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The Identity Myth and Christian Anti-Semitism



by Michael D. Williams

Anti-Semitism did not die in the Berlin bunker in 1945 where Adolph Hitler committed suicide. Hitler was neither its inventor nor its undertaker. While Anti-Semitism goes back to at least 220 B.C. in the Greek colony of Alexandria in Egypt,¹ it is also as recent as the current Christian Identity movement in the U.S.

Identity Christianity is a confessionally Christian and racist movement loosely linked to the broader "Patriot movement," an informal coalition of individuals and right-wing extremist

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groups who believe that a global conspiracy engineered by a small group of elite insiders is manipulating political events, economic markets, and social trends for their own draconian ends. While the Patriot movement covers a relatively narrow ideological spectrum, it does include the John Birch Society, which repudiates anti-Semitism and bears no particular relationship to Christianity,² as well as rabidly anti-Semitic and white supremacist movements such as the Liberty Lobby, various Aryan groups, the growing militia movement, and Identity Christianity. What all of them share is a common commitment that American society is in decline due to the intentional and dastardly machinations of a secretive cabal of international power brokers.

Although the Patriot movement has long existed on the periphery of American society, it has grown markedly in recent years, and exploded into the American psyche in the spring of 1995. An hour and a half after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, the Institute for First Amendment Studies received a fax identifying the perpetrators as members of the Christian Identity movement. While the allegation was immediately discounted as the federal investigation concentrated on overseas terrorist groups, an arrest was soon made of an American citizen, Timothy McVeigh, who, it is alleged, has connections with the Christian Identity movement.

The term Christian Identity does not come from the idea that the Christian believer is in some way identified with the redemptive action of Jesus

Christ, but rather from the movement's association of God exclusively with the white race. It is race rather than the gracious activity of God which takes center stage in Christian Identity. The ideology of the movement is grounded in a distinctive reading of the Christian scriptures, a reading that centers upon alleged racial differentiation and racial value. A.J. Toynbee has suggested that wherever a system of racial value exists it is itself grounded in a racial myth. The myth may go unarticulated, but it is often deliberately designed to legitimate feelings of racial consciousness, superiority, and even arrogance where they did not exist before.³

The Identity Myth

While Christian Identity provides much of the confessional underpinnings for the racial myth of racist right-wing extremism, the adherents to the myth actually belong to a number of different groups. Organizations such as the Aryan Nations, the Aryan Brotherhood, the Ku Klux Klan, the Covenant, the Sword of the Arm of the Lord, the Posse Comitatus (an anti-taxation movement), the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, the Mountain Church of Christ, and the Order all adhere to the racial mythology of Christian Identity. All of these groups are militant, racist, and distrustful of the American government. In the last twenty years over thirty members of these groups have been arrested and convicted for racially inspired murder, conspiracy, armed robbery to finance race-hatred campaigns, and even sedition.⁴

Drawing upon roots in Anglo-Israelism and British civil religion,⁵ Christian Identity links a particular racial stock, the white race, both morally and biologically to Christ and the apostles, and ultimately to God. The Identity movement dates back to the 1870's with the publication of *Identification of the British Nation with Lost Israel* by Edward Hine. Adding to the myth of Anglo-Israelism a militant anti-Semitism and a call for a new American revolution to replace a corrupt political order, Hine laid the ideological foundation for the Identity movement.⁶

As set down by Hine and followed by such modern devotees as Rev. Richard Butler of the Aryan Nations, the racial myth of the Identity movement asserts that Adam, the first man, was white. And since Adam was made in the image of God, God

himself is white. But the racial purity of the human race would not last very long. After Adam and Eve's first son, Abel, was born, Eve was seduced by the serpent. This seduction is not the moral seduction which most readers of the Bible find in the story of the illicit tree in Genesis 3, but a literal sexual seduction. The serpent impregnated Eve, and she gave birth to Cain. Not being Adam's son, Cain did not bear the image of God: white racial characteristics. Cain, according to the Identity myth, was the first Jew, an evil hybrid race, half human, half devil. The fall, the disobedience in the Garden, was an act of race-mixing, of diluting the white race with foreign, ungodly elements.

