalized religion, thus making them more likely to be antagonistic toward Christianity. Of half of the population who were raised in a religion, at least some are likely to be apostates after leaving home. This makes the majority of the student body predisposed to be antagonistic to religion.

In addition to this predisposition, there is the peculiar campus climate formed by Whitman’s isolation from the outside world. Commonly known as “the Whitman Bubble”, the population of the campus uses the image of the Bubble to maintain a separation between what is inside and what is outside.

Whitman students, whether or not they come from a liberal background, are trained in politically-correct speech, ungendered pronouns, textual analysis, intellectual discourse, and the “liberal” arts in general. Students are socialized into a liberal-upper-middle-class-agnostic-environmentalist-academic sensibility, and it comes to be the accepted identity of the campus.

This identity is strengthened and reinforced when compared to what is outside the Bubble. What is outside the Bubble is conservative-working-class-religious-fundamentalist-SUV-driving-pragmatically-driven, and is everything that the Bubble-insiders define themselves as not. In this setting, the Whitman community is the “ingroup” and Walla Walla residents, or “Townies” are the “outgroup”. According to a study by Michael Riketta, the ingroup defines the outgroup as its opposite, and that opposition is

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<sup>113</sup> For college students of the current generation, this is much more common than the last. The generation of college students being studied in the apostate research I mentioned earlier is essentially the generation which is now our parents, and what apostates remained apostates from that research raised their children without religion.

perceived more strongly when there is a higher perceived conflict between ingroup and outgroup (104-105)

Most of the time, the perceived conflict between in- and outgroup is relatively low, with only occasional encroachments of the outside world upon the safety of the Bubble. But when something with which the outgroup is affiliated enters campus, it seems more of a threat than it would if it were to stay outside the Bubble. This has happened a few times in recent years, with encroachments ranging from the presence of military recruiters on campus (who were subsequently banned from campus by ASWC), to that ever-applicable presence of Christians on campus who don't just sit silently by.

In January of 2006, the WCF put up fliers around campus and slips of paper in student mailboxes with Bible quotes on them. The student listserve exploded with strongly anti-Christian messages, condemning the "perpetrators" of this campaign, decrying this violation of students rights not to receive flyers in their mailboxes...it went on for at least a week.

Students who had been raised in a church to which they no longer belonged, students who had been rejected by their faith, students with no religious background, or confirmed atheists, who associated Christianity with that string of conservative modifiers, students who associated Christianity with outside the Bubble and therefore with everything Whitman does not stand for, all of these spoke up in that debate.

When less-extensive debates happen, the discourse is often the same. Veronica Prout and Becky Avila wrote an opinion piece for the Pioneer this September, detailing what they saw as the lack of concern for religious diversity, and the lack of sensitivity of the student body toward religious people and Christians in particular (9/26/2007). A response letter was published the following week from a student who argued that religious belief is not something that needs to be respected:

Religious belief is irrational. This is a fact. There is no rational reason to believe in the existence of a god. No evidence exists to support it. As many like to point out, that's why it's called "faith." But for some reason, religion receives an elevated status above mere "belief" in our society. (Stevens, 10/4/2007)

In this manner, the liberalism of the college setting is twisted around to defend the denial of respect for religion. Because religion is "irrational", Stevens argues, it is appropriate to engage it in debate and to expect religious individuals to defend their beliefs on the same terms as any other argument. Stevens does not use the remainder of his letter to try to engage Prout and Avila in honest debate, but rather continues his rant against religion in general.

This small discourse in the Pioneer and the larger chaos that was the January 2006 listserve debate are the products of the recipe for religious intolerance at a small liberal arts college laid out in this paper. Combine students of an age associated with apostasy and religious disassociation, negative past experiences with religion, myriad attached connotations of the word “Christian”, identification with persecuted groups, and perceived threat. Mix hundreds of these students together in a Bubble-protected community which defines itself as anti-anything-outside-the-Bubble. Bake for a few semesters.

This serene soufflé of liberal academic paradise collapses, however, the moment at which some outside influence pierces the Bubble. This place where students feel safe and isolated from the outside world is not safe for religious students whenever that Bubble is popped. It turns into a deluge of cruelty and language which strikes at the soul. Religious students who are not affiliated with programs such as the WCF feel the brunt of this assault, because they do not have the support group that the affiliated students do. It is possible that these students who identify religiously at the beginning of college become apostates later due to such pressure from the Bubble to conform.

It’s a sad situation, because one of the many identifiers that Whitman’s self-idealization includes is “accepting”. What can be done? College students will probably always have a tendency toward apostasy, and the past experiences or group identities of students can not be controlled. However, improving the open discussion of religion on campus, and the “coming-out” of religious liberals and moderates whose voices are often overshadowed by the greater discourse on campus would alleviate the conflation of religion necessarily with conservatism, and also remedy the perceived threat problem.

The Bubble which reinforces the ingroup identity of the college must be transgressed at every opportunity. Speakers from the community as guests in club meetings, classrooms; students volunteering outside of the campus, students making friends outside of campus, all of these would help weaken the Bubble, and thus weaken the perception of differences between the in- and outgroup. Only by intentionally breaking down these presuppositions and boundaries can Whitman overcome the religious intolerance that is lurking so close to the surface here.

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