MANIFESTATION OF A LACK: CAPITALISM, DEMOCRACY, & THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

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During the past twenty years, there has been a major shift among America’s radical right; increased popularity, radicalism, nationalism, anti-Semitism, and terrorism have marked this change. These same years have harkened the era of globalization, a period discernible by the increasingly rapid spread of capitalism and related changes in political subjectivities across the globe. This thesis examines the relationship between these changes in an attempt to shed light on political and economic subjectivity in contemporary America.

In order to do so, I focus specifically on the Christian Identity Movement (also called “Christian Identity”). Christian Identity is the most popular religious movement among the radical right and has contributed significantly to the aforementioned change among these groups. In addition, its contemporary manifestation arose in direct response to economic and political disenfranchisement. For all of these reasons, Christian Identity provides a worthy site for investigation.

I begin this thesis with a chapter that explores the relationship between the Christian Identity Movement and the history of democracy. I provide a detailed description of democracy’s philosophic and lived history in order to elaborate on the system’s underlying imperfections and conclude by explaining the connections between contemporary political and economic changes and Christian Identity’s existence.

Chapter 2 then situates Christian Identity within the history of American culture’s Puritanical roots. This investigation demonstrates the way Christian Identity adherents use the Puritan tradition to seek a return to a mythic and purified American past, revealing the way
members employ a regressive response to contemporary political and economic changes in America.

Finally, chapter 3 demonstrates the ideological and practical effects of Identity’s attempts to return to this mythic past. I utilize psychoanalysis to propose that virulent anti-Semitism and terrorism are related products of Identity’s search for lost origins.

I conclude by arguing that Identity’s ideology and terrorist practices are direct responses to economic, social, and political shifts. As these changes are a result of the increasing hegemony of capitalist ideology in the globalized era, Identity’s existence suggests that current antagonisms within America’s liberal-democracy will not all be swept away by progress brought by capitalism, but are born from its very evolution.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION: THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY MOVEMENT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND EARLY AMERICAN CULTURE</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. THE WHOLLY UNHOLY OTHER?: JEWS, PARANOIA, &amp;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTOPIAN IMAGININGS</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION:
THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY MOVEMENT

In April of 2001, Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center (also referred to as the SPLC, a group that tracks extremist behavior in the United States) delivered a lecture entitled, “The State of Hate in America: The Growing Conflict Between Identity Politics and Multiculturalism.” During this lecture Potok outlined some of the major changes among the radical right in America in the previous fifteen years, centrally addressing the fact that it had become both more anti-Semitic and more inclined to use terrorism. Potok explained that changes in the economy caused by globalization were the biggest factor, as they had caused disenfranchisement and social change for many who had previously maintained fairly stable lives in the working class. I found this lecture both interesting and insightful, but as is true of a lot of scholarship on America’s radical right, I found that it did not answer a number of questions that its material raised.

I agree fundamentally with Potok’s claim that the economy was the central factor leading to the radical right’s shift (in fact this is a major topic that I will explore in the coming discussion). However, disenfranchisement does not necessarily lead one to become anti-Semitic, violent, or to use terrorist tactics. This thesis, then, is an attempt to provide an (at least partial) explanation of how and why shifts caused by globalization are related to these specific changes on the radical right. In order to do so, I will provide an analysis one particular group among the radical right: Christian Identity.

Before approaching Christian Identity, an exploration of the specifics of the shift among the radical right is in order. Until the 1990s, the radical right in the United States was centrally focused on opposing communism and restoring white supremacy (Potok, “The State of Hate”).
Specifically, members of extreme right-wing groups advocated for the restoration of Jim Crow Laws, for keeping people of color out of the job market, and for eradicating communism in order to save the America they so loved. The radical right of this era did use violence, mostly through acts which sought to maintain and restore social and cultural power of whites in localized arenas (White, 222, Potok, “The State of Hate”). These groups were known for their Ku Klux Klan (or KKK) politics; they threatened and attacked individuals in order to send the message that white supremacy was not going to be threatened. Until around 1990, the rise in these hate groups generally corresponded to America’s economy; when the economy was up, hate groups went down and vice versa (Potok, “The State of Hate”).

However, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the radical right began changing and by the beginning of the 1990s, it was radically different. While restoring white supremacy is still a central focus, the enemy is no longer perceived to be the black man, but is believed to be the Jew (Potok, “The State of Hate”). The patriotism and nationalism that marked earlier manifestations of the radical right has also shifted. Those on the radical right are no longer aligned with the government in their fight against communism, but instead target American political, economic, and legal institutions; yesterdays’ most enthused flag wavers are now burning flags alongside the radical left (Potok, “The State of Hate”). However, the radical right remains nationalistic. These groups now believe America has been taken over by outside forces and thus believe in America, but not in those in power in America.

Unlike the old radical right, which fluctuated in reverse proportion to the health of the economy, number and size of groups now rises every year. Increased growth has been accompanied by a large increase in terrorism. This shift has been especially dramatic since 1995, the year Timothy McVeigh bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, which houses
offices of the U.S. government, in Oklahoma City (Potok, “State of Hate”). While the rise may not be solely attributable to an actual increase in terrorist attempts (as the SPLC and other terrorist watch groups increased its efforts in seeking out suspected terrorists in the wake of this huge disaster), it does signify a dramatic increase in the number of attempts to commit acts of terror. In addition, these terrorist cases also indicate a change in right wing extremists’ targets. Instead of primarily directing violence towards individuals, the radical right now frequently targets government buildings, abortion clinics, banks, and gay night clubs among other institutions. This signifies their willingness to kill large numbers of civilians and also demonstrates a new attempt to send their message to the government and society at large.

There are a number of factors that have contributed to this change; among them, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is one of the most important. The relevance of this event has two parts. One, the fall of the Berlin Wall signified the end to the threat of communism to America and thus the end of the nation’s external enemy. The degree to which this threat was real is still up for debate; nonetheless, communism served as the big enemy America was attempting to combat.

In addition to the psychological change wrought by the end of the communist threat, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked a shift in economics. As capitalism was allowed to spread world-wide, the fall of the Berlin Wall also heralded the new era of globalization that linked nations, cultures, and institutions across the world in a way that had not previously been possible (Patman, 967). The spread of capitalism was no longer limited by the Soviet empire and was thus allowed to spread internationally without major constraint. This is not to suggest that the changes which resulted from globalization were merely economic; they were social and cultural as well. As Slavoj Žižek suggests, “the brutal imposition of the unified world market…threatens
all local ethnic traditions, including the very form of the nation-state” (Tarrying 12). Together, the psychological, economic, social, and cultural changes made 1989 a moment of change among the radical right.

Not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the First Gulf War also set change in motion. The major shift elicited by this event was not economic, political, or social, but instead revolved around President George H.W. Bush’s proclamation that “We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order” and “what we’re doing is going to chart the future of the world for the next hundred years” (qtd. In Mueller, 128). Bush may have been suggesting a new system of global politics, including new security measures, but the radical right saw his intentions differently. Members of the radical right expressed concern about the establishment of a “One World Government” prior to the Gulf War and Bush’s statement was perceived as confirmation to what were already significant fears. Fundamentalists much less radical than Christian Identity adherents—for example, Pat Robertson—responded by placing the comment squarely within apocalyptic fears (Barkun, 257-8).

Bush’s claims and actions in the First Gulf War also coincided with three events that were important to large segments of the extremist right. One of these events was The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act which went into effect in 1993, adding to the radical right’s already blossoming fears of the federal government. The second event that served to stir the radical right around this time was the Ruby Ridge incident of 1992. This botched attempt by the FBI and ATF to arrest Christian Identity adherent Randy Weaver in his home in Idaho resulted in a shoot-out which killed Weaver’s son and pregnant wife, as well as a US Marshal. Lastly, the radical right was given new energy by the 1993 federal siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, which resulted in over 70 deaths (White, 225). In the minds of many right wing
extremists, both Ruby Ridge and Waco provided evidence of a growing government conspiracy to stop all who dissented from America’s political and cultural mainstream.

Thus, the early 1990s became a turning point in the radical right’s demonization of leaders around the world, especially in America. The conspiracy theories that developed in the wake of these events posit a secret organization of wealthy Jewish men whose uncontrollable greed fuels their quest to dominate the world. The United Nations is perceived to be the main institution this imagined cabal controls, through which they are thought to have power over governments around the world (Barkun, 258). New World Order conspiracies have increased many radical right groups’ popularity and have shaped their goals and methods of response. The use of terrorism has increased as groups target what they believe to be symbols of this One World Order’s government.

In many ways, terrorism has become another manifestation of a cold war in which sides are drawn between the “terrorists” and the American government and society. As in the Cold War, each side perceives themselves to be radically at odds with the other. This opposition is understood to be ideological and is fought via symbolic battles for power. Much as cold wars do, terrorism uses violence and the threat of violence in attempt to affect political and social change (White, 8). Governments often respond by positing terrorists as the radical opposite of themselves, and thus engage in the black and white thinking which often marks terrorism itself.

The cold war comparison becomes especially illuminated when one considers the United States’ response to the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. President George W. Bush’s response to these attacks was to posit them within a black and white conception of the world, not unlike Cold War rhetoric which described communists and communism as the radically evil other to democracy’s inherent goodness. Bush clearly drew battle lines when he claimed, “Either
you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (“Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” 9/20/2001). As he stated, “this is a new kind of evil…[and we] will rid the world of the evildoers” (qtd. in Hoffman, 19). His subsequent initiation of “The War on Terror” signified a veritable open-ended battle against anyone the United States determined to be a terrorist (Hoffman, 19). As was true of communism in the Cold War, the threat perceived to come from terrorism is imagined to be not merely physical, but also ideological; democracy, liberalism, freedom are all thought to be threatened by this “new kind of evil.”

However, conceiving of liberal democracy as the radical opposite of terrorism does not tell the whole story. As it relies on non-democratic means to effect change and because it demonstrates ideologies based on simplistic moralistic and oppositional ideologies, terrorism is at odds with democratic ideals. At the same time, though, terrorism is not entirely unrelated to democracy but is actually a consequence of democracy’s imperfections. Terrorism today often expresses political alienation. Terrorists often believe the democratic state is not listening to their wants and needs and thus they turn to violence to express their voice in a way the state cannot ignore. Much terrorism today is an expression of sentiments that terrorists do not believe will be responded to by the democratic state. In addition, As Bruce Hoffman sates, terrorism, especially religiously motivated terrorism, has risen in a time when “…the promise of munificent benefits from the liberal-democratic, capitalist state…fails to materialize in many countries throughout the world” (86). At the same time that terror is rising, democracy seeks to establish itself globally. The growth of liberal democracy has not proven to eradicate terrorism though. That terrorism is still on the rise as democracy spreads suggests that there are inherent imperfections and antagonisms within the system’s current manifestation.

Unfulfilled promises of democracy and terrorism are not unique to the “3rd World.” In
this specific moment when America is leading the project to establish democracy in Iraq, it has a growing number of terrorists on its home turf. In America, as elsewhere, terrorism is in fact a response to changes created by democracy’s spread. To a large extent, America’s domestic terrorism responds to the spread of capitalism that is so often ensured by democracy’s increase. Thus, while the hegemonic discourse in America posits democracy and capitalism as blessings for all of humanity, terrorism is an unintended and negative consequence of imperfections in these systems. By arguing that there is a relationship between the liberal-democratic system and terrorism, I am not, in any way, excusing domestic (or any) terrorism or terrorists. Alternatively, I am attempting to explain how and why these imperfections have given rise to the radical right in its contemporary, American form.

Instead of examining the whole radical right, this thesis will focus on the Christian Identity Movement in particular. I have chosen Christian Identity for a number of reasons. First, as members of a religious group, Christian Identity adherents explicitly document their theology making it easier to gain insight into the contours of their belief system\(^1\). Secondly, I chose Christian Identity because its members demonstrate a contemporary response to a lack of political efficacy. In its current manifestation, Christian Identity was born directly out of economic disenfranchisement and the lack of a government response to their grievances. As such, Identity’s current ideology provides a contemporary example of subjects’ responses to American liberal-democracy’s failures and imperfections.

In addition, I chose Christian Identity over other groups because of its import among the radical right. While Identity itself changed during the shift previously described, it was also one

\(^1\) While Christian Identity adherents consider themselves Christian, their theology differs from mainstream beliefs to such an extent that their “theology” is often referred to as hatred dressed in godly terms. However, I maintain that the use of the term “theology” is appropriate because adherents view Christian Identity teachings in religious terms, believing that they are the Word of God, the only true interpretation of the Bible.
of the major factors that led to the wide-spread growth, ideological change, and use of terrorism among the radical right (Potok, “The State of Hate” & White, 222). As such, examining its theology and practices provide insight into this change. Christian Identity is increasingly shaping the ideology and thus the actions and goals of groups on the radical right; many groups which identify themselves primarily as neo-Nazi, militia, or KKK, follow the theology of Christian Identity. Christian Identity culture and ideology also shape the beliefs and practices of others on the radical right even when individuals (or the groups they identify with) do not fully adhere to Identity principles (Hoffman, 109).

The Christian Identity Movement is the most popular religion among the radical right in America today. As Bruce Hoffman states, Christian Identity is “the connecting thread,” between a “…seemingly diverse and disparate collection of citizens’ militias, tax resisters, antifederalists, bigots, and racists” (109, emphasis mine). However, this does not mean that all members of the aforementioned groups follow Christian Identity theology; in fact, some members of these groups explicitly state their disagreement with Christian Identity theology. (For example, notorious former Klan leader David Duke explicitly disagrees with many of Christian Identity’s literal Biblical interpretations and right-winger and white supremacist Peter J. Peters Scriptures For America website states “We Certainly are Not Identity” (http://www.scripturesforamerica.org/)). There are also a fair number of adherents who are not associated with any group, but come to form Christian Identity beliefs via the Internet, their printed material, or acquaintances. And, some encounter the movement via one of the thirty-seven Christian Identity churches that are known to exist in America today (Beirich, et al., 52).

Determining the number of people who ascribe to Christian Identity theology is a difficult endeavor; estimates range from five thousand to hundreds of thousands. This difficulty is the
result of a number of factors. First, many adherents do not want to be known. Suspicious of an
established institutions, Christian Identity members often dissociate with those not in their group.
(Some Identity groups are even explicitly distance themselves from the label Christian Identity
despite continuing to adhere to its theology). Second, membership within the group varies
greatly. On one end of the spectrum, members spend entire lives on secluded compounds, where
all day-to-day activities are performed in the name of God. On the other end of the spectrum, an
individual’s interaction with the religion may occur only through other outlets of the radical
right; for example, some members attend churches with less radical theologies while espousing
Identity beliefs in other venues of their lives. The third factor that presents difficulty in
determining the number of Identity adherents is the lack of a central organization. Because of
this, fragmentation there is no singular authority to consult (Barkun, x).

However, despite fragmentation and change, adherents are connected by a number of
factors. Christian Identity members are bound by a common theology based on the following
main tenets, which I have summarized from primary source material:

1. Aryan Christians are God’s Chosen, the true literal Children of Israel (referred to as
   Israelis in the Old Testament); they are the only descendents of Adam and Eve’s union
2. Those who are Jewish are opposed to God’s Chosen and are trying to ruin white,
   Christian America (while some adherents believe Jews are the spawn of Eve and Satan
   copulating, others believe they are human, but nonetheless evil)
3. All other people (non-white & non-Jewish) descended from races that came before Adam
   and are thus of a different species (often referred to as “mud people”)
4. Only a theocratic government will save the White Anglo-Saxon Germanic race from sin
5. Traditional gender roles are prescribed by God; in conjunction, homosexuality is a sin
6. There is an impending race war between whites and non-whites; white it has already
   begun, it will continue to culminate until it ends in the apocalypse
7. If the white race does prevail, Christ will return to the earth and establish a utopian land
   in America; America is thus the chosen land and follows many of the prophesies written
   in the Bible
8. Everything in the world is not simply a sign, but a literal manifestation of either good or
   evil
This “theology” serves as a binding point for adherents who collectively interpret everything around them through this world view.