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The purpose of the serpent's temptation was to eradicate the presence of God from the world, and thus to destroy the white race, the bearer of the divine image. Cain the Jew murdered Abel the image bearer, just as millennia later the Jewish sons of Satan would murder Jesus the *white* Son of God. The serpent's children, world Jewry, seek the annihilation of all Christians, white followers of Identity.

Following the Anglo-Israel myth, Identity holds that the Old Testament Hebrews were not Jews but the white race. "Saxon" means "Isaac's sons" according to Hine. These white sons of Isaac crossed the Caucasus (or Caucasian) Mountains and eventually founded the new Israel in the British Isles. This is all, quite understandably, confusing to the person who is unfamiliar with the Identity myth. I will endeavor to sort it out as we progress. Suffice it here to say that according to the Identity myth, the term "Hebrew" and "Jew" refer to different racial stocks. The Hebrews are the white sons of Seth, while the Jews are the product of Eve's adulterous affair with Satan.

This myth of origins rather than Anglo-Israelism *per se* is the basis for Identity's racial doctrine. Whites and Jews originate from different roots. The white man is the son of Adam and bears the image of God. The Jew is the son of the serpent and bears the image of Satan. Thus humanity is traceable to at least two sources.

I say “at least” because Identity did not leave all races but the white and the Jewish out of its understanding of origins. Richard Butler claims that the other races were the result of a divine experiment. This experiment failed because it could not obtain the *imago dei* (image of God) for the experiment subjects. Modern science refers to that experiment by the name “evolution”.⁷

The people of the Old Testament, the people who were called Israel, were not Jewish but white. To conceive of Abraham or Moses as a Jew is a supreme fallacy according to Identity theology. Such notions are the product of successful propagandizing by the Jews. The Jews and their father, Satan, have entered into a conspiracy to deceive the white race into believing that they, and not the white race, are the people of God.⁸

This conspiracy theory solves the christological problem of Jesus’ alleged Jewishness. Part of the Identity myth is the belief that the Israelites never returned to the land of Canaan after being taken into exile. When Israel was removed from their ancestral land the Jews moved in and propagated the fabrication that they were Israel. Jesus was not a Jew but an Israelite, a white man from the house of David. According to the Identity preacher James Wickstrom, all references to the Jewishness of Jesus are the result of the Jewish conspiracy whose intent is the deception of the true people of God.⁹

The Identity movement uses the Jewish conspiracy theory as a hermeneutic key for understanding history. All the world’s problems, whether they be economic woes, political turmoil, or even personal misfortune, are traced to the conspiracy of the Jews to win the world for Satan. Throughout history, the theory goes, the Jews have been busy promulgating the lie that they are the white race, the people of God. The Jews, says the theory, introduced the Black Plague in the late thirteenth century as a scheme to depopulate white Europe. They have been expelled from each country they have entered after the native white peoples have begun to notice that their children vanished at those times of the year when Jewish holidays called for blood sacrifices.¹⁰ It was a Jew, Karl Marx, who produced the literature that brought the world the hated Jewish curse of communism. Through their usury and corrupt business practices, the Jews

have taken control of the world economy in order to undermine the economies of white countries. Today they promote homosexuality, feminism, abortion, affirmative action, and multiculturalism to dilute the white race. In short, anything that has gone wrong in the affairs of humankind can be traced to the Jewish conspiracy.¹¹ All historical conflict and all contemporary national problems result from the cosmic struggle between God and Satan, a battle that rages in history between Yahweh’s chosen, the white race, and the Jewish allies of Satan.