Members of Christian Identity share a non-mainstream subculture. Many aspects of this subculture are interchangeable with characteristics of groups such as the militias, the Ku Klux Klan, and neo-Nazi organizations, but some are directly related to Identity theology and are not common among all of these groups. A central aspect of this culture is its survivalist nature. Many members attempt to rely on, and interact with, mainstream culture as little as possible. Many live in rural areas where they can seclude themselves from the outside world. They often stockpile weapons, teach survival skills, read and memorize military handbooks, and perform military drills; Christian Identity members also orchestrate and participate in gun and survivalist trade shows. Members can buy and sell weapons and other products needed for lifestyles that do not rely on businesses, banks, or the government. Thus, Christian Identity culture is highly militaristic and, as is true of many groups on the far right, concerned with gun rights.

It is also a culture that idealizes hyper-masculinity. As has already been mentioned, Christian Identity members believe that men and women should fulfill traditional gender roles and many adherents believe that women should be entirely subservient to their husbands. Christian Identity is currently centrally concerned with what they believe to be threats posed to white women. As such, Christian Identity members emphasize the need for white males to protect the white race and employ men to occupy all positions of power. Christian Identity does not simply privilege men over women, but is centrally defined and driven by a rigid patriarchal structure.

Despite their seclusion and the desire to live self-sufficient lives, members do create community with each other through a number of venues. One of those venues is the
aforementioned trade shows where members can meet each other and exchange ideas and commodities. Christian Identity members communicate through their own information systems. Christian Identity members run a variety of low power, short wave, Internet, and satellite radio stations where they preach Christian Identity theology; these broadcasts also include discussions of everyday, seemingly profane topics such as taxes and consumer culture. Broadcasts often flow between specific discussions about the Bible and everyday events expressing the belief that everything is part of a divine drama (see, for example, Kingdom Identity Ministries’ website: www.kingidentity.com/radion.htm).

These information channels are but one aspect of Christian Identity’s social network. Members of Christian Identity and other related groups often gather together at conventions; for example Richard Butler, leader of the Aryan Nations interacts with leaders of many other groups by holding an annual Aryan Congress where adherents and other white supremacists gather (White, 224). Followers of Christian Identity have also been known to take care of each other and others with similar ideologies, especially those who are willing to commit acts of terror. For example, Timothy McVeigh was reportedly in communication with Christian Identity members and likely stayed on Christian Identity compounds in the days before he bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City. The image and memory of McVeigh still serves to create community among members who collectively honor his accomplishments. This is also true of a number of other figures who have entered the mainstream because of conflicts with law enforcement; the Branch Davidians, Eric Rudolph, and the Weaver family of the infamous Ruby Ridge incident are three examples which fit this category.

Christian Identity first entered public awareness because of members’ terrorist actions and remains primarily known for the same reason. However, not all Christian Identity members
commit violent crimes. Many adherents believe that success is best ensured through defensive measures: by living self-sufficient lives away from mainstream American society. Others will engage in some level of criminal activity by refusing to pay taxes or refusing to recognize any court higher than those at the county level and create their own political groups and common law courts. Those who do believe terrorism is a worthy means of effecting change plan, organize, and attempt to overthrow the federal government, bomb abortion clinics, attack gay nightclubs, or commit acts of hate against individuals; while their targets are diverse, all of these are perceived to be acts against what is categorized as a Jewish cabal that Christian Identity members believe control the federal government, law enforcement, and American society at large (Barkun, 199-200). Regardless of where members are on this spectrum, their beliefs signify a dangerous response to democracy’s failures within the United States.

While democracy is inherently imperfect, Christian Identity is a manifestation of the specific imperfections of contemporary American democracy. Thus, I approach Christian Identity because I believe that it can tell us something about why American democracy’s imperfections have resulted in groups of people who feel alienated from the democratic process and express those sentiments as violence. As it presents evidence of terrorist cells from within the nation, Christian Identity can tell us something about the climate of America and the world. Since neither Christian Identity nor terrorism is new, the insight is to be found in the differences between its previous manifestation and its form today. The make up of the group, its continued rise, its changed ideology and goals and its use of terrorism all mark a new way political subjects are responding to the world. Thus, what follows is an examination of how Christian Identity’s theology, ideology, and practices are constructed and employed in relation to changes in democracy and capitalism. I believe that it is worth examining Christian Identity in relation to
the political and economic realms to which it responds. As a reflection of American
democracy’s lack, as a manifestation of its incompleteness, Christian Identity provides insight
into its current state.

In order to extrapolate these insights, I begin this thesis with a chapter that explores the
relationship between the Christian Identity Movement and the history of democracy. I provide a
detailed description of democracy’s philosophic and lived history in order to explore the
system’s underlying imperfections and conclude by explaining the connections between
contemporary political and economic changes and Christian Identity’s existence. Chapter 2 then
situates Christian Identity within the history of American culture’s Puritanical roots. This
investigation demonstrates the way adherents use the Puritan tradition to seek a return to a
mythic and purified American past. This reveals the way Christian Identity members employ a
regressive response to contemporary political and economic changes in America. In the third,
and last, chapter I explore the ideological and practical effects of Christian Identity’s attempts to
return to this mythic past. Proposing that anti-Semitism serves a central role in holding their
ideology together, I investigate the contours of this aspect of their belief system. In addition, I
explore the effects of Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism, specifically its relation to their
contemporary use of terrorism. Each of these chapters seeks to gain further insight into why
Christian Identity ideology exists in the form it doest, why its members employ the tactics of
terrorism (and other forms of violence) and most importantly, how their beliefs and practices
reflect America’s contemporary liberal-democracy.
CHAPTER I:
CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY

One is tempted to say of democracy, what according to a recent essay by Immanuel Wallerstein, Mahatma Gandhi said of Western civilization. “What do you think of Western Civilization, Mr. Gandhi?,” someone asked him. To which the Mahatma replied, “it would be a good idea.”

- Stuart Hall

There are real roots, real grievances that underlay this movement and I think it is a foolish thing to simply categorize those who comprise the radical right as a bunch of lunatics outside the parameters of society…if we look at it that way we completely miss what is underneath this movement, what is driving it, and therefore how to combat it.

– Mark Potok, “The State of Hate”

According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, democracy should not be idealized as a system that can reach a utopian state. Instead, as their work, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, claims, it should be conceived as a horizon that can never completely be reached. In all its specific manifestations, they claim, democracy is necessarily imperfect, always short of the imagined ideal. Imperfections should not be thought as exceptions to the rule of perfect democracy, but should instead be understood as always already existing components of every articulation of democracy. They are expressions of the system’s inherent lack. In Laclau and Mouffe’s view, because “problems” necessarily exist, attempts to eradicate them are not only impossible, but are repressive.

Ironically, these “imperfections” are often pointed to as evidence of a teleological model, which paradoxically suggests that flaws indicate democracy’s march towards perfection. As Homi Bhabha states,

The argument goes something like this: we fail because we are mortal and bound to history, the faith of democracy lies not in perfectibility but in our perseverance and progress, our commitment to set the highest ideals before ourselves and struggle towards them to revise and reshape our ‘best selves.’ Such an internal dialectic of the ‘unrealized’
and the ‘utopian’ encounters the negative instance of failure only in order to provide a strange moral coherence and consolation for itself. (28-9)

To view the “failures” of democracy as somehow separate from the system in which they exist is to ignore democracy’s inherent impossibilities. Such a view thus limits any attempt to understand possibilities for change. However, in America, as elsewhere, this reasoning has been employed to justify technological development, capitalist ideology, and globalization, among others signs of “progress,” without recognizing the way these changes benefit some at the expense of others.

The Christian Identity Movement is not rootless; the group’s existence is related to the inherent lack of democracy as well as the continuously evolving ways in which that lack manifests in America. While the group, like this evolution, is arguably international, having traversed national borders in recent history as in the past, Christian Identity is still centrally an American phenomenon. The vast majority of its members live in the United States. In addition, adherents have woven together reactionary responses to real grievances born of American democracy’s failures, cultural mythology (much of which exists in greater or lesser form in mainstream American thought), and American religious traditions in order to create an extremist theology and ideology. From this perverse conflux of structures they have developed an even more perverse notion of how to act upon the world.

As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, democracy’s failures yield (among other things) radical groups who express their own lack as desperate racism and hatred of others, leading one to wonder: how and why has American democracy failed the members of this group? This question does not suggest that American democracy’s imperfections automatically produce groups like Christian Identity, nor does it excuse their hatred and violence. Instead, it seeks to examine which imperfections in democracy contributed to their existence. In order to approach
this question, this chapter explores four eras of democratic thought and practice: Ancient Greece, The Enlightenment, the founding of America, and the contemporary postmodern, late-capitalist moment. As discussions of democracy (or the political in general) always already imply economics, elements of this chapter will also necessarily address the relationship between capitalism and democracy. This brief history of democracy and its failures demonstrates the inextricability of democracy’s lack and the capitalist system, as well as how these two components relate to the rise of Christian Identity.

**Ancient Greece**

Democracy, both in idea and in form, originated in the Ancient Greek city-state Athens.\(^2\) Written in the year 360 BCE, Plato’s *The Republic*, is considered one of the earliest works on political philosophy. While this work explicitly condemns democracy (which for Plato strictly meant direct democracy) it nonetheless provides insight on the topic both through this denunciation and through the author’s prescription for an ideal state. Democracy, according to Plato, was unordered and chaotic, allowed citizens to shirk their duties, and fell to relativism, treating all on equal ground regardless of character (VIII, 557a-558c, 303-4). Worst of all, perhaps, was that the democratic citizen fell to many useless desires, was wasteful, and placed individual freedom above all other goals (Plato, VII, 560d-562d).

Instead, according to Plato, a utopian state is a just state. And, in order to have justice, everyone’s basic needs must be met. Left unfulfilled, he reasons, these needs will lead the civic body to chaos and even war (IV, 439-441). In order to avoid such violence, every individual must fulfill the specific role they are naturally suited for. “…No two persons are born exactly

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\(^2\) While this is complicated by claims that democracy had previously existed in other areas, the Greeks coined the term and the Athenian, more than any of the other ancient systems, would serve as a model for subsequent governments.
alike,” Plato writes, “but each differs in his nature, one being suited for one occupation, and another for another” (II, 370b)\(^3\). Thus, for Plato, a just society is an efficient society, ensured by the division of labor.

At first glance, the notion that each individual is best suited for a specific role in life may appear amoral, or even benign. However, this reasoning demonstrates the way productive society is, and always has been, founded on hierarchical categories and the belief that people are naturally meant to fulfill each role. It also leads to Plato’s defense of a distinct division of power, including the exclusion of parts of the populace from civic affairs. His conception is strictly ordered in hierarchical fashion with each citizen occupying his or her allotted place, with the ruling class being the smallest of all.

Plato explains that one rarely transcends the class he is born into, and thus, *The Republic* prescribes an educational system designed to regulate this hierarchical order (III, 415a-c, 128). Only those who have the ability to grasp the proper amount of knowledge should be entrusted with the power to rule, the remaining majority of citizens need to be educated in a way that will make them allies to those with power. In order to ensure this alliance, Plato also advocates for the control of information and ideas. Reason is the rule; all expressions considered irrational, including literature and art, were to be banished (Curtis, 27).

Despite his denouncement of democracy, aspects of Plato’s philosophy would come to shape Western philosophy and liberal democratic thought. Many of his ideas, I argue, present contentious problems for the democratic ideals of today as he writes off whole segments of the

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\(^3\) In order to determine which role one is to play, Plato looks to the composition of the soul, decreeing that three components – appetite, courage, and reason – exist in various quantities in each individual. Those whose souls were ruled by “appetite,” or physical desires, were to be the laboring class of “producers”, those ruled by “courage” were best suited to be the warriors or “auxiliaries”, and the rulers, or “guardians” would be that small group of people ruled by reason (Curtis, 27). Justice, Plato reasons, would arise when each group fulfilled its role on the hierarchical ladder, the producers and auxiliaries answering to the guardians (420b-d, 134-5).
population from political practice, advocates slavery, and suggests the need for propaganda to
close the masses; however, these were in fact, incorporated in early American democracy and
some remain fundamental to the system today.

On the other hand, many of Plato’s prescriptions were not followed. For, while Plato
advocated for hierarchical order, he did believe this should correspond to each group’s wealth.
His explicit statement that wealth needed to be divorced from leadership was a prescription the
American system would not adhere to. Rulers, in his mind, were to be philosophers (V, 473d)
working as civil servants to maintain moderation so that they, like the city would be sufficient,
but not indulgent (IV, 421a-c, 465c). According to Plato, these guardians were even supposed to
renounce private property (as well as their wives) in order to ensure that they acted in the interest
of the community at large instead of out of selfish motives (Curtis, 27). Thus, while his vision
remains strictly hierarchical, Plato views his vision as the best way to ensure that every citizen
worked for the interest of the state.

While Plato’s view was not practical, but utopian, Aristotle approached democracy as an
observer, writing instead about its positive and negative aspects (Curtis, 28). Like Plato,
Aristotle did not believe democracy was ideal; In The Politics, he writes that of the three
government systems he witnessed – oligarchy, tyranny, and democracy – the latter is the best, but
that it was inferior to those ideal governments which were unrealizable: polity, aristocracy, and
monarchy (Ober, 3).

Like Plato, Aristotle believed in a naturally ordered society, ascribing to the idea that
there were individuals meant to be rulers, just as there was a portion of society that was meant to
be ruled (1253a-1255a). Thus, Aristotle advocated for the societal division of labor, stressing the
naturalness of all human relationships, which worked to fulfill material needs: the household, the
village, and the polis (Adams & Dyson, 15). Aristotle proposed a teleological model for each of these components, stating, “…what every being is in its most perfect state, that certainly is the nature of that being…” (1252b, 3). Like Plato, he stressed that reason was needed to control desires in order to allow the individual to achieve his or her natural state (Curtis, 29).

According to Aristotle, states, like people, move towards realizing their true nature (1252b); for states, this means self-sufficiency achieved by moderation of all things, including wealth (Curtis, 29). While moderation was essential, this did not mean the citizen should renounce material objects. To the contrary, as Aristotle states in *The Politics,* “…a subsistence is necessary in every family, the means of procuring it certainly makes up part of the management of a family, for without necessaries it is impossible to live, and to live well…thus property is an instrument to living…” (1253b). This notion included human property, which Aristotle thought essential to the functioning of human structures; *The Politics* includes a defense of slavery as well as the property-like relationship between men and women (1253b-1254a, 1259b). Aristotle claims that hierarchies of power are not only natural, but are the precursor to realization of the ideal family, village, and state (1260a-b, 1253b).