The Christian Identity movement marries its conspiracy theory to American nationalism, making the conflict between God and Satan not only racial but national as well. According to the Identity myth, the thirteenth tribe of Israel found its way to Europe after the exile and eventually traveled across the Atlantic aboard the *Mayflower* to America, where God gave them such sacred and inspired documents as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the first ten amendments to that constitution. Manasseh, the displaced house of Israel, became the “founding fathers” of the United States. Yet America, the promised homeland of the Israelite, did not escape the notice of the Jews. Through deceit and satanic magic, the Jews sought to thwart God’s eschatological purpose of securing a safe homeland for his people by usurping the control of America from the white Pilgrim fathers. The chosen means for reaching the satanic goal of white destruction is the Jewish corruption of divinely inspired American civil law by way of constitutional amendment. All subsequent amendments to the first ten, the Bill of Rights, are in reality blasphemous additions dictated by our Jewish masters.¹² Seeking to sap the moral strength of America and mongrelize her white race, the Jews have introduced such inherently diluting programs and legislation as civil rights and multiculturalism. They have amended the Constitution to allow blacks and women to vote, to integrate our schools, to establish a federal income tax, and to permit federal reserve banking. How do federal income taxes and the federal reserve relate here? They finance the Jewish conspiracy and serve to centralize power into the hands of the Jewish cabal.

Z.O.G.

White, Christian America is an occupied country according to Richard Butler, pastor and leader of the Aryan Nations. He refers to the present U.S. Government as Z.O.G., the Zionist Occupation Government.¹³ Butler claims that the Bible predicted the enslavement of the chosen people by Z.O.G., the anti-christ. It also predicts the sudden and catastrophic overthrow of Satan and his minions at the return of Christ, the warrior king of Israel, to this world to set up his kingdom and vindicate the white race. Thus we see that Identity's myth of origins and conspiracy theory culminates in a futurist eschatology. Christian Identity includes all the necessary components for a theology of history: a theory of origins, an explanation of historical differentiation and conflict, and a resolution of that conflict. The return of Christ will signal Armageddon, a final cataclysmic battle that will cleanse the earth of all non-whites.¹⁴ That final struggle will also see the annihilation of those whites who have sold out to the Jewish conspiracy. In the parlance of the Identity movement, these race traitors are referred to as "city slickers" and "carpet baggers."

Belief in a militant and imminent *parousia* constitutes a call to arms and justifies racial violence for the adherents of Christian Identity. Convinced that the world is on the verge of catastrophic upheaval, the Identity believer believes that he has the green light to eliminate Jews, Blacks, Hispanics, Catholics, foreigners, and race traitors.¹⁵ Within the images of John's Apocalypse, the Identity believer finds a vivid description of the approaching chaos as well as a holy mandate to take every step possible to aid its coming by means of racial violence.

In the mid-1970's, Butler relocated from California to the Idaho panhandle town of Hayden Lake to establish his Aryan Nations compound. He saw the Pacific Northwest, with its relatively low minority population, as both a potential homeland for the white race and a staging area for the coming conflict against Z.O.G. In 1992, Eva Vail Lamb, a neighbor and supporter of Butler, established the Idaho Organized Militia as a defense force against the U.S. federal government, Z.O.G. Believing that a racially pure white nation will arise out of the Pacific Northwest, Butler and his

followers have begun to build what they fashion to be a patriot army, an armed resistance against Z.O.G. and the mongrelization of the white race.¹⁶ Adherents of Christian Identity are preparing for the battle that will be joined at the "fields of Armageddon," which Richard Butler interprets to be the American grain belt.¹⁷

Butler's Identity followers have been stockpiling arms and freeze-dried foods, training at "survivalist" bases around the country (now called militias). Christian Identity adherents have even been preparing lists of persons and installations to be targeted at the appearing of Christ, which they expect at any moment. The time we presently

*...a battle raging in history
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the white race, and the
Jewish allies of Satan?*

inhabit is called "the end of time," or the final "period of tribulation," and even now the Identity believer has the mandate to militantly resist the Zionist Occupation Government by whatever means are available to him, even terrorism and murder. In a bizarre collapsing of language in upon itself, we might say that the Christian patriot under the Identity view is called to the violent overthrow of the current government of the United States. The Identity motto: "One God, one nation, one race" stands as an urgent battlecry to violent racial and political revolution. In 1983 William Potter Gale, a retired Army colonel, preached over a Kansas radio station:

Yes, we're gonna cleanse our land. We're gonna do it with a sword. And we're gonna do it with violence. "Oh," they say, "Reverend Gale, you're teaching violence." You're damn right I'm teaching violence! God said you're gonna do it that way, and it's about time somebody is telling you to get violent, whitey.