For Aristotle, democracy is the best way to achieve moderation of wealth and thus was the answer to inequities born of the economic system (Ober, 4). He believed that because most of those who qualified as citizens were likely to be poor, democracies would not be ruled by the wealthy. In Aristotle’s view, democracy was meant to function in the interest of the workers and the poor, regardless of how many citizens fell on each side of the economic divide (Ober, 4). Majority rule did not necessarily define a democracy, which would only be realized when the people, being the majority, had political control (1290a-b). Only this could achieve some
balance between the rich and poor and allow democracy to function justly, preventing chaos and maintaining order (Ober, 5).

In the Athenian system, wealth did not equate to more political power; thus, maintaining democracy in Athens depended on integrating elite Athenians into the political regime, which was controlled by the non-elite majority (Ober, 9). To no small extent, the Athenian system of direct democracy wherein citizens, not representatives, voted on bills and legislation ensured that the non-elite maintained power. Athenian democracy persisted for a long period of time, in part because of this balance. Aristotle’s opinion of the economy was that it was an entity which had to be limited in order to ensure the democratic system could function. He thus believed that economic activity and systems of usury for profit alone are unnatural and thus should not be employed. He states, “…usury is most reasonably detested, as it is increasing our fortune by money itself, and not employing it for the purpose it was originally intended, namely exchange…whence of all forms of money-making it is most against nature” (1258b). Aristotle’s reasoning for this was that unlimited acquisition of money would disallow the economy to work in just ways (Peacock, 646). Instead of driving men to pursue their “natural” ends, he states that it “makes everything subservient to money-getting, as if this was the only end; and to the end everything ought to refer” (1258a).

Christian Identity presents strikingly similar views on self-sufficiency, usury, and the making of profit for profit alone. In fact, these concerns form the crux of their project, around which the remainder of their ideology centers. While I am not suggesting that Christian Identity ideology is rational (because these beliefs are paranoid responses), their beliefs about monetary

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4 Democracy may invest the poor “with the power of the state” (Aristotle, 1290b), but this did not imply that wealth should be distributed equally; it would be unjust, Aristotle believed, for the poor to use their political power to redistribute wealth and such an action would also result in chaos, here manifest as class-based civil warfare (Ober, 5).
practices are the response to real problems. Centrally capitalist, America’s system today does not heed Aristotle’s caution that one should only engage in economic activity to the extent necessary to meet one’s needs. Instead, the hegemonic thought and practice of today posits profit making as the ultimate goal, which is the very thing Aristotle most feared.

Related to this ideology, many of Plato’s prescriptions – centrally, that every citizen have his or her basic needs met – have not been fulfilled, creating grievances which Christian Identity members respond to. While Aristotle and Plato’s belief that property is essential to happiness remains in contemporary American society, their contingent belief in the need for moderation in wealth acquisition and balance between economic and governmental realms has fallen by the wayside; while America today does not explicitly disallow anyone from political participation based on his or her identity, power remains vested in the hands of the few at the expense of the many. In effect, the democratic system insidiously appears to promote equality and freedom, while limiting both via capitalism.

Here, I am not suggesting that following Plato and Aristotle’s prescriptions leads one to utopia. For example, as was the case in Athens, both men’s philosophies assumed the presence of slaves. Greek slavery was not simply an exception to the rule of democracy, because their economic system depended on specialization, even exploitation of labor. As economic history in the West is testament to, exploitation would be essential to the functioning of liberal-democracies that would later develop. In conjunction, the Athenian system, as in Plato and Aristotle’s philosophies, disallowed portions of the population from political participation.

American democracy has not faltered simply because it has neglected to replicate an ancient ideal. The Greeks’ views were the precursor to liberal-democratic thinking that sees promise, virtue, and freedom in the nation-state ruled by democracy whose markets are allowed
to flourish, where material goods are held as a precursor to happiness, and where labor is most effectively utilized. What neither Plato nor Aristotle addressed, as would be the case for centuries to follow, was the inherent violence of their own claims to be able to decide what was best for all of humanity. Neither man attempted to achieve the point of view of those being ruled, those shut out of the system, or those they decided were naturally destined to be slaves.

While Aristotle cannot be considered a modern constitutionalist or liberal democrat, his ideas were used to develop the American model of democracy. The Framers of America, like Aristotle centuries before, viewed the law as the ultimate bearer of justice because it was based on reason and not desire (1287a). This notion still could not eradicate power hierarchies, as someone had to both make and enforce the law. Coupled with Plato’s belief that government should not regulate wealth, the Ancient Greeks can be seen as setting the stage for the American liberal democratic tradition. But, much of the Athenian model of direct democracy was left behind, a difference that would change the balance between the economic and the political that the Greeks had achieved, even if that balance was always limited. Thus, it is a combination of the inherent lack in any democracy and specific political, economic, and social manifestations that contribute to America’s current state of affairs. While Christian Identity’s existence is largely rooted in disenfranchisement wrought by late-capitalism in America, this does not change the necessary exploitation of some members in every democracy.

Enlightenment

For the most part, Enlightenment thinkers did not write about democracy in the way it was practiced in Athens; instead of advocating direct democracy, they were republicans who believed in the rule of law. This law was to be established through a political constitution that
would serve as the distributor (and thus also the limiter) of sovereign power to the collective body (Viroli, 23). Thus, the American system of democracy even today, which is based on constitutional law, is actually a democratic republic, not a democracy in the traditional sense.

One of the most influential proponents of Enlightenment thought was John Locke who, like Plato and Aristotle before him, centrally believed that government should serve as a power delegated for the good of the whole community. Locke believed that nature was governed by law, “...and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind...that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions...” (II.6). Property, he believed, was essential because it was necessary to existence (II.5.25). While owning property, was a natural right, it had to be labored on; as he writes in *The Second Treatise of Government*, it is labor that makes property one’s own; it is labor that honors God; only through the industriousness and rationality of labor can land be improved and avoid falling to “…the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious” (II.5.28). Echoing Aristotle, Locke stresses the need to limit property acquisition, suggesting that one should only take as much as he needs, so that land and its fruits do not spoil (II.5.31) and so that there is enough for everyone (II.5.33).

As land was not an infinite resource, Locke saw the need for monetary exchange between citizens (II.5.46-8). It is clear that Locke saw potential problems with the monetary system, as he states that with it, “…men have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth…” and suggests that this can lead to controversy and the encroachment on others’ rights (II.5.50). However, in this writing Locke does not advocate for abolishing money, which he believed had become a necessary system (II.5.48); instead, he reasons that the role of government is to institute laws which ensure freedom by protecting personal property (II.6.57).
Locke’s views on property are interpreted significantly differently by various scholars. However, his view of government centrally revolves around the protection of property rights suggesting that he considered property owners to be the only true citizens. This diverged greatly from the Athenian system, which did not consider wealth a determining factor in the allocation of political rights.

Locke’s notions of individual liberty, an economy unrestrained by government, and the central importance of protecting property under the law, are the precursor to modern liberal-democracy. In fact, his beliefs about labor and property were central to the establishment of America both politically and culturally. As will be further explored, these ideas form the basis of Christian Identity’s notions about America and their roles as Americans. It is important to note that Locke’s theories also established a fundamental tension in liberal-democracy that continues today. The system he proposed allowed for unprecedented individual freedoms as it broke from the Divine right and hereditary laws of the feudal past; however, his theory of property inherently limited who could participate in politics and whom government benefited: namely, property owners.

Locke’s ideals were more progressive than the Greeks in his disavowal of slavery, as he claimed that because all men were born equal, and each was naturally the ruler of himself, no one could give power of his life to another and thus no one could become a slave (II.4.24). However, this did not abolish the inequities of a system predicated on capitalism. While certainly a break from feudal society, his philosophies would be employed in the United States in favor of landowners at the expense of the rest of the population. Ultimately, those with power were able to utilize his philosophy and maintain the African slave trade; simply by defining

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5 As Karen L. Vaughn argues, Locke’s “definition of labor was such that the ethical conclusions he arrived at were generally favorable to capitalism as he knew it and to the private property system upon which that capitalism was based” (2).
slaves as less-than-human property, early Americans maintained that they were protecting the “natural” rights of individuals.

Unlike Locke, who maintained that government should not interfere with property distribution without people’s consent (Adams & Dyson, 64-5), Jean-Jacques Rousseau envisioned a government with more control over economic matters. He believed that economic disparities “threaten not only democracy, but also liberalism” (Viroli, 28). This view led him to suggest that the state should allow all segments of the population to participate in social and civic life regardless of wealth. Rousseau viewed property as a problem that led to the ills of society as it resulted in exploitation and inequality, which eventually lead to injustice and moral corruption (Adams & Dyson, 79). As such, in *The Social Contract*, he suggests that it is better when property is a public possession (20).

In a striking argument against the notion of a “natural” order, Rousseau opens *The Social Contract* by challenging the standing notions of hierarchy, order, and nature, claiming that men were not naturally designated to fulfill various roles, but that their placement in them made it appear that way (7). Rousseau believed that in the absence of unequal distribution of wealth a collective and unified view would emerge wherein all members of the citizen body would desire communal good; this was his concept of General Will, which he believed could only emerge through a direct democracy (85). Thus, it was only in absence of representation that a true democracy could exist wherein citizens would have the ability to make their own choices, represent their own Will, and be truly free (85).

While Rousseau’s philosophy was not followed by America’s founders, it is difficult to fault them because direct democracy presented practical challenges to any society larger than a city-state. The ideas set forth in *The Social Contract* demonstrate the difficult of creating a
society based on true freedom and equality. His notion of the General Will does not present any guarantees; without hierarchy it is much harder to control the masses. The Founding Fathers also disagreed with his denouncement of individualism which they saw as a bedrock to establishing the nation. Despite these differences, the Founding Fathers would remain in line with Rousseau’s belief in the law, which he believed was the only authority that could permit the individual to self-govern and be free⁶.

American democratic theory and practice today continues to rely on strands of Enlightenment thinking, particularly Locke’s beliefs concerning property, and an economic system unrestrained by government. In addition, it borrowed Rousseau’s notion, at least in rhetoric, of sovereignty of the people who should have the ability to make decisions on their own. While some Enlightenment ideals were never incorporated into the American system, as was the case with Greek philosophy, it is not simply out of neglect that problems exist in American democracy. Each system has its limits and impossibilities. Thus, as with all democratic philosophy, the contradictions and impossibilities of Enlightenment thought have necessarily remained. Liberty, sovereignty, and equality, even in a limited sense, were never intended for all and could never be completely ensured within one system. However, Locke’s notion of a government based on the protection of property without limiting wealth has led to a system which poses real problems in America; his theory thus stresses the import of productivity, yet depends on individual self restraint to limit acquisition. This ideology is central to Christian Identity beliefs, but poses problems for them.

⁶ While Rousseau’s model may come the closest to approaching equality and true sovereignty, in addition to its impossibility in the modern nation-state, he himself admitted any conception of democracy was inherently incongruous, noting, for example, that in his own, human liberty contradictorily depended on a system of laws which had to be enforced by the government (Adams & Dyson, 83).
The Founding Fathers

The early American exclusion of women, most non-whites, and non-landowners from political practice is often posited as historically determined shortsightedness, congruent with the racism and sexism of the time. However, the previous history demonstrates that exclusions are in fact inherent to every system and that democracy had always been based, to some degree, on both class and gender exclusions. With the genocide of Native Americans and the African slave trade, these exclusions also became explicitly racialized in the United States. While racism did not originate on American soil, racialized thinking increasingly developed because it was profitable for those in power.

The Founding Fathers knew that in order to maintain social order in a democratic system, they would need a civic body without widely divergent interests. Like Plato and many philosophers who followed in his vein, George Washington stated at the founding of the United States, “the more homogeneous our citizens can be made…the greater will be our prospect of permanent union” (Colombo et. al., 137). In accordance with this goal, he believed that the nation should invest in an educational system that would mold all politically eligible (white, male) citizens’ thought in line with those in power. Those who would not benefit from maintenance of the society’s hierarchy would be taught from an early age, through all of society’s institutions that the government worked in their best interest.

The concern with maintaining peace and order via unity was not Washington’s alone. One of the key authors of the Federalist Papers, James Madison, wrote of his concern with factions, especially those that divided over the unequal distribution of property (Hochschild, 328). While his concern may have been genuine, it did not stem out of a desire to be equitable, but out of worry that the fledgling nation would erupt in disorder, threatening the status quo. In
fact, self-interest was central to Madison’s desires because, as a property owning white male, he worried that a “majority faction” might demand for “an equal division of property or for any other improper or wicked object” (qtd. in Zinn, People’s History 17).

As Howard Zinn points out in his famous work The People’s History of the United States, the American democratic system was not established to allow two equally powerful contingents to engage in active argument; instead, it was intended to maintain the distribution of power and wealth in the hands of those who already held it. As Zinn comments:

The Constitution, then, illustrates the complexity of the American system: that it serves the interests of the wealthy elite, but also does enough for small property owners, for middle-income mechanics and farmers, to build a broad base of support. The slightly prosperous people who make up this base of support are buffers against the blacks, the Indians the very poor whites. They enable the elite to keep control with a minimum of coercion, a maximum of law – all made palatable by the fanfare of patriotism and unity. (99)

In addition to only guaranteeing sovereignty, self-realization, and equality to those considered citizens, Constitutional law maintained hierarchies of power while simultaneously obscuring where that power came from. Property ownership was central to this power; the Framers saw it as the source of wealth and thus envisioned a politico-economic system that directly tied democracy to capitalism, which perpetuated exploitation and power inequities, all under the justification of establishing and bettering the nation. These foundational American values are central to Christian Identity’s ideology. However, as is true for Christian Identity adherents, many did not foresee or ultimately desire the results of capitalism’s unhindered growth which the constitutional system allowed.

The genocide of native peoples, slavery, and disenfranchisement of anyone who was not a land-owning male allowed American capitalism to flourish along with its ideology as it became the best means of achieving the progress Aristotle had so long ago prescribed. A deeply
hierarchical society allowed America’s economy to grow, America as a nation to expand westward, and for its eventual reach beyond North America via trade and imperial projects. With few government controls, capitalism increasingly benefited a few at the expense of the many. However, even those who ascribed wholeheartedly to a belief in liberal democracy were sometimes faced with its incompleteness. The British Utilitarian John Stuart Mills greatly influenced liberal democratic philosophy, including the American tradition, with his work *On Liberty* (Little, et. al., 236). But despite his celebration of liberal-democracy,

…John Stuart Mill realized that one of the major conundrums of his celebrated theory of liberty consisted of the fact that he was a democrat in his own country and a despot in another – India…What has to be acknowledged – as Mill was not able to do in that great document of modern democracy, *On Liberty* – are the implications of the self-contradictoriness of liberal democracy, which has a war raging in its heart. (Bhabha, 29)

Clearly, those same contradictions existed within his own nation, as exploitation of labor and class division were central to the capitalist project both at home and abroad.

*The Birth of Christian Identity*

It was precisely this war between the principles of ‘universalism’ promised by the rhetoric of liberal-democracy and those of ethnocentrism and racism on which the system depended (Bhabha, 29), that led to the development of groups which would later transform into Christian Identity. These early groups first formed in Britain, where, according to Michael Barkun, “a public accustomed to the seemingly limitless growth of British wealth, power, and prestige were attracted to the notion that their nation’s successes were the result of God’s will, not luck or brute force” (10). That colonial projects, in all their brutality, were central to Britain’s success presented deep-seated contradictions to such idealistic views of British “progress.”
However, the British-Israel Movement provided a way to relieve such cognitive dissonance. Founded in the second half of the 19th century in Britain, British-Israelism was a small movement that centrally believed in the idea that Anglo-Saxons were God’s “Chosen People,” the direct descendents of the Lost Tribes of Israel destined to fulfill God’s plan for humanity. The group spent most of its time attempting to chart this lineage and discussing their findings, however false the majority of them were. These beliefs led to pride in heritage for British-Israelites, but they did not lead to the kind of anti-Semitism or racism that is at the heart of Christian Identity. While the group never attained a mass following, reaching its apex at five thousand members in the 1920s, it did have enough force to travel across the Atlantic and transplant itself onto American soil (Barkun, 14-5, 50-1).

British-Israelism had reached the United States by the mid-19th century, and by the 1880s, it had spread to other parts of the northeast. As Michael Barkun contends, British-Israelism may have seemed eccentric to many, but “…it was not surprising that some Americans found it attractive and even plausible. There was no shortage of Americans convinced that the country would fulfill a millennial role…” (20). As will be further explored in Chapter 2, this belief in America’s exceptionalism was central to early American thought and helped to propel America’s colonial projects as it justified Westward and later, outward, expansion. In this way, British-Israelism was the ultimate justification for belief in the goodness of “progress,” no matter what the cost to some members of society. For, while slavery, genocide, poor working conditions, inequality, and disenfranchisement of the majority of the population, among other downfalls, had all contributed to America’s success as a nation, British-Israel ideology excused

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7 Barkun reports that after reaching its apex of around five thousand members in the 1920s it steadily declined so that by the 1990s there were only around 700 members.

8 In addition, British-Israelism interacting with other religions contemporaneously flourishing at the end of the 19th Century: Pentecostalism, Methodism, and others (Barkun, 21).
white Anglo-Saxons’ contribution to these iniquities to be given divine status under the rubric of God’s ultimate plan for humanity.

That those who ascribed to British-Israelism generally were not working class or poor men who bore the brunt capitalism’s inequities speaks to a difference between the ideological work of this group and Christian Identity. Whereas British-Israelism was mainly driven by urban men working as clergymen and pastors, as well as many who worked in industry (among their ranks was even a man who claimed to be a professor from Yale) (Barkun, 18-19), Christian Identity adherents typically hail from the working class and poor segments of rural America. For the former group, membership was more often about holding fast to American exceptionalism despite knowing they were benefiting from the nation’s propensity to reap destruction on others; the latter’s membership is more often a response to their own disenfranchisement born of these same practices, which is at odds with their deep entrenchment in American and capitalist ideology.

In the early 1920s the revival of the Ku Klux Klan added to the force of the movement as some in the inner circle of British-Israelism worked to combine the two groups’ efforts. Despite its nativist and bigoted politics, organizers effectively portrayed the Klan as Americanism at its purist, suggesting that the group respected and defended Americans regardless of race or religion (Barkun, 23). However, it was this association with the Ku Klux Klan that first introduced anti-Semitism to British-Israelism; as early as 1921, British-Israelites believed in a Jewish conspiracy which posited Jews a powerful force, that was beginning to control the government (Barkun, 25).

The anti-Semitic influence of the Ku Klux Klan coincided with the increasingly public anti-Semitism of a man often heralded as the capitalist par excellence: Henry Ford. Ford’s infamous newspaper *The Dearborn Independent* was penned by William J. Cameron, himself a
British-Israelite. The paper grew in popularity, ratcheting up the level of anti-Semitism in radical circles, as well as in more mainstream groups across America. *The Independent* was the first to publish the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a work that endorses the theory of a secret group of Jews who seek to seize world power from (deserving and innocent) white Christians. The publications under Henry Ford’s name, and thus the figure of Ford, came to have a strong influence on the growth and ideological bent of Christian Identity. That Ford was such a successful businessman, the very image of the promises of capitalist progress, made his beliefs (and any written under his name) all the more attractive. In addition, the vast number of publications and their existence in a more mainstream venue helped spread anti-Semitic ideology in connection with the doctrine of work and capitalist progress in what would serve as an important precursor to today’s radical right. This line of thinking, as well as the *Protocols* themselves, continues to circulate in Christian Identity circles today (Barkun, 29-34).

In the United States, British-Israelism found its most favorable environment in the Depression years (Barkun, 44). As Barkun writes, “The message that Americans were indeed God’s chosen people, in a literal rather than merely a metaphorical sense, must have been solace to many who had begun to doubt the validity of the American experience” during such a difficult time (44). While the Depression era would sow many of the seeds for America’s growing radical right, it would take until 1970s and 1980s for them to flourish as Christian Identity (Barkun, 49). During this time, the first groups developed completely separate from British-Israelism’s English roots as they developed an American-centric theology that posited ‘Jews’ as a literally demonic force, who they believed were engaging white Christians in battle over the fate of the world (Barkun, 49). During these early years of globalization, a group called the Posse Comitatus rose out of the increasingly impoverished farm belt of the Midwest, marking the
first solidified group to claim that Jews were the satanic enemy creating their problems. As their name – which means “the power of the county” – suggests, the Posse was based on the idea that the county sheriff is the highest enforcement agent who is constitutionally valid (Barkun, 69).  

According to Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center, this attempt at local empowerment was a direct response to political and economic conditions in the Midwest during the late 1970s and early 1980s. During these years, tens of thousands of American farmers lost their farms as a result of a number of factors. The most important causes were the embargo to send grain to the Soviet Union, the attempt of many family farmers (at the encouragement of the U.S. government) to borrow large sums of money in order to turn their family farms into agri-businesses, and a large jump in interest rates on loans which made repaying these debts on extremely difficult. Thus, the demand for farmer produce, especially grain, went down at the same time that big-business farms created fierce competition; when family farmers could not pay their loans, many faced land seizures by the banks. In the end, many families that had owned land for generations, were now homeless, jobless, and in debt with no means to repay their loans. Some rallied together in order to ask for government support. But, when no one in power attempted to understand or remedy these problems, what began progressively evolved into a virulently anti-Semitic movement that viewed its interests as directly opposed to the government (Potok, “The State of Hate”).

The Posse Comitatus eventually died out after gaining a negative reputation when members were indicted for a number of crimes (including the murder of Jews, police officers, and those they identified as homosexual). But, their existence had signaled a significant change among the radical right. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, groups that constituted the far right

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9 As William Potter Gale, Christian Identity minister and cofounder of the Posse, stated, “a County (or Parish) government is the highest authority of government in our Republic” (Barkun, 69). This belief would later lead to Gale’s conviction of tax-related criminal charges in the late 1980s after he refused to comply with IRS regulations.
were generally focused on defending the American government and economy against the evils of Communism; but the rise of the Posse marked the beginning of a shift to a new focus on the ills of the U.S. economy and government which came to be represented in the image of the Jew. The Christian Identity groups that developed in the Posse’s wake adopted many of their beliefs, contributing to the ideological shift that swept much of America’s radical right. These changes increasingly define the radical right today (Potok, “The State of Hate”).

Potok attributes these changes and the dramatic rise in the number of hate crimes at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century to globalization’s affect on America’s economy. Before this period, Potok argues, when the economy was good, the number of hate groups went down; however, during the 1990s, while the American economy was doing well, with little unemployment and low inflation rates, the number of hate groups continued to rise annually. This trend was especially exacerbated in the latter years of the decade. During this time the number of hate groups rose from below 400 to above 600 in a four year span and the number of possible domestic terrorist cases Potok’s group investigated jumped from 100 to 1000 a year. While he concedes that more than one factor is at play, Potok contends that the increasing consolidation of wealth and the resultant two-tier economy in the U.S. is the main cause (“The State of Hate”). As increasing portions of the population are relegated to the bottom tier, democracy’s promises of freedom and equality remain unrealized for more and more people.

During the same years that extremism was on the rise, inequality in the distribution of wealth increased, perpetuating a long standing trend that continues today. Pointing to “…global restructuration, the transnational mobility of capital…downsizing, de-industrialization, de-skilling, the attack on unions, regressive taxation and welfare program ‘reforms,’” Anna Marie Smith contends that, “the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer at an
unprecedented rate” (16-17). Between the late 1970s and the early 1990s in the United States, for example, the real incomes of the poorest 20 percent have decreased 17 percent while the wealthiest fifth have seen real incomes raise 18 percent (Smith, 17). Not only is inequality growing; it is growing at an increasing rate.

These shifts have resulted in strikingly different experiences for today’s American adults. Whereas a high school diploma guaranteed Americans a job that could support a family two generations ago, today’s job seekers must have a university degree and most families need the income of two working adults. In addition, the large number of Americans who once made a livable wage in steel mills and auto plants are now often making under $20,000 dollars as employees of large franchises, such as fast food restaurants (Potok, “The State of Hate”). These jobs arguably have much less meaning, require less skill, and provide less autonomy. Within capitalist ideology, though, they are often posited as money-saving, job creating, and ultimately as contributing to the American economy.

Placing contemporary economic shifts into an evolutionary model in his work Postmodernism: Or the Logic of Late Capitalism, Fredrick Jameson identifies three stages of capitalism: market, monopoly, and multinational (35)\(^\text{10}\). The current phase, multinational, or consumer capitalism, is identified by a significantly greater ability to sneak into every crack and crevice of life, exploiting many things that were formerly out of its reach (Jameson, Postmodernism 36). This stage is also marked by increasingly open borders, the ability of government and big business to cross into each others’ once autonomous realms, new forms of

\(^{10}\) The earliest or classical phase, called market capitalism, corresponded to realism; the next stage, called monopoly capitalism was the age of imperialism and corresponded to modernism; multinational (often misidentified as post-industrialism) is the third and purest stage of capitalism because of its international nature it is able to exploit those things that were previously inaccessible (Jameson, Postmodernism 35-6).
media that infiltrates most realms of life, and changing sights of production, among many others (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xviii-xix).

The new relaxation of borders in the economic realm means that globalization is often touted as the harbinger of openness, a better economy, freedom, and social progress evinced by changes such as increasing multiculturalism; but, when viewed from political-economic perspective, it becomes clear that the benefits of these changes are mostly wrought by those already at the top. Capital and power continue to be spread unevenly (Jameson, *Globalization* 57-9); in fact, as Peter McLaren suggests, disparity is a central part of the system as “…capitalism’s survival depends on the reproduction of the asymmetrical social relations of production through the barbaric over accumulation of wealth and [the] economic and cultural exploitation…” (99). Ironically, this exploitation is actually encouraged by the ideology that posits globalization as both inevitable and emancipatory.

While Christian Identity was not the inevitable result of these economic changes, the growing contingent of disenfranchised and alienated workers did enable much of its growth. In looking at the motives of the groups born in the 1970s and 1980s, it is clear that adherents felt alienated when the march of capitalist advancement rolled over their lives. The changes that led to this group’s disenfranchisement fall under the category of “progress” within capitalist ideology, which is the same ideology that was central to the development of America’s liberal-democracy. These factors contributed to the political alienation of these white men who, once empowered by the state, felt themselves neglected. But, instead of pointing to capitalism, they came to believe that democracy’s expanding reach was a tool of an evil cabal that was trying to steal the American dream from them.
Christian Identity’s beliefs are not simply the result of economics; to think about changes wrought by globalization in strictly economic terms is to miss the crux of the problem for many Christian Identity adherents. This problem centers on the way capitalist progress changes social and political relations of power in addition to the economic shifts it causes. As Slavoj Žižek intones, the description of social change produced by capitalism in Karl Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto* is even more relevant in the era of globalization. As Marx states, “all fixed, fast-frozen relations…are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned…” (qtd. in Žižek, *Fragile* 12).

As a result of rapidly shifting social norms, ideologies that once effectively articulated social difference lose their capacity to function. Complex, nuanced, and flexible ways of thinking often come to be replaced by rigid, binary conceptual maps which no longer posit hope in the freedoms promised by democracy (Hall, “Democracy, Globalization, & Difference”). This is precisely the basis of Christian Identity theology which conceives of everything in the world as a literal manifestation of good and evil; this includes their beliefs about democracy, which they now relegate to the later category.

At the same time that these binary and rigid reactionary ideologies are erupting, democratic institutions in the contemporary era are less well-equipped to deal with conflicts and crises. Because they are increasingly controlled by, and in the service of, those with economic power, democracies are significantly hindered. Capitalism has long been in tension with democracy, but according to Chantal Mouffe, this was once a positive opposition. In her essay, “The ‘End of Politics’ and the Challenge of Right-wing Populism,” Mouffe explains that liberal democracy was an articulation that came about during the nineteenth century when, “liberalism was democratized and democracy was liberalized” (“End of Politics” 52). The struggle between
the two aspects, “…has served as a motor for the political evolution of Western societies and it has led to temporary forms of stabilization under the hegemony of one of the contending forces” (“End of Politics” 53). In effect, each aspect was restrained and controlled, as one limited and qualified the other (Hall, “Democracy, Globalization, and Difference”).

According to liberal-democratic thought, free market capitalism was the best system to impartially allocate economic resources within a democracy, as it was understood to allow for high living standards and prosperity across the board. Because the market was thought naturally equalizing and free, there were limits on how much economic power would be democratized. On the other hand, democracy was considered the best system for limiting free-market capitalism; it promised to serve the public because private interests would only be allowed existence when citizens consented. The power of capital and the inequalities it inevitably produces were meant to be checked by the democratic system (Hall, “Democracy, Globalization, and Difference”).

While this chapter has sought to show the impossibility of creating a perfect balance, it is also of central import to recognize that earlier manifestations of liberal democracies nonetheless allowed for a level of contestation, negotiation, and reform almost unimaginable in the current moment. Liberal democracy has become what Hall calls, “a single, self-sealed totality,” wherein capitalism and democracy cease to function as a self-regulating system. This change is the result of a heightened level and influence of neo-liberal ideology, which advocates for and celebrates the end of the previous antagonism; as power is increasingly delegated to those with wealth, progress is less and less charted by the good of all and becomes increasingly determined by the new heights an increasingly shrinking portion of the population can reach11. The hegemony of

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11 As Chantal Mouffe laments, neo-liberal ideology “fails to grasp [is] the necessary tension which exists between the logic of liberalism and the logic of democracy, and the impossibility of a final reconciliation” (53).
neo-liberal ideology not only disallows the possibility of an order ruled by a force other than capitalism; it also shifts the way humans experience and participate in politics.

For one, political subjects come to expect new things from democracy, which is newly understood as the guarantor of the promises of rugged individualism, mass consumption, and privatization. No longer the guarantor of civic rights, democracy becomes equated to consumer freedom, allowing “freedom of choice” and “freedom of expression” in and through the marketplace. Democracy is thus newly expected to guarantee open markets and it is in and through open markets that citizens expect what was previously guaranteed by the state (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 100). Identities once defined by work and civic responsibility come to be structured under the organizing principle of consumerism. It is thus as consumers that individuals participate and find meaning in democracy. Christian Identity members have been (or fear being) disenfranchised by an increasingly consumer driven society, which they can no longer participate in. As a result, the gap between their subjectivities and democracy’s services continue to grow.

As the power behind the “remorseless drive to privatize everything in sight” is mostly hidden by this confluence of capitalism and democracy, capitalist ideology remains easy to sell to the public despite increasing disadvantages for an increasing portion of the population. This public acquiescence allows the concentration of power to increasingly move away from the public and local spheres. Privatization, outsourcing, and downsizing continue to grow, and the relationships between human capital and citizenship become “orchestrated in executive boardrooms of transnational corporations as much as by the state” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 100). In relation these changes, multinational corporations now have an increasingly larger role in determining social, political, and economic policies of state governments. This results in,
“...indirect rule by powerful economic actors who hold tremendous control over basic livelihoods” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 5). This has devastating consequences for the democratic possibilities of the average citizen as contestation and change become increasingly difficult to imagine, let alone manifest. It also creates new conflicts as those in power have increasingly dissimilar interests with the rest of the population.