You better start making dossiers and recording names, addresses, phone numbers, and car license numbers on every damn Jew rabbi JDL [Jewish Defense League] leader in this land, and you better start doing it now. And know where he is. If you have to be told any more than that, you're too damn dumb to bother with. You get these roadblock locations, where you can set up ambushes, and get it all working now.¹⁸

The Justification of Racial Violence

The Christian Identity myth not only unifies the racist radical right, but also justifies their racist attitudes and violence. Identity uses quasi-biblical ideology to sanction racist attitudes as well as terrorist and seditious activity. While the orthodox Christian may be shocked by Identity's distortions of the Christian tradition to rationalize racial violence, such use ought not to surprise us. Confessional language has often been used to justify terrorist violence. Other contemporary examples are as close as the nightly news: warring confessional factions in India, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and even Latin America.¹⁹

The Christian Identity movement believes that racial hatred and murder are justified because God is at war with Satan and that struggle is carried out in history by means of racial conflict. God's chosen emissaries, the Christian white race, have been assigned to the front and are locked in mortal struggle with the satanic Jew. Identity thought not only justifies racial hatred, but in fact makes it obligatory for the Identity convert. Under the Identity value system of the "white makes right," the follower of the movement feels justified in seeking the promised Christian millennium of peace and righteousness by racial hatred and acts of terrorism. The obligation to resist Z.O.G. and cleanse the world of the satanic Jew provided by the Identity myth alleviates the guilt associated with murder and violence. Coates notes that "Identity allows its born-again men and women to practice with suddenly clear consciences that bigotry, hatred and even criminal violence that they had been taught from childhood were sinful."²⁰

While the message of Christian Identity reached very few people in the 1980's, today it has found a medium through which it can reach millions. The computer internet is glutted with apocalyptic warnings of social collapse and tales of the federal government's intention to displace the white race from the American continent. The very founder and backbone of American culture, the white man, is being taxed to death in order to support runaway immigration based upon racial quotas that favor Third World non-whites, and an entrenched welfare system that caters to "the worst elements in the population," by "buying their

votes with welfare programs paid for by our hard work." Using our tax dollars, the government has created an educational system that has given us nothing but falling SAT scores and rising illiteracy and an EPA that forces ever more restrictive rules and regulations upon us, in effect stealing our land and liberties. Our taxes support degenerate politicians, "crooks and liars of the sort typified by Bill Clinton." White culture is degraded via the agenda of multiculturalism, a happy pluralism that serves only to teach young whites how to dress and behave like drug-infested, lazy, ghetto blacks. Most perniciously of all, agencies of the federal government are now procuring attack helicopters and armored personnel carriers for domestic use against those whites who openly dissent against its policies. The list of fears and complaints on the electronic bulletin board is legion: the 1992 murder of the wife and children of white supremacist and tax dissenter Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge, Idaho; the murder of David Koresh and his followers at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, in April 1993; the efforts to take away our God-given and constitutionally guaranteed right to protect ourselves and our families via the Brady Bill and the Crime Bill.²¹ Can the United Nations invasion of America and the imposition of the New World Order be far away?²²

Convinced that the U.S. federal government is bent on the systematic violation of the personal liberties of white Americans, adherents of Identity Christianity have come to think of the federal government as an enemy. Central within the Christian Identity rhetoric concerning the evils of the federal government is the debate over gun control. It is commonly believed that the government conducts illegal and covert information gathering activities targeted against the groups that make up the larger Patriot movement. Allegations of warrantless searches and wiretaps, satellite eavesdropping, and undercover infiltrations against those holding politically incorrect views are common on the internet. What is the government up to they ask. Not the defense of the citizenry, but the theft of precious liberties. The Field Manual of the Free Militia alleges that the federal government is seeking to pass gun control legislation because it is committed to the destruction of the Christian religion. In fact, the Manual insists that it is every

Christian's moral duty to possess a weapon (preferably an assault weapon), learn to use it, and join together with others who are prepared to fight the government in order to preserve the first amendment. But the key to the first amendment is the second, according to the Manual:

[T]his is a pivotal point in American history. If the government is successful in banning semi-automatic paramilitary weapons, then they will be emboldened not only to further infringe gun rights, but to infringe all rights. This is because the Second Amendment is the teeth of the Bill of Rights, and assault rifles are the teeth of the Second Amendment. Without their bite, there is nothing to prevent a draconian state from devouring all of our precious liberties.

Materials such as the Field Manual of the Free Militia do not call people merely to prepare to defend themselves against an imagined hostile state, but in fact to take action. William Pierce declares that the true Patriot is the one is willing to take responsibility to "do something about [the] enemy." The time for writing your congressman and complaining is long gone. Congress cannot hear the "normal" white American. It's too busy catering to the homosexuals, feminists, Jews, and minorities. The white race must protect itself from Big Brother. And it must do it now, before it's too late.

Racist Dehumanization

The Identity myth denies the *imago dei* to all but white people. Richard Butler's "reasoning" works this way:

Do you suppose that all that walk this earth on two legs are human? But this is not true. God breathed the spirit only into white people. "Human" comes from the Sanskrit which means "ho-man" or "spirit man." And when we trace down the roots of the people, it is the ho-man, the fair-haired white people, to whom they referred. We can also find that in the Vedas of ancient India.²³

That Adam was a white man demonstrates that the Creator is also white, because Adam was made in his likeness (Genesis 1:27). Only whites bear this likeness, this *imago*, and it is located in the pigmentation of their skin. This exclusive association of the *imago dei* with white people dehuman-

izes all others. Those races that are the product of evolution (and not creation) are impure and predestined for failure. As the children of Satan, the Jews are little more than demons who have no right to exist. Thus, racial purity assumes supreme importance in Identity thought. To mix the white race with any other is to deny and forfeit the image of God because all but whites are understood as being defective in essential being. They are not persons, human beings, but either demonic agents (the Jews) or mere objects within the world to be used by the people of God.

That which is glorified by the Identity believer is the very thing that he scorns in Jews and Blacks,

With the death of the Soviet empire, the search for an enemy has turned inward and found a target in the federal government.

that is to say, his own being, most particularly a single genetic aspect of his person, the color of his skin. The believer in the Identity myth has made a god out of skin pigmentation. White skin gives value to the self and defines personhood. The Identity believer's trust or faith is grounded in and allied to race. As Martin Luther taught more than four centuries ago, "Whatever then thy heart clings to...and relies upon, this is properly thy God."²⁴ That which one absolutizes or makes the ground of all value functions as one's sovereign, one's god. In his book *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*, George D. Kelsey rightly designated racism as a confessional stance. The ultimate center, the god of racism, is race. Such thinking, Kelsey concludes, is a form of idolatry because it elevates an immanent, this-worldly element to the level of the absolute.²⁵ The racist defies his own being. Thus, the final point of reference for decision making and action for the racist is a biological particular. If we are to grant the word "Christian" in Christian Identity any substance at all, we must say that at best it is polytheistic, for it worships a god of race alongside of the God of Christianity.

By means of genetic classification, the racist places the onus of sin and evil within the world upon others and places those with the correct

genetic differentia into the realm of eternity and certainty. Thus the god of race determines the shape of history. All culture and historical structures rest upon a genetic substructure, for the racist roots culture, behavior, and value in race. The quality of history, then, is not moral so much as biological, because the essence of man is his genetic structure. James Daane captured the *geist* of the racist theological myth of history when he wrote as follows:

When a feature of race incidental to our humanity is absolutized, the race possessing this feature exalts itself as a superior race, develops the consciousness that it is the historic bearer of a transcendent destiny to lead the world, by whatever required means, into its future.²⁶