That the Christian Identity Movement is a response to this increasing divide can easily be evinced in their theology which posits those in power as evil outsiders who have come to steal the American dream from its true citizens. Christian Identity members’ inability to see the roots of these inequalities in the growing power of the capitalist system is in part the result of its very growth. As it becomes increasingly hegemonic, the workings of the economic realm are increasingly obscured. The result: stronger antagonisms, more deeply fragmented democracies, and a greater difficulty to see the economic roots of these frictions and divisions (Jameson, Postmodernism 99).

In response to changing social norms, economic disenfranchisement, and a lessened ability to utilize democratic systems for change, Christian Identity adherents (among others) have turned to extreme nationalism. They couple these sentiments with anti-elitism, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and homophobia in an attempt to return to an earlier era when they did not have as many economic competitors and when the state was explicitly aligned with white male property owners. While nationalism is not new to the era of globalization, for Christian Identity members, as for many others, it is newly employed in response to a failed modernizing project. As is true of many, this reaction dangerously combines past and future in a desperate attempt to recreate an imagined national utopia of long ago (Hall, “Democracy, Globalization,
These dreams present a real problem for Christian Identity adherents as they hold onto ideologies that served them in the past, but are the very source of their problems today. The changing landscape wrought by late-capitalism and globalization directly contributed, and continues to contribute, to the growth of Christian Identity. This movement, born in the farm country of the Midwest after the government ignored many pleas for economic help demonstrates real changes in the function of American politics and new ways subjects respond to those changes. That this group had been some of America’s most strident patriots also demonstrates an inherent problem in liberal-democracy: the promises of democracy which once created an alliance with the nation are granted to fewer people as capitalism advances. This results in more people who are not only disenfranchised, but feel lied to and cheated. Christian Identity’s responses thus directly relate to foundational philosophy of America as a liberal-democratic nation.

An examination of the history of democracy illuminates the incompleteness inherent in all of its manifestations. However, it also provides evidence that imperfections can manifest in ways that have strikingly different consequences for different social actors. Antagonisms may be inherent to any system and can even provide spaces of contestation, but they are not inherently positive; much depends on the way conflicts express themselves. Their growing number and increasingly violent nature in recent years are not inevitable, but are a reaction to the march of capitalist “progress” which disenfranchises an increasing number at the same time that it delegates more political power to the economic realm. Thus, the notion that “perseverance and progress” are the mark of democracy’s perfectibility ignores the inherent workings of capitalism, especially when it is allowed to flourish without restraint. Christian Identity’s response to this “progress” is inherently anti-democratic because they no longer find hope in the system. Instead,
as is increasingly true of many groups, they engage their grievances on a moral register (Mouffe, “End of Politics” 58). For them, this morality is determined by their adoption and employment of early American ideology and practice which they turn to in an attempt to return to an earlier nation. It is to these traditions that the following chapter turns.
CHAPTER II:
CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND EARLY AMERICAN CULTURE

The previous chapter examined the connections between the changes in expressions of democracy over time and the development of Christian Identity; the goal of this chapter is to situate the movement within American culture, specifically in its adoption of large portions of Puritan culture. Scholarship on Christian Identity tends to focus on its contemporary history, most often addressing the group’s use of terrorism, its responses to globalization, and the ways its members have reacted to rapid economic and social change. This focus on Christian Identity’s postmodern characteristics and its response to capitalism’s most recent manifestations are relevant (and are in fact essential to this thesis), however, a discussion of the group’s modern and pre-modern roots is equally important if we are to understand how this group has responded to contemporary changes.

Much of the scholarship on Christian Identity mentions its connection to British-Israelism. For example, Chester L. Quarles’s, Christian Identity: The Aryan American Bloodline Religion and Jerome Walters’ One Aryan Nation Under God both briefly address the group’s British predecessor. In addition, Michael Barkun’s Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement, goes much farther than other scholarship by charting the group’s roots to Protestant millenarian thought in the early nineteenth century. While Barkun even states a connection to Puritan thought, his work does not demonstrate Christian Identity’s co-optation of large portions of Puritan culture and theology.

The details of this borrowed culture are of import for a couple of reasons. First, in providing a reference point, a discussion of Puritanism will aid in an understanding of the Christian Identity mindset. Secondly, as Puritanism provides the basis of most of Christian
Identity’s beliefs, (albeit often in less radical and less violent ways), outlining these beliefs will provide insight into the basis of Christian Identity theology. As I will describe the difference between Puritanism and Christian Identity systems of belief, this comparison will also illuminate which beliefs Christian Identity has specifically added themselves and thus lend insight to their specifically postmodern use of culture and theology. Third, the connection to Puritanism is worth exploring because it places Christian Identity adherents more clearly in relation to the lived history of liberal democracy in America. As Puritanism provided many ideological bases for what would become America, shaping not only its culture, but also its political and economic climes, fleshing out Christian Identity’s cooption of this belief system demonstrates their connection to some of these fundamental aspects of America. As such, it is erroneous to think of Christian Identity as completely divorced from American culture. However, important differences between Christian Identity and American culture clearly exist. Their cooption of Puritanism demonstrates how Christian Identity seeks to return to mythic origins of America’s past and illuminates their goals of establishing a purified nation, religion, and race.

Christian Identity’s use of Puritanism is not accidental; strands of Puritan thought continue to exist in Christian Identity ideology and theology because adherents consciously employ Puritanism and express alliance with Puritan goals. That this is the case becomes clear in an examination of Christian Identity material, which regularly references Puritans in a positive light. For example, the website for American Reformation Ministries, names itself a “Calvinistic Celtic Christian Israelite Identity Outreach” (<http://www.kelticklankirk.com/>). And, one popular Christian Identity book, The “Apple” Story, begins with a chapter on the Puritans. The first page states,

The story of the Pilgrims and Puritans that settled New England is the story of the planting of God’s Kingdom in America…It seems that the religious persecutions in
various European countries had been providentially used to select out the most progressive and enlightened people for the colonization of America. (1)

These are only two of many possible examples demonstrating Christian Identity’s conscious employment of Puritanism and their idealization of those Puritans who came to America on what they believed to be a godly mission.

As the passage above demonstrates, a central aspect of Puritanism that Christian Identity has adopted is a strident belief that America is exceptional because it is where the “most progressive and enlightened people” planted God’s Kingdom on earth. The notion of America’s superiority did not originate with the Puritans, but began with the European idea that the New World was the opposite of the Old. Innocent of the Old World’s sins – of power, imperialism, war, inequality, and injustice – the New World was posited as holding the potential to be humanity’s great redeemer (Noble, xxvii). The belief in America’s inherent possibilities – that it would serve as the location where humanity would be perfected – permeated Puritan thought in the 17th Century. As John Winthrop prophesied in his greatly influential speech, “Model of Christian Charity,” America would be nothing less than “…a city upon a hill,” and “…they eyes of all people shall be upon us” (Winthrop, 180). As Winthrop’s words suggest, the Puritans believed that America would be a model for the rest of the world. In fact, the very idea of America and its national identity came into existence inextricably from the notion that America was exceptional (Spanos, 36).

Christian Identity theology employs the belief that America is, more than any other nation, divine. This belief in America’s godly exceptionalism is central to Christian Identity’s theological conception of the world and the history of humanity. As the doctrinal statement of Kingdom Identity Ministries states:
WE BELIEVE that the United States of America fulfills the prophesied (II Sam. 7:10; Isa. 11:12; Ezek. 36:24) place…It is here in this blessed land (Deut. 15.6, 28:11, 33:13-17) that God made a small one a strong nation (Isa. 60:22), feeding His people with knowledge and understanding through Christian pastors (Jer. 3:14-15) who have carried the light of truth and blessings unto the nations of the earth (Isa. 49:6, 2:2-3; Gen. 12:3). (<http://www.kingidentity.com/>).

For Christian Identity members, America is exceptional because it is the place where God’s people will realize His plan for humanity.

For the Puritans, the realization of this plan would end with Second coming of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God; the return of Christ would transform the entire world, renewing and redeeming mankind (Spanos, 37). The Puritans believed that this new world would be the New Jerusalem depicted in Revelation literally implanted in New England (Zakai, 23). Christian Identity theology revolves around this belief, although they believe the Kingdom of God will be implemented in all of America, not just in New England. Kingdom Identity Ministries expresses this notion:

WE BELIEVE the ultimate destiny of all history will be the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth (Psalm 37:9, 11, 22; Isa. 11:9; Matt. 5:5, 6:10; Rev. 21:2-3) with Yahshua our Messiah (Jesus Christ) reigning as King of kings…When our Savior returns to restore righteous government on the earth, there will be a day of reckoning when the kingdoms of this world become His (Rev. 11:15; Isa. 9:6-7) and all evil shall be destroyed (Isa. 13:9; Mal. 4:3; Matt. 13:30, 41-42; II Thes. 2:8). His elect Saints will be raised immortal at His return (I Cor. 15:52-53; I Thes. 4:16; Rev. 20:6) to rule and reign with Him as kings and priests (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; Exodus 19:6; Dan. 7:18, 27). (<http://www.kingidentity.com/>)

Thus, Identity members understand their role as imperative; they believe themselves to be central actors in the drama of human redemption, on a divine mission with the fate of humanity at stake.

Puritans did not only see themselves as divine but conceived of themselves as those specifically chosen by God to realize His will. Because of this belief in their chosenness, Puritans likened themselves to the Jews of the Old Testament (Spanos, 37). In their minds, America was to be the “new Israel” and Puritans believed themselves to be “…confronting it for
a providential purpose just as the original Israelites confronted the wilderness of Sinai after the Exodus” (Barkun, 5). The Israelites provided a pertinent metaphor to the Puritans, shaping and providing Biblical legitimacy to their mission.

However, Christian Identity members have taken this metaphorical association with the Israelites and made it both literal and central to their system of belief. Adherents believe themselves to be ancestrally related to the Israelites as they believe that these “lost tribes of Israel were never lost. They only lost their identity as they migrated westward over the centuries from the land of their captivity” (<http://www.amprom.org/books_online/Heirs_of_the_Promise.html>)

In an attempt to prove that they are the descendents of members of these tribes, Christian Identity adherents are particularly concerned with mapping and charting their heritage. They do this by charting the movement of tribes discussed in the Bible and drawing maps which represent the spread of various peoples over history. Believers “chart” the movement of the Israelites’ descendents from Biblical times until present day, claiming that many of their progeny reside in America.

For Christian Identity, an essential aspect of charting these tribes is demonstrating their complete separation from other lines of heritage. This is done in an attempt to demonstrate the racial make-up of Israelites. As Kingdom Identity Ministries’ doctrine states:

WE BELIEVE the White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and kindred people to be 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 (<http://www.kingidentity.com/>).

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12 The name “Christian Identity” in fact came from Identity’s attempt to reclaim what they believe is this lost identity.
Thus, for Christian Identity being God’s chosen is equated to being white. While this belief diverges from Puritan theology, it is not entirely the creation of Christian Identity.

Puritans did not conceive of themselves so distinctly along racial lines, but the notion of their chosenness was not entirely devoid of racial or ethnic distinctions. For example, the Puritans believed that colonization of the Amerindians was an historical duty necessary to complete their project in the New World (Cañizares-Esguerra, 69). This belief was based on the Puritans’ idea that the native people they encountered were Satan’s minions, who had been placed in America as a challenge to the community they were attempting to establish (Cañizares-Esguerra, 16). Thus, colonization, in the Puritan mind, was understood as nothing less than a battle between God’s Christian heroes (who were white Anglo-Saxons) and the Amerindian agents of the devil (Cañizares-Esguerra, 71). While Puritans did not centralize race as Christian Identity does, Puritan notions of good and evil were still based on ethnic and racial distinctions.

As their beliefs about colonization demonstrate, Puritans saw themselves as leading actors in a cosmic drama (Cañizares-Esguerra, 70-1). This drama, they believed, would end with the apocalypse. The period leading up the apocalypse would be an intensified battle between the forces of good and evil known as Tribulation. The Puritans believed that they were living in this era, which would eventually culminate in the battle of Armageddon. Only if the chosen were victorious in this fight would Christ return and God’s plan would be realized. The Puritans believed that in order to win they would have to follow God’s will. If they failed in this regard, they believed the Devil and his minions would reign victorious. While Christian Identity these violent and fear-imbuing beliefs, they conceive of Armageddon in strictly racial terms, as a race war between the white Chosen and the non-white agents of the devil.
For Puritans, the assignment of chosenness was not to be taken lightly; first of all, it did not guarantee that God’s plan would be realized and secondly, it carried a heavy responsibility to all of humanity and God. As such, Puritans believed that religious belief entered them into a covenant with God, which was above all else a contract of servitude (Ceppi, 214). As John Winthrop intoned, “when God gives a special Commission he looks to have it strictly observed…but if we shall neglect that observation of these articles…the lord will surely break out in wrath against us be revenged…and make us know the price of the breach of such a Covenant” (Winthrop, 179). Puritan culture was thus a culture of duty; faith was not played out in ritual or prayer, but in dutiful action to God. In fact, knowing God by serving Him was the most important thing to Puritans (Rutman, 13).

Because they believe in their chosenness literally, Christian Identity members place a heavy weight on fulfilling their duty. As one ministries’ newsletter states,

Here we stand in the year of our Lord 2005, an embattled remnant, soldiers of the cross, duty and honour-bound to serve and obey our Lord God and King, Jesus Christ!…IT IS OUR DUTY! WE ARE HONOUR BOUND BY OUR CODE OF CHIVALRY AND STRICT ADHERENCE TO BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO DEFEND OUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OUR LOVED ONES. (<http://kelticklankirk.com/militias_christian_identity.htm>)

This sense of duty presents adherents actions as divine. To neglect them is not only a disgrace to god, but also threatens the very survival of the community.

As the passage above states, duty includes “strict adherence to Biblical Principles,” a notion that Christian Identity adherents also borrow from Puritans. Central to the creation of Puritanism was a belief in the notion that the Protestant Reformation had not gone far enough; in Puritans’ eyes, the Anglican Church remained impure because it had taken on Catholic traditions which were against God’s prescription. Specifically, Puritans disavowed the traditions that

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13 Puritans held a firm faith in the necessity of the “errand” God had sent them on, growing increasingly more committed to their cause upon each generation (qtd. in Spanos, 37).
required believers to follow human authority instead of the Bible (Miller, 13). Perhaps most problematic to the Puritans was the Catholic belief that believers had the power to work out their own salvation through virtue or prayer. Puritans believed that in positing God in this manner – as one whose will could waiver or be bought by humans – Catholics had cheapened God and had strayed from His message (Cañizares-Esguerra, 15). Thus, they believed that they needed to purify these traditions and restore God’s proper role by making him the ultimate authority by living according to his Word (Cañizares-Esguerra, 15). This, they believed would emulate the church established by Christ in the first century, and would reestablish its original purity (Miller, 7).

Privileging the Bible over human laws led Puritans to a theology that removed intermediaries between the practitioner and God, in theory allowing every man to have a direct religious experience with Him (Miller, 13). This “personal godliness” was radically different from the Anglican Church’s focus on ritual conformity directed by a central authority (Block, 48). It presented a new type of agency to the individual, who did not have to answer to Church authority, but to themselves (Block, 44). For Puritans, conscience was to be at the heart of decision making; one was not supposed to follow moral prescriptions as interpreted by the church, but was to internalize God’s authority (Ziff, 14).