I suggest that the Christian Identity view of history in fact elevates the idol of race over the God of Christian revelation. Its myth of origins is really not worthy of exegetical refutation because *it is not based upon revelation in any way*. The things that it claims are biblical are simply not in the Bible. They are not even legitimately capable of being extrapolated from the Bible. The declarations by Butler and others regarding the alleged etymological meanings of biblical words are fanciful to the point of being laughable. Despite its pretensions, the Identity myth simply refuses to deal responsibly with the text of biblical revelation. That revelation, especially Genesis 2-6, asks questions of Identity's myth of origins that Identity cannot answer. Did Adam, the white man, fall? How did the other races fall? Identity's answer appears to be that Adam did not fall at all and that the other races were created already fallen. Such notions only demean the Creator and victimize all men because they reduce culpability to extrahistorical cosmic forces. To whom is the promise of redemption given in chapter 3? The white man does not seem to need it and it is beyond the reach of all others.

Curiously, there is one narrative element of the early chapters of Genesis that makes no appearance in the Identity myth of origins. The story of the noahic flood is totally absent from Identity thought. The reason for its absence is self-evident: it simply explodes (drowns) the myth. Genesis 6-8 tells the story of eight people, all blood kin, who were saved from a divine cleansing of the earth.

The inescapable conclusion one draws from the story is that the Lord started afresh from these eight people and their animal cargo. Any racial differentiation that took place before that time would be erased by the waters of judgment.

I further suggest that one's race does not make him or her more or less of a person or more or less human. Acts 17:26 affirms Adam as the universal ancestor of all human beings regardless of race. The biblical conception of humanity is one of a unified stock that finds its genetic base in Adam and its moral base in the obedience/disobedience of Adam and Jesus Christ, the second Adam. All men are in Adam, and therefore, commonly condemned and commonly in need of redemption. Acts 10:34-36 states clearly that there is no place for racial boasting. God does not show racial favoritism (cf. 1 Peter 1:17), but rather grounds his merciful acceptance in his own gracious activity and in the obedient response of human beings (Acts 10:43). Jesus Christ is Lord of all who believe (Acts 10:36; Romans 10:11-18), not all who bear a particular skin pigmentation. Romans 10:12 and Galatians 3:28 are interesting vis-a-vis the Identity use of the word "Jew" as signifying the seed of Satan. Both of those texts declare belief in Christ as the end of all racial value determinations:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).²⁷

A Warning to Evangelicalism

The supreme heresy of all racism is that it reduces other human beings into mere objects and teaches that one can stereotype other races by means of reifying images. The racist excludes other races, or one particularly hated race, from humanity and personhood because he alleges their very existence to be corrupt. Racist stereotyping, however, says more about the racist than it does about the race being described. A stereotype is the exaggeration of a few typical characteristics,

imagined or real, into determinative characteristics. It functions as a device of legitimation, one that oversimplifies and justifies perceptions and thinking. Thus, stereotyping is not meant to inform but to persuade. Using Martin Buber's existential anthropology,²⁸ Kelsey argues that the racist knows himself through the contrast with the hated race or races. The racist requires the "out-race" in order to actualize himself. The member of the other race is an "it," an object to be experienced. Thus the hated out-race and its members are objectified, alienated and depersonalized.²⁹ While I refrain from following Buber and Kelsey in their ontological conclusions, Kelsey's treatment does appear to offer a legitimate psychological model of the racist and the process by which he depersonalizes the out-races. Many scholars who have examined racism conclude that it arises from psychological feelings of displacement and alienation on the part of the racist.³⁰ The racist needs someone to blame for his feeling of personal inadequacy in the face of social forces that appear both beyond his control and hostile towards him.

Contemporary political developments demonstrate forcefully the principle. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet state signaled the end of the Cold War. But what immediately replaced communism in the former Eastern bloc was not a democratic utopia but tribal dispute and ethnic hostility. The gap left by the demise of Soviet totalitarianism allowed long entrenched animosities to resurface. It also created or occasioned an alteration in the nativist and populist American psyche. Since the end of World War 2, the "international communist conspiracy" held conspiracy-minded Americans in thrall. But with the death of the Soviet empire, the search for an enemy has turned inward and found a target in the federal government.

A large and growing number of Americans feel themselves alienated by a government that seems not only indifferent but hostile to their interests. Buffeted by global political and economic restructuring, increasing competition for fewer and lower paying jobs, and the social dislocation and confusion that has attended middle class American culture since the mid-1960's, the predominantly white, male, working-and-middle-class has seen

its traditional privileges and status continually challenged and eroded by progressive social movements. Each new call for "rights" appears to come at the expense of the white male.

Someone is to blame; someone stands behind this reversal of fortune. The adherents of Christian Identity personalize and cosmically moralize their forces, and thus fall into the manichean mythology that historical effects are caused by satanic forces aligned against an innocent, victimized, and godly remnant.

Evangelical Christians who rightly see such movements as Identity as an affront to the biblical love commands (Matt. 5:43-45; 22:37-40; John

Often the word "liberal" means "different from us," and therefore less than fully Christian.

14:20; 15:12) are themselves not immune to stereotypical thinking when it comes to race. All of us have heard white Christians describe black people as naturally lazy, orientals as sneaky, and Jewish people as stingy and cunning in business affairs. Nor do we restrict the use of depersonalizing stereotypes merely to race. The word "liberal" is thrown about as a device to dismiss people and ideas, particularly in separatistic evangelical and fundamentalist circles—and it is not unheard of in Reformed circles. This particular door swings both ways, as orthodox Christians are often typified as "fundamentalists" by more liberal Christians. In conservative circles, more often than not, the use of the word "liberal" as a descriptive tag means "different from us," and therefore less than fully Christian. Rarely do we use the word to designate a particular historical and theological tradition, or an advocate of that tradition. When used merely to signify those who are different from us, the word "liberal" places the person or his thought into a neat category where it does not require our serious attention, and thereby labels the person and what he has to say in such a way that he can be easily dismissed.

Besides illustrating how we deal with those who are different from us, the Christian Identity movement provides evangelical Christianity with two other lessons or warnings. First, secular analyses of the Identity movement tend to treat it as a sub-

set of Protestant fundamentalism. Coates, a journalist, understands the movement as a confessional position with all “the traditional fundamentalist trappings,” even though it obtains its particular identity through its racial myth of origins.³¹ Likewise, the criminologist Jonathan R. White claims that Identity’s links to fundamentalism cannot be ignored.³² In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, Skipp Porteous has typified Christian Identity as “classic fundamentalism,” and has aligned the religious right, the Christian Coalition, the militia movement, and Christian Identity into a single ideological movement. He has gone so far as to suggest that Pat Robertson’s 1991 book, *The New World Order*, has served to feed the conspiracy frenzy of the far right.³³ We therefore ought to be aware that conservative Protestantism is smeared by association with Identity thought by secularists. This fact alone, fair or foul, ought to make us more sensitive to both racial problems and the language of political dissent.

Second, an amazing correlation is often drawn between Identity thought and dispensational theology by writers such as White and Coates. The latter contends that dispensationalist “pro-Semitism” bears “close scrutiny, for it has little to do with human affection.” Rather, the evangelical obsession with Israel concerns itself with a particular understanding of the Jewish nation and its eschatological place in the divine purpose.³⁴ Thus, Coates is able to claim that there is ultimately no difference in kind between Neo-Nazis stockpiling Uzi machine guns in underground bunkers and Hal Lindsey portraying the Jews as the “terminal generation.”³⁵ While this sounds far-fetched, and we must admit that White and Coates are less than lucid here, they are nibbling around the edges of a legitimate concern. What dispensationalists assert regarding the Jews has not been based upon a metaphysical distinction (a difference in essence or value in the mind of God) between Jews and Christians. I am not saying here that the Christian theologian cannot distinguish between Old Testament Judaism and the Christian church. Some such distinction seems to me not only warranted but fully in line with a redemptive-historical reading of Scripture. But, that distinction must be understood as historical rather than metaphysical. It is not a matter of the church and Israel being

apples and oranges, but different apples. Once people make a metaphysical distinction between races, they have created an ontological difference that is certainly open to racist manipulation.

The final lesson here, then, is that to put the Jew on an eschatological pedestal is ultimately as injurious both to him and to us as is racism. Rather, we ought to recognize the New Testament dictum for what it is, absolute, irrespective of race. No man comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ. To love Jewish people is not a matter of holding them in awe as the eschatological people of God, but to offer them the free redeeming grace of God in Jesus Christ.

NOTES

- 1 Belden Menkus, “Anti-Semitism,” *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, Carl F.H. Henry, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 88.
- 2 The object of conspiratorial paranoia for the members of the John Birch Society is not a cabal of Christianity hating Jews, but rather such institutions as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the United Nations. See Dan Smoot, *The Invisible Government* (Belmont, Ma.: Western Islands, 1965) and James Perloff, *The Council on Foreign Relations and the American Decline* (Belmont Ma.: Western Islands, 1988).
- 3 A.J. Toynbee, “Race,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 4, James Jastings, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922) 552.
- 4 Jonathan R. White, “Holy War: Terrorism as a Theological Construct,” (Gaithersburg, Maryland: International assoc. of Chiefs of Police, n.d.) 2.
- 5 On British civil religion and its influence upon American culture see Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) 43-64.
- 6 James Coates, *Armed and Dangerous: The Rise of the Survivalist Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987) 81.
- 7 *ibid.*, 90-91.
- 8 White, 5.
- 9 *ibid.*, 7.
- 10 Coates, 86. Herman L. Strack, “Anti-Semitism,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. 1, 598, noted in 1922 that if such blood-rites did indeed exist they would not go unnoticed by the general population. He claimed that Judaism in Europe divided into the Talmudist and Karaite sects during the eighth century A.D. These two sects have been bitterly opposed to one another and either would gladly point the finger at the other if such rites did take place.
- 11 Coates, 89.
- 12 *ibid.*, 83.
- 13 White, 7.
- 14 Coates, 9.

- 15 White, 9.
- 16 In 1984, Butler's vision of racial conflict briefly materialized in the form of an offshoot from his Aryan Nations led by Robert Jay Matthews, called the Order. The Order committed a series of crimes, including bank robberies, bombings, and the murder of Denver radio talk show host Alan Berg, a Jew. Matthews himself died in a shootout with police in December of that year. See Robert Crawford, et al., *The Northwest Imperative* (Portland, OR: Coalition for Human Dignity, 1994) 1.16.
- 17 Coates, 90.
- 18 Quoted in Coates, 96-97.
- 19 I do not know to what extent analysts of liberation theology have discussed it as a justification of violence in Latin America, but I suggest that it would be a fruitful area of critique.
- 20 Coates, 81.
- 21 William L. Pierce, "Oklahoma City and America's Future." Originally a radio address aired April 29, 1995. World Wide Web, July 14, 1995. Similar paranoia can be found in any number of militia newsletters on the internet.
- 22 Common among right-wing conspiracy theorists is the idea that certain "European bankers" (a long recognized cipher referring to the Jews) control the United Nations and intend to use its military forces against the white population of the United States. See Skipp Porteous, "Militia Madness." World Wide Web, July 12, 1995.
- 23 Quoted in Coates, 91.
- 24 Quoted in H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960) 119.
- 25 George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956) 9, 26-27.
- 26 James Daane, "Racism," *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, 565.
- 27 See Thomas O. Figart, *A Biblical Perspective on the Race Problem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 131-42, for a fuller discussion of the exegetical material relating to racial differentia and value.
- 28 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, (New York: 1937).
- 29 Kelsey, 43-54.
- 30 Toynbee, 553; White, 5, 10; Coates, 14; Menkus, 597.
- 31 Coates, 81.
- 32 White, 10.
- 33 op. cit.
- 34 *ibid.*, Coates, 250-58.
- 35 Coates, 12.