However, because man is easily tempted into corruption and was inherently sinful, Puritans believed that only God’s law could ensure purity. Thus, they created a theocracy, under which social and political realms were dictated by the Word of God (Zakai, 26). In turn, Puritans created a society established on the notion of complete obedience to God. While this was an

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14 While allowing practitioners to free themselves from the rule of other humans, this authority simply becomes replaced by God. Because it required subordination to God, by today’s standards this agency would not be considered liberating (Block, 42). In addition, the bible can never be entirely free from human interpretation and for Puritans and Christian Identity members alike, this interpretation most often comes from ministers and other authority figures in the church.
attempt to avoid the trappings of human fallibility in positions of power, it mandated that one constantly police him or herself, and created a society where rules were rigid, and sinning was considered a civil as well as a religious offence. Ultimately, power was more highly concentrated and less challenged.

Like the Puritans, Christian Identity adherents believe a theocracy must be established in America today if the country is to be saved. In a revealing (and widely spread) pamphlet entitled, “American Must Turn to God’s Law,” the author explains the “…correctness and effectiveness of Divine Judgment”. Written, “For the instruction of civil authorities,” this pamphlet explains that “Sin is ‘the transgression of the [God’s] Law’ (1 John 3:4),” and that, “To quit sinning, America must turn and obey God’s Laws.” Inside, the reader is provided with, “examples of our disobedience,” which demonstrate the imperfection of human laws. For example, the pamphlet provides commentary on the way American law currently deals with theft:

These frames imply that imprisoning those who are caught simply wastes taxpayer dollars as it does not do anything to curb criminal behavior. In contrast, the pamphlet suggests, God’s law is effective in changing behavior and benefits society in the way it punishes its citizens:
While the punishment under “God’s law” to make thieves repay society by paying for the stolen goods or through work may appear progressive, their final solution for the unreformed thief is death. The pamphlet’s statement that, “…all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you (Deut. 13:11),” suggests that Christian Identity members believe in the possibility of a crime free society. This utopian belief becomes especially clear in the last frame of the entire pamphlet (below) which (after discussing why capital punishment is the right answer for murder and rape) depicts an idealistic vision of society.
Underneath this frame the pamphlet reads: “When those who violate God’s Laws are punished according to God’s Judgments (punishments), the citizens enjoy justice, order, quietness, and peace. God says: ‘When My judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness’ (Is. 26:9)”. Ultimately, the pamphlet suggests that following God’s laws will create a perfected society.

However, the pamphlet also suggests that economics are an important factor in creating “justice, order, quietness, and peace.” The cartoon expresses members’ belief in the depravity in taking money from the citizen to enforce laws; Christian Identity members are often adamant tax resisters, believing that citizens should not have to pay a government they do not agree with. This cartoon also specifically demonstrates Christian Identity’s beliefs about work, which it claims, “teaches skills, improves behavior, and reduces the tendency to crime.” While positive notions of work exist in much of American culture and society, these beliefs are to no small degree attributable to the Puritans who believed work was good in and of itself.

For Puritans work was believed to be a good in and of itself because they believed that it aided one in avoiding the temptations of sin and simultaneously served God by helping to establish the Kingdom of God (Ziff, 18). Thus, in the Puritan mindset, a productive society was a good society. As Max Weber states, the Puritans believed that “Not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity serves to increase the glory of God, according to the definite manifestations of His
will. Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins” (Weber, Protestant Ethic 157). An unwillingness to work was thought to demonstrate a lack of grace (Weber, Protestant Ethic 159). The Puritans thus stressed that regardless of what type of work one did, as long as it was in line with one’s calling, it was dignified (Ziff, 17).

Work organized the Puritan community to a large extent, both literally and metaphorically, as it served both as the basis of organization and as the basis of much imagery and metaphor in sermons (Ziff, 23). In this was serving God was equated to work and work was equated to serving God. In Puritan New England, farming was the basic form of work and it served to organize the community especially those beyond the frontier (Ziff, 18). The Puritans conceived of a world divided between the civilized and the uncivilized. They placed themselves in the former category because they produced from God’s bounty through their efforts of work; in the latter, were those in the natural world who did not utilize what God had given them because they were not organized and thus had no ability to produce.

Christian Identity members have also adopted this belief in the inherent goodness of work, especially farming:

Small family farms are the backbone of a community, a nation, and of society as a whole. A landscape of family farms is settled, balanced and stable, and generally sustainable. It's the natural shape of society on the land. Such communities aggregate into strong and secure nations (<http://www.kelticklankirk.com/farming.htm>).

As this quotation demonstrates, Christian Identity’s idealization of farming is inextricable from their belief in its ability to build strong communities and nations. While this notion replicates the Puritan belief that agriculture could sustain their fledgling society, Christian Identity members’ belief is wrapped in overtones of nostalgia for early America. For example, “The Old Timer Page” on one Christian Identity site states:
Today there is an increasing self-awareness among many toward becoming more self-reliant...the pioneers of 100 years ago were already more self-sufficient than most of us will ever be. Perhaps instead of looking to the future and new ways of doing things, we ought to at least take a small look into the past and re-acquaint ourselves with the old ways that are proven, that work, yet are nearly forgotten (<http://waltonfeed.com/old/>).

This nostalgia relates to Christian Identity’s belief that early America was self-sufficient and early Americans self-reliant, two notions they believe are inherently good.

If the farm was the basis of a unified Puritan community, the family was the primary unit of social organization which allowed the farm to function. As such, Puritan marriage was intimately connected to notions of productivity. The wife was thought of as property, understood to be a good that the husband acquired in marriage. In addition, she was expected to serve as her husband’s helper to aid in the household’s production (Ziff, 17). The hierarchical order of the household was thought imperative to the survival of the family and thus all were under the direction of the father.

In the Puritan mindset, a weak family was thought to put the rest of the social order at risk, “...for the Puritans knew that the pattern of submission set in the home fixed the attitude toward authority throughout life and that strong family government prevented disorder in the state” (Rutman, 6 from Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost). The father served as a model for all other relationships of authority, as the biblical commandment to revere parents and follow their dictates was thought necessary in all realms of life (Rutman, 6, from Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost).

Because of the Puritan belief that everyone had access to the word of God, religious education could begin in the home (Ziff, 31). Thus, religion was taught at home and even the most intimate family affairs were dictated by God’s laws. As an essential component of sustaining the community, sex was regulated by the dictates of God’s laws. Because it led to
productivity, sexual practices inside marriage were celebrated, but “...only as the means willed by God for the increase of His glory according to the commandment, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Weber, Protestant Ethic 158). On the other hand, sexual practices outside of God’s law were punished; the consequence for fornication was whipping and for adultery, it was death (Rutman, 46). Because human nature was thought inherently sinful, Puritans believed that it was natural for humans to break sexual prohibitions. However, they also believed that leaving transgressions unpunished would elicit God’s wrath (Rutman, 46). Sexual regulations were thus established in order to ensure and maintain a hierarchical family structure and order within the community, all of which was ultimately in the service of productivity and God’s will.

Like the Puritans, Christian Identity adherents also place family in the forefront of social order. This focus can be evinced in Christian Identity materials that stress the need for hierarchical familial organization including traditional gender roles and subservient children. Like all aspects of society, gender roles are understood to be prescribed by God’s laws; as one ministry’s doctrine states, “…men and women should conduct themselves according to the role of their gender in the traditional Christian sense that God intended” (www.kingidentity.com/doctrine.htm). Discussion of gender roles most often revolves around the Christian Identity belief that wives must be subservient. This can be evinced in the following passages, taken from “Bible Study #1, Role of Women in the Church and in the Home: Submission of Godly Women”:

Yahweh is not being an unreasonable tyrant when He commands women to be under submission to their husbands. The domination trait of Eve' sinful nature came about as a curse from God because of her disobedience in the Garden of Eden. This curse, along with that of pain in childbirth and that of death, extends to future generations of her female descendants.

When Eve didn't obey God's commandment, she became deceived (beguiled, seduced). Eve also led Adam to sin. He, too, was cursed by Yahweh; therefore, all of Adam and
Eve's descendants suffer from a sinful nature with all its terrible consequences. ([http://www.kelticklankirk.com/womens_auxiliaries_Bible_Study_1_submission.htm](http://www.kelticklankirk.com/womens_auxiliaries_Bible_Study_1_submission.htm)).

The passage above not only provides justification for women’s submission to their husbands, but because Eve is posited as the cause of Adam’s sin, it also leads Christian Identity followers to justify policing women’s sexuality to a greater degree than men’s two notions represented in this bumper sticker:

![Bumper Sticker](https://example.com/bumper_sticker.png)

(Kingdom Identity Ministries)

Adultery is certainly not condoned in Christian Identity circles; however, it is redefined as sexual intercourse with someone of another race (Quarles, 91). The “abomination” of homosexuality, is also a main Christian Identity concern, as they believe it a transgression that should be punished by death (see, for example, www.kingidentity.com/doctrine.htm). In addition, “aborticide,” a term that implies that the act of performing abortions is murder, is also considered a crime severe enough to be punished by death (“America Needs God’s Law”). All of these rules align with the goal of (re)production and thus work towards the end of sustaining the covenant of followers, which is understood along racial lines.

While Puritans understood an ordered family to be central to social organization, it was only the most basic unit. This message was centrally conveyed in the church, where ministers advocated the need for a hierarchical and differentiated society (Miller, 15). Because it allowed for development of specialized skills and thus an increase in production, Puritans believed in the division of labor (Weber, Protestant Ethic 161). Much like the Ancient Greeks, Puritans
believed that each member of society had a specific calling and that following it was one’s duty. This was especially true after the Puritans had set roots in America; by the beginning of the eighteenth century the clergy were centrally concerned with maintaining class stratification by promoting the rule, (in church and society) of the “well-trained and the culturally superior” (Miller, 15). Thus, as Plato had prescribed so many years ago, leadership was given to the learned; the unlearned were meant to dutifully serve in subordination (Miller, 16).

Puritans adopted Ancient Greek philosophy about societal order in other ways as well, often directly reflecting Aristotelian ideas. For example, they borrowed the notion that authority and subordination were both inevitable and practical because every person’s composition differed (Rutman, 52-3)\(^\text{15}\). As for Aristotle, the belief that each person had a calling led the Puritans’ to justify slavery. Puritans were able to profit from the institution of slavery, even though the idea of engaging in the African slave trade was considered ungodly because it would endanger the sanctity of the community (Ceppi, 216, from Towner, 215)\(^\text{16}\). As this willingness to engage in a potentially threatening practice demonstrates, Puritans often put aside other beliefs in the name of production (and profit) ultimately creating a society based on what would become capitalist practices.

The explicit racism behind the practice of slavery and the racialized organization of labor that followed were both aided and obscured by the Puritan notion of servitude. As Puritans posited their relationship to God as one of service, they could employ the metaphor in all parts of society, justifying and constructing a hierarchical structure even when other factors got in the way (Ceppi, 214). Servitude served to direct and structure labor hierarchically and

\(^{15}\) However, for the Puritans, these divisions were ordained not by nature, but by God; that some were rich and some poor, some intelligent and some stupid, some lucky and some not, was not the outcome of the composition of one’s soul, but was the outcome of God’s prescriptions (Miller, 17).

\(^{16}\) Puritans believed slavery was threatening because they believed that Black bodies contained pagan souls.
simultaneously posit compulsory labor across the ranks as a virtue (Ceppi, 228). Race was used within notions of servitude in order to “signify the hierarchical social and spiritual value of the bodies performing that labor” (Ceppi, 228). Whiteness came to represent a good impulse to labor, while blackness had negative, even satanic connotations. Thus, Puritans played a role in initiating the racial coding of the division of labor: productive and rational labor was associated with whites, unproductive, self-interested, and menial labor with blacks (Ceppi, 228). Because the sacred and the profane were not separate arenas in the Puritan world view, any practices could be sanctified in the service of God, especially when they were seen to increase production and ensure the survival of the community. Notions of servitude not only justified their participation in the African slave trade, but also shaped the classifications of labor along racial terms, the effects of which still exist in America today.

Christian Identity relies on Puritan narratives of both servitude and racialized labor in order to support their belief that social division should be strictly based on race. Christian Identity members write explicitly about slavery and believe that racialized servitude corresponds to a natural hierarchy, which has been perverted in America and needs to be recreated. These beliefs are exemplified on the American Reformation Ministries’ website which posts diary excerpts from Confederates in the Civil War. The following is taken from “White Supremacy: The Cornerstone Principle of the C.S.A [Confederate States of America]” written by Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederate States of America on June 5, 1866:

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17 “The metaphors and ideals of feudal servitude as a social structure and covenantal servitude as a spiritual structure were available to the dominant culture as ways of moderating and accommodating the potentially destabilizing energies of socio-economic transition” (Ceppi, 215). Servitude became one of the ways to deal with changing norms, to cushion the impact of economic change as the system shifted from feudalism to capitalism (Ceppi, 216).
The order of subordination was nature's great law; philosophy taught that order as the normal condition of the African amongst European races. Upon this recognized principle of a proper subordination, let it be called slavery or what not, our State institutions were formed and rested. The new Confederation was entered into with this distinct understanding. This principle of the subordination of the inferior to the superior was the "corner-stone" on which it was formed. 

(\url{http://www.kelticklankirk.com/white_supremacy_cornerstone_cause_CSA.htm})

Like Puritans, Christian Identity members believe Blacks are naturally inferior, but unlike Puritans, Christian Identity members actually believe all people of color are a human sub-species they term “mud-people.” In accordance with the Puritan belief that only whites could perform productive and thus godly labor. Adherents commonly refer to the importance of white labor, especially white, male labor. As the flyer below suggests, the exploited labor of Black slaves did not build America; instead, it was the civilized work of white men.

![Image of flyer saying White Men Built this nation!]

(W.A.R. Magazine, from Kimmel)

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18 Like early Americans before them, Christian Identity adherents believe that the early national goals of Westward Expansion were part of a larger, godly agenda; as The “Apple” Story contends, “During the ensuing two hundred years this combination of Divine Law and Faith drove inspired men and women to further expansion and opportunities, in the name of Jesus Christ” (2).
The statement “White Men Built this nation!! White Men Are this nation!!!” demonstrates the Christian Identity believe that work constitutes a nation. It also places them within the history of the entire nation and pointing to their belief that whites were chosen to establish America. In conjunction, the statement “White Men Are this nation!!” points to Christian Identity’s belief in the need for a society purified of all other races.

Ultimately, all of the aforementioned Puritan beliefs revolved around the goal of creating and maintaining a purified community. For the Puritans, this society was threatened by a number of factors. For one, the uncivilized, savage, and diabolic wilderness that lay beyond the frontier presented threats (Spanos, 39). In addition, they believed that all manifestations of the devil within the community were a threat because these would lead God to allow the devil to exert power over them (Norton, 296). However, rooting out all evil was an impossible proposition because Puritan’s believed in humanity’s inherently sinful nature. Thus, in order to keep the community safe, they believed in the need to punish sinners. While they did not believe all transgressions of God’s law should be punished by death, those which demonstrated a strong enough presence of the devil should.19 In this way, all Puritans’ beliefs and actions were directly connected to creating the community (through work, colonization, instituting an ordered society, etc.) or sustaining its purity (also via work and by creating boundaries between themselves and the outside world, punishing sinners, etc.).

The importance of purity to Christian Identity adherents is no less than it was to the Puritans. Like the Puritans, Christian Identity members do focus on sinners amongst the chosen; but, for them this leads to condemnation of other whites who do not live according to Christian Identity prescriptions. As their material on theocracy made clear, those who transgress God’s law

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19 While Puritans are perhaps best known for the Salem Witch Trials in the late 17th Century, the punishments they used were not unique to this period but the number of executions and the severity of punishments were not typical of Puritan behavior (Norton, 3-13).
need to be punished and often executed. Theft, murder, rape, abortion, and homosexuality all qualify as worthy of capital punishment in the Christian Identity mindset. As did the Puritans, Christian Identity followers also believe that transgressions of God’s law are met with his vengeful wrath. Christian Identity followers thus point to wars, immigration, and debt as evidence that white Christians are not abiding by God’s word, including his prescriptions for gender roles (http://www.amprom.org/Newsletters/Partials/pastorsdesk_6_06.html). According to Daniel Gayman, God has wrought “sickness, disease, loss of jobs, drought, floods, venereal disease, farm foreclosures, business bankruptcies, government regulations, license, [and] excessive taxation” as punishment for sins.

However, an examination of their materials demonstrates that adherents of Christian Identity focus more on the corrosive forces that come from the outside, than on sinners within the Christian Identity community. Because Christian Identity conceives of good and evil along racial lines, their primary concern is with creating lines of demarcation between themselves and those of other races.

The chart above exemplifies Christian Identity’s belief about the corrosive nature of all races other than the “white race;” this belief is followed by a strong denouncement against race-mixing, a theme that dominates Christian Identity literature. For example, one pamphlet states:

God chose his Israel-Schythian-Celtic-Caucasian people to be used by Him in a great plan for the transformation of a world lost in paganism…These are the civilizers who are
to lead by example. Our people disinherit themselves when they are disobedient to God by race mixing and other great sins. (“You May Be an Heir”).

As one ministry’s doctrine states:

Race-mixing is an abomination in the sight of Almighty God, a satanic attempt meant to destroy the chosen seedline, and is strictly forbidden by His commandments. www.kingidentity.com/doctrine.htm

Again, these beliefs are structured by that the white race’s survival is dependent on its godly ordained purity so that it may reign victorious in the impending race war. As race mixing is understood to be central to maintenance of the community, it is often addressed in conjunction with an ordered and civilized society and thus encompasses notions not only of race, but of sexuality, and gender as well.

Earth’s Most Beautiful
Endangered Species

The life of a race is in the wombs of its women.
The White race faces extinction now!
Only 2% of the earth’s population is young White female.

Look long and hard, White man.
Images like hers may soon cease to exist forever.

Judeo-Christianity & Judeo-controlede world governments perpetuate genocide through doctrines of Universalism.
No race can survive without nations of its own. America denies us White nations, White schools, White neighborhoods, White organizations and everything necessary for racial survival, then promotes inter-racial mating.

The highest law of nature is the preservation of one’s own kind. There is no time remaining for White men to indulge in reality denial or cowardice. If our women are not worth fighting for, then I ask you, “What Is?”

Live The 14 Words
‘We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children’

Here is why:
‘because the beauty of the White Aryan woman must not perish from the earth’
This flyer (available for print and distribution) exemplifies Christian Identity’s cultural cosmology: the white race must be preserved in order to ensure the fate of humanity. Male adherents (the majority of those who follow Christian Identity) thus believe that central to their project is protecting (threatened) white women from the sexual predation of non-white men.

Once again, this world view is not entirely unique to Christian Identity, although the emphasis on race is. Puritans were also concerned with the purity of sexuality along racial terms. Puritans believed the native peoples they encountered to be lewd and sexually dirty. These characteristics were thought to be the result of life in the wild, where they Puritans believed them to be sexually free. In the Puritan mindset, any people lacking organization, including racial or national solidarity were necessarily wild, out of control and thus threatening (Slotkin, 76). While this did fall along racial lines in the case of the Amerindians, Puritans were more concerned with marks of civilization than with race. These notions are mirrored in the “Earth’s Most Beautiful Endangered Species” flyer above, which stresses the need for preserving “one’s own kind” and for creating racially separate schools, neighborhoods, organizations, and nations in order to ensure that preservation.

As was true for the Puritans, the notion of protection is connected to the idea of literal protective boundaries; for adherents of Christian Identity, those boundaries are determined by the nation: “No race can survive without nations of its own.” This obsession with a purified American body leads to Christian Identity’s strong sentiments of xenophobia and incessant focus on America’s borders\(^{20}\). Many adherents interact with, and are part of, border patrollers and groups such as the minutemen who view Mexican immigration (both legal and not) as one of the largest threats to the nation. This threat is depicted in a number of ways. For example:

\(^{20}\) In fact, the focus on, and concern with, America’s borders is, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the single most important factor spurring the radical right in America today (Beirich, et al., 48).
While there are many messages encoded in the images above, one of the most essential is the emphasis on borders. Christian Identity believes America should be entirely isolationist, disallowing immigration of all non-white, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic people. The implication that immigration threatens the very existence of the white race becomes clear when one examines the commentary written below the first two images: “It is NOT Immigration - it is Colonization!” as well as the commentary on the lower two images, which suggest the supposed conquest is to be
of white owned and controlled land. These images also make clear that Christian Identity’s beliefs about immigration center on economics. Those coming from the outside are portrayed as posing a major threat to white, male labor.

Ultimately, as was true for Puritans, Members’ lives are shaped by the fear of defying God by allowing impurity of any kind into the community. Christian Identity members conceive of a world in which the fate of humanity depends on a nation with strong borders; they believe that only in seclusion, can the white race be free of evil and only in this purity can it be preserved. They believe that this purity is the prerequisite to the second coming of Christ, and thus the restoration of a righteous government, the elevation of the white elect to immortal Saints, and the destruction of all evil. But, the Kingdom of God will not arrive on its own. Its establishment requires labor and a strong work ethic which they also believe are threatened by impurity and must be preserved.

Christian Identity members have co-opted the Puritan tradition in an attempt to return to an “original” America. This desire for a pure America is accompanied by desires for a pure religion and a pure race. While Christian Identity members posit these returns as imperatives to the survival of humanity, it is clear that they are reactionary replies to disenfranchisement and alienation. For those alienated by the government, Puritanism provides a tradition that disavows human authority in the name of a personal relationship with God. In the face of economic disenfranchisement, Puritanism provides a belief system that posits work as both valuable to the community and as a good in and of itself. And, the Puritan notion of America’s exceptionalism provides hope for a nation that Christian Identity members believe has failed. In adherents’ eyes, America can still be that “city upon a hill,” and they, as Americans have a dignified and divine project to carry out.
Of course, in adopting Puritanism, Christian Identity members do not radically divide themselves from the American system they so disavow. In fact, many scholars argue that Puritanism provided the basis of American culture, most strongly through the values that would aid in the evolution of feudalism into capitalism. As Max Weber claims, “…Puritanism carried the ethos of the rational organization of capital and labor” (Weber, Protestant Ethic, 166). This ethos shaped the very contours of American political, economic, and cultural systems. While American culture today diverges from the Puritan project, significant threads remain. Most centrally, these threads include America’s exceptionalism, its strong vein of individualism, its positive views of work ethic, and other aspects that are central to capitalist ideology.

So, we are left wondering, why, in the face of disenfranchisement and alienation, has Christian Identity co-opted the very belief system that was the root of capitalism? How have they managed to hold onto this belief? And, to what effect? It is to the answers of these questions that the last chapter turns.
CHAPTER III:
THE WHOLLY UNHOLY OTHER?: JEWS, PARANOIA, & UTOPIAN IMAGININGS

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Christian Identity theology mandates a community that is purified of all transgressions of God’s Law (and in effect all of those who present a threat to the community via these transgressions). This chapter will demonstrate how Christian Identity adherents actually attempt to create that purity through a variety of actions, many of which are anti-social and criminal in nature. As Christian Identity does not have the power to establish a theocracy in America, adherents use means that are outside the sanctions of the state in their attempt to create purified communities. While their targets are varied, Christian Identity believes that Jews present the largest threat to their community. The centrality of Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism is no doubt related to the religious and racial closeness of Jews and white Christians. This anti-Semitism is fundamental to their ideology; it is the piece that holds all of their other beliefs together and it is the driving force behind many of their actions.

Before a full understanding of the causes of Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism and their actions can be achieved, one must first understand the Christian Identity conception of the root of evil. In the Christian Identity cosmology, evil begins with Satan, who is believed to have literal descendents walking the earth. These human-like children of the Devil are thought to have been created when Eve was sexually seduced by Satan in the Garden of Eden. As the theology goes, Eve copulated with the devil, producing Cain; all descendents of Cain are thus thought to be satanic and at constant war with the children of Adam and Eve (whose seedline begins with Abel). While the line of descendents beginning with Adam and Eve are understood to be white, Anglo-Saxon, Christians, Christian Identity adherents believe that the line of descendents beginning with Eve and Satan are the Jews. Because Jews are the literal descendents of Satan,
they are believed to be the source of all evil, the root cause of all the threats posed to the covenant which were discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, Christian Identity conceives of a world in which white, Anglo-Saxon, Christians, as God’s Chosen, were put on the earth in order to battle the satanic Jews and all the threats they cause. In order to gain perspective as to why and to what effect Christian Identity believes Jews to be the ultimate source of evil, I will examine the way Christian Identity represents Jews, both in theology and in imagery.

Central to Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism is the belief that Jews have stolen their identity as God’s Chosen (and have deluded all of humanity into agreeing with them). As KKK member and Christian Identity adherent Charles Lee expressed, “Today we call it Christian Identity simply because we feel we’ve lost our identity – that these people that call themselves Jews have stolen our identity so that’s where we coin the phrase” (Hate Groups U.S.A). In proclaiming themselves as the Chosen, and believing themselves to be the only ones with a personal relationship with God, Christian Identity adherents attempt to exorcise Jews out of the history of the Christian faith. While the paranoia glares through Charles Lee’s statement, Christian insecurity about its identity in relation to Judaism did not originate with the Christian Identity Movement; in fact, this crisis of identity harkens back to the origins of Christianity.

Christianity fundamentally conceives of itself as the completion of the project begun by Judaism; as such, according to Christians, Judaism was supposed to be converted entirely and thus was meant to convert it entirely. As Judaism still exists, it is clear that this transformation was not complete, a fact that contradicts Christians’ conception of their faith. As Martin Henry claims in his article “Christianity and Anti-Semitism,” “…the upshot of Christianity’s failure to

21 While all Christian Identity adherents are anti-Semitic in some fashion, there is a major divide between those who ascribe to the theology described above (called the “Two Seedline Doctrine”) and those who instead believe that Jews are the descendents of other, lesser, humans. While this chapter will focus on those who ascribe to the two seedline doctrine, the groups’ anti-Semitism functions similarly enough that the chapter that follows applies to both.
absorb Judaism has been that Judaism has continued historically to be, as it were, a thorn in Christianity’s flesh, a constant, uneasy reminder to Christianity that its claims may not be true, at least not in any self-evident or readily comprehensible sense” (362). The existence of every Jewish person, then, presents a reminder that Christianity’s ground may not be as firm as it claims. Christian Identity members’ belief in their own chosenness is a response to the fears presented by this history, but is also rooted in the philosophical basis of Christianity.

Unlike Judaism (and other “particularistic” religions), Christianity is based on universalism. While this leads to “brotherly love,” its notion that “All men are brothers” – implies that everyone who is not “my brother” is not a “man” (Žižek, On Belief 143). Thus, Christianity can lead believers to view other religions as being at radical odds. This is especially true for literalists, such as followers of Christian Identity who explicitly express a belief in the opposition between Christianity and Judaism. For example, the book Judeo-Christian by Pastor Bob Hallstrom, discusses the “incompatibility” of the two religions, claiming that "Fundamentally, Judaism is Anti-Christian" (http://www.kingidentity.com/special.htm). This book, like many other Christian Identity materials, also seeks to show that Jews are excluded from, and are thus opposed to, Christianity. While Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism is not excusable, its philosophical basis exists in the Christian tradition. Again, this is not to suggest that all Christianity leads directly to anti-Semitism or that all anti-Semitism is as virulent or dangerous as Christian Identity’s.

Instead, Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism is especially radical because it posits Jews not only in religious opposition but as opponents in all realms of life. In order to examine the particulars of Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism, I will turn to other aspects of their representations of Jews. The most common trend among Christian Identity members is to depict
Jews as those who use their financial prowess to take over what was meant to be an Anglo-Saxon, Christian state. Far from being unique to Christian Identity, this representation of Jews is thousands of years old. In their analysis of anti-Semitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno suggest, like many others, that Jews’ historical relationship to the economic sphere has long been a source of tension. Beginning in imperial Europe, Horkheimer and Adorno claim, Jews were used by rulers to protect themselves from the anger of the exploited ranks of the population (175). By exiling them from other central functions in culture, Jews became merchants whom exploited workers came to despise because they were perceived to be the representatives “of municipal, bourgeois and finally, industrial conditions” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 175).

As Jews were forced to migrate to different countries, they carried the capitalist way of life with them, drawing the anger of those who suffered under the unequal distribution of wealth (Adorno & Horkheimer, 175). This anti-Semitism disallowed Jews from participating in other forms of economic exchange and labor, leading Jews to be constantly relegated to the position of money-lender. Despite the fact that this outcome was the result of Christian beliefs and practices, resentment towards Jews grew. Imagined to be able to earn money without work, Jews were thought to subsist by taking money from Christians. Anti-Semitic beliefs not only increased, but became specifically related to capital.

Some Christians perceived Jews to be at radical odds with their way of life. As has previously been discussed, Protestantism, especially the Puritan tradition, was based around notions of work ethic. Because Puritanism posited work as good in and of itself and stressed the import of labor that produced from God’s bounty, Puritans saw the interest earned from money-
lending as illicit, irrational, and unproductive (Weber, *On Capitalism* 136). Money-lending was thought to require no labor and thus was seen simply as a practice that demonstrated one’s desire for money; because labor was the factor that ensured a proper relationship to God and nation, those who earned money without “productive labor,” were seen as devoid of morality to the Puritans (Weber, *On Capitalism* 136). Following the Puritans, Christian Identity members believe that money-lending is irrational and detrimental to the community. They express these beliefs as anti-Semitism. For example, consider this quote from “The International Jew” posted on an Christian Identity website:

> The genius of the Jew is to live off people, not off land, nor off the production of commodities from raw materials, but off people. Let other people till the soil; the Jew if he can will live off the tiller. Let other people toil at trades and manufacture; the Jew will exploit the fruits of their work. That is his particular genius. ([http://kelticklankirk.com/Jews_ZOG_and_ZOGlings.htm](http://kelticklankirk.com/Jews_ZOG_and_ZOGlings.htm))

As this quotation demonstrates, Christian Identity adherents do not focus on money-lending, but on what they believe to be the inherent and negative money-lending characteristics of Jews.

While issues of capitalism are important, they need to be looked at within the context of the liberal-democratic state. This is important in understanding Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism because adherents respond not only to economic disenfranchisement, but also to their subject position in relation to the state; it was not simply economic disenfranchisement that led to the growth of the first contemporary Christian Identity group, but also that the government failed to respond to their pleas for help. Further, adherents depict Jews not only in the economic realm, but also represent them as the force taking over the state. Christian Identity members often refer to America as the “Jewnited States,” believing that Jews have perverted the original goals once held by the Founding Fathers. As one Christian Identity website states:

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22 As has already been discussed, Puritans were not the first to view money-lending in a negative light. As was mentioned in chapter 1, the Ancient Greeks held similar views about the practice.
The current governments now in power are tyrannical, oppressive and insanely ignorant. The former nations of Christendom are lead by a pack of self-serving, degenerate, reprobate, arrogant maniacs… In America, where the true gospel light should shine and a stronghold of freedom should endure, what do we in actual [sic] fact find?…

The elite of the New World Order, and the sycophantic Loyalist to the de-facto Federal Government of the U.S. of ZOG [Zionist Occupation Government]… have openly mocked, ridiculed and resisted the true Christian Faith and any attempts to return to proper government based on sound Biblical principles and the Constitution. Tyranny and oppression have increased… (http://kelticklankirk.com/militias_christian_identity.htm)

Christian Identity adherents long for a republic free from external rule, where power was allocated to the people and Christian morality shaped all institutions. Christian Identity believes these principles have been replaced by a group of money-loving, self-serving Jewish elite who now subject the population to tyrannical rule.

One of the factors behind this anti-Semitism can be found in the tension between what liberal states promise to their citizens and actual lived experience. In his essay, “On the Jewish Question,” written in 1843, Karl Marx describes the process that creates this gap between promise and reality. As he suggests, in feudal societies, man was restrained both politically and as an individual, but liberal societies are based on the premise of guaranteeing freedom. However, as Marx cautions, this liberty is a trap; for, in the transition to liberal societies “… man was not liberated from religion; he received religious liberty. He was not liberated from property; he received the liberty to own property. He was not liberated from the egoism of business; he received the liberty to engage in business” (45). Thus, Marx reasons that natural laws allow for freedom to participate within the system, but do not allow a freedom from the system. As such, every man must participate follow the rules even though they are not to everyone’s benefit.

This is, Marx contends, because the rights of man – equality, liberty, security, and property – aim to guarantee property above all else. They are based on the assumption of an
individual who is self-sufficient and motivated by the capitalist desire to satisfy the self (Kouvelakis, 709). In addition, because the “man” imagined in the rights of man actually only applies to citizens, and only property owning men are citizens, universal rights are only guaranteed to those who participate in the system of property ownership (Kouvelakis, 709). Thus “universal man” is uncovered to be bourgeois individual. In effect, universal rights of man render capitalist exploitation possible (Žižek, Sublime Object, 50). They divide the population between the enfranchised and the disenfranchised, allowing the former to make decisions for the latter; thus, the state works to serve some at others’ expense.

This has strikingly negative consequences for society. As Marx states, “Money is the universal and self-sufficient value of all things. It has, therefore, deprived the whole world, both the human world and nature, of their proper value. Money is the alienated essence of man’s work and existence; this essence dominates him and he worships it” (50).23 If universal rights depend on money, money becomes the basis for all value, the actual guarantor of all rights. Thus, “it leads every man to see in other men, not the realization, but rather the limitation of his own liberty. It declares above all the right ‘to enjoy and to dispose as one will, one’s goods and revenues, the fruits of one’s work and industry’” (Marx, 42).

Christian Identity adherents express this condition of life in liberal society as anti-Semitism. They not only depict the Jew as the force taking over the state, but often stress that Jews do this by replacing Christian values with irrational desires for money. As followers regularly quote from “The International Jew,” “the Americans are (now known as) a sordid, greedy, cruel people.” Why? Because JEWISH money-power is centered here”

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23 According to Adorno and Horkheimer, liberal societies create the condition where it is futile for individuals to plan their own happiness; thought becomes futile in capitalist societies, as men simply have to follow blindly and adapt to act as part of the system; “as industrial society progresses and is supposed to have overcome its own law of impoverishment, the notion which justified the whole system, that of man as a person, a bearer of reason, is destroyed” (DE, 204).
Another example is the website “The Money Masters: How International Bankers Gained Control of America” (<http://www.themoneymasters.com/>). These examples demonstrate a direct and specific response to an increasingly capitalist and consumerist society. Of course, this is not to excuse Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism, but only to demonstrate that it is a response to real changes.

Following Marx’s analysis of the liberal state, Adorno and Horkheimer state that modern anti-Semitism must be understood in the context of the mockery that the masses suffer because they continually have to suppress the longing for happiness which liberalism and capitalism promise (Bell, 172). They state, “Because the cheated masses feel that this promise in general remains a lie as long as there are still classes, their anger is aroused. They feel mocked. They must suppress the very possibility and idea of that happiness…wherever it seems to have been achieved despite its fundamental denial; they have to repeat the suppression of their own longing…” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 172). Those in working classes feel a sense of disempowerment because they are under the hand of the manufacturer, who has the power to provide or withhold money.

Even further, workers realize their position when they realize what they can buy with their money. In addition to being unable to buy things, advertisements showcase the merits of commodities, which workers cannot afford. Yet, the relationship between wages and prices of items is concealed from the worker (Adorno & Horkheimer, 174). This generally disallows

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24 While this website does not point to Jews as the main problem, anti-Semitism is implied by its references to the practice of money-lending and its connection to many anti-Semitic sites.

25 As Horkheimer and Adorno also add, “The illusory conspiracy of corrupt Jewish bankers financing Bolshevism is a sign of innate impotence…the image of the intellectual is in the same category: he appears to think—a luxury which the others cannot afford—and he does not manifest the sweat of toil and physical effort. Bankers and intellectuals, money and mind, the exponents of circulation, form the impossible ideal of those who have been maimed by domination, an image used by domination to perpetuate itself” (Dialectic of Enlightenment, 172). The appeal of many paranoid projects is that they “…provide[s] a short cut by bringing the complex to a handy formula and offering at the same time the pleasant gratification that he who feels to be excluded from educational privileges nevertheless belongs to the minority of those who are ‘in the know’” (Stars, 45).
citizens from gaining a full perspective of how the economic system works, and thus combines
disempowerment with ignorance. Many who join Christian Identity are grieving their loss of
identity in response to work that is increasingly alienated and without autonomy; as such, their
lack of liberty is truly pronounced.

This begins to explain anti-Semitism among the proletariat, but, how do we account for
anti-Semitism among the bourgeoisie? While many Members of Christian Identity are working
class, others are not. As discussed in previous chapters, Henry Ford himself was a virulent anti-
Semite whose publications had significant influence on the Christian Identity Movement, clearly
not one of the “cheated masses.” How did Ford’s hatred function? As Horkheimer and Adorno
suggest, anti-Semitism works to conceal domination in the capitalist system (173). Whereas
rulers in pre-capitalist societies were directly repressive and disavowed work as disgraceful, in
capitalist societies, rulers control with rationality rather than domination. As such, they claim to
be aligned with workers, while continuing to maintain the power of rulers from the past. As they
state, for the bourgeoisie, “…anti-Semitism is self-hatred, the bad conscience of the parasite”
(Adorno & Horkheimer, 176). For worker and capitalist alike, then, anti-Semitism functions to
hide the exploitation inherent in capitalism; it simply serves a different psychological function
depending on one’s economic stance.

While Marx’s notion about the way money functions in liberal societies can provide
insight into why some would be compelled to rely on the trope of anti-Semitism, he ignores the
fact that all societies are inherently antagonistic. Instead of viewing this antagonism as
necessary, he points to money as the root of the problem, claiming, “money abases all the gods
of mankind and changes them into commodities” (50). Marx thus posits money as the source of
corruption within society, which he interchanges with the figure of the Jew throughout his
writing. He asks: “What is the profane basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money” (48). In Marx’s view then, money is problematic in liberal society, and it is the Jew that carries and spreads capitalism.

In effect, Marx conflates the essence of money with the essence of the Jew; both are dirty and contagious:

The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner, not only by acquiring the power of money, but also because money has become, through him and also apart from him, a world power, while the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of the Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves in so far as the Christians have become Jews. (49)

Marx relies on the Jew to explain the problems of liberal society, without taking into account the way Christian tradition was largely responsible for the rise of capitalism and the large number of Jews who became money-lenders.

Marx’s anti-Semitism is a signal that analyses based on historicism can be incomplete; while he reveals that universals guaranteed by liberal-democracy actually only benefit white male property owners, he does not address how or why antagonisms return again and again, often in the same form. Marx provides insight into the way ideology functions to cover these particularities and thus lends insight into the working of “false consciousness” (that is how and why subjects ascribe to systems of belief that are against their own interest). However, the tools of Lacanian psychoanalysis provide further insight into the workings of ideology. I have

26 Considering that Marx himself was a Jew, how are we to reconcile this anti-Semitism? One response is Sander Gilman’s idea that “…Jews are not merely the fantasy capitalists of the paranoid delusions of anti-Semites; they also mirror the image of their own difference within their sense of self” (Gilman, Jew’s Body 176). As he further states, identification, including “identification with the aggressor” remains a primary drive, one that shapes the creation of self and Other with the “tools” of projection and transference (Case of Freud 8-9). Quoting Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, he writes, “identification, a primordial tendency which then gives rise to desire; and this desire is, from the outset, a (mimetic, rivalrous) desire to oust the incommodious other from the place the pseudo-subject already occupies in fantasy” (Gilman, Case of Freud 9).

27 Marx seems to destroy his own theory with his anti-Semitism here: he posits capitalism as the force that corrupts an otherwise pure humanity but then points to an essentialized “Jew” as the figure of that corruption.
discussed some of the historical reasons that Christian Identity’s insecurity comes to be expressed as anti-Semitism (i.e. what that anti-Semitism refers to) but I have not addressed how that belief is created.

For Lacanians, ideology is understood as having the appearance of a totality, but is known to rely on fantasy to cover its own inherent impossibility (Žižek, Sublime Object 49). For Marx this fantasy is his anti-Semitism; the Jew is imagined as a corrosive force in an otherwise cohesive social body (Žižek, Sublime Object 126). Despite having radically different political alliances, Christian Identity’s use of anti-Semitism functions in strikingly similar ways.

Compare Marx’s to Christian Identity’s thoughts:

[Jews]… are vampires, and vampires do not live on vampires. They cannot live only among themselves. They must subsist on Christians and other peoples not of their race…If you do not exclude them from these United States, in this Constitution, in less than 200 years they will have swarmed in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land, and change our form of government, for which we Americans have shed our blood, given our lives, our substance and jeopardized our liberty. (The “Apple” Story, 5)

The quotation above demonstrates how Christian Identity’s anti-Semitism, while theological, is also truly posited within the space of America. Considering Christian Identity’s nearly obsessive concern with national identity (their theology and their role within that theology is posited within the dream of a bound and ordered original America), it is insightful to consider their anti-Semitism in this context.

As Slavoj Žižek claims, national communities are held together not simply by symbolic identification (nor discursive creation) but by a shared relationship toward a Thing, which he defines as “Enjoyment incarnated” (Tarrying 201). (Enjoyment here is to be understood in the Lacanian sense, not as pleasure, but as “the paradoxical satisfaction procured by a painful encounter with a Thing that perturbs the equilibrium of [and is thus beyond] the ‘pleasure
principle” (Tarrying 280).) The Thing is generally thought as “our way of life”: the way a community organizes its rituals, ceremonies and the like (the way it organizes its enjoyment). However, it is not simply a collection of these, but there is understood to be “something more” in it, something which appears in and through these features (Žižek, Tarrying 201). This “something more” is produced by a real, nondiscursive kernel of enjoyment, the presence of which is necessary for the Nation to appear to have an ontological consistency (Žižek, Tarrying 202).

Because enjoyment cannot be fully constituted, because this real nondiscursive kernel remains, it is always perceived to be threatened or stolen (Žižek, Tarrying 203); when it is materialized, something always appears to be missing. In order to maintain a belief in the nation’s Thing despite this “missing” piece, members of the community create a fantasy of an Other. As Žižek states, we believe the ‘other’ “…wants to steal our enjoyment (by ruining our way of life) and/ or he has access to some secret, perverse enjoyment” (Tarrying, 203). Paradoxically, then, the racist believes that the National Thing is both inaccessible to the other and simultaneously threatened by him (Žižek, Tarrying 203). It is thus the ownership or possession of this Thing that all ethnic tensions revolve around (Žižek, Tarrying 202-3).

For Christian Identity, this National Thing is inextricable from their conception of God. As was demonstrated in the last chapter, Christian Identity adherents attempt to return not only to a purified America, but also attempt to reclaim an origin, purified religion, free from human corruption. Both of these are simultaneously posited as solely the domain of White Christians yet threatened by the Jew. For example, the Nation and Christianity are depicted as threatened by the Jewish love of money.
Žižek argues that ultimately, when one hates the other, this is actually a hatred of the other’s enjoyment. This can be clearly witnessed with the example given above. The hatred of the Jew is in fact the hatred of his enjoyment of money. However, this tension is irresolvable as long as national identification remains, because the other is nothing but a production of one’s own national belief. There is no other except the other one creates; as such, hatred of the other is simply hatred of one’s own enjoyment (Žižek, Tarrying 203). Christian Identity’s hatred of the Jew is simply their repressed desire for the enjoyment they attribute to the Jew; the Jew as money lover is simply Christian Identity’s repressed desire to have money and power. They must consciously hate this because it is outside the bounds of their national identification, which is based on traditional American values of work and productivity.

While displacing this inherent antagonism works to maintain stability within the ideological field, the desire for the other’s enjoyment does not disappear. In fact, as Žižek writes, “…it is precisely through such a displacement that desire is constituted” (1993, 206). So, for Christian Identity members, imputing social antagonisms to the Jew (as he who steals our money, etc.) is in fact is the way to organize and express their desire. As Žižek asks, “do we not find enjoyment precisely in fantasizing about the Other’s enjoyment, in this ambivalent attitude toward it?…does not the Other’s enjoyment exert such a powerful fascination because in it we represent to ourselves our own innermost relationship toward enjoyment?” (Tarrying 206). Conversely, the hatred of the Other is in fact the hatred of an inner antagonism, the hatred of the split that exists between what we claim is ours and the desire for what we impute to be other. It is this split that prevents one from achieving wholeness; since the other is the embodiment of this split, “hatred of the other is hatred of the excess of one’s own enjoyment” (Žižek Tarrying 206).
Thus, the anti-Semitism Christian Identity adherents express is the excess of their own enjoyment, the way they organize their lives. Again, national identification for Christian Identity members means adhering to many capitalist principles; being an American means working. As such, their hatred of the Jew is actually the hatred of the excess of capitalism. As this excess is inherent to capitalism’s functioning, anti-Semitism is actually hatred of capitalism’s innermost feature (Žižek Tarrying 206). As they cannot admit this antagonism comes from within, they imagine the Jew as an outsider infiltrating the government and economy and thus destroying America. Thus Christian Identity’s fantasy of the Jew is actually a utopian dream to have capitalism without “…its ‘excess,’ without the antagonism that causes its structural imbalance” (Žižek Tarrying 210). This dream allows them to maintain belief in their national cause. As Žižek states,

…imbalance is attributed to the figure of the Jew whose ‘excessive’ accumulation and greed are the cause of social antagonism. Thus the dream is that, since the excess was introduced from the outside i.e., is the work of an alien intruder, its elimination would enable us to obtain again a stable social organism whose parts form a harmonious corporate body, where, in contrast to capitalism’s constant social displacement, everybody would again occupy his own place (Tarrying 210).

For Christian Identity, this dream is made ultimate by their apocalyptic beliefs and their vision of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

To followers of Christian Identity, like many anti-Semites throughout history, the Jew’s body is understood to be the literal source of corruption within the social body. This is demonstrated, for example, in Christian Identity’s constant referral to the Jew as a vampire; the Jew does not simply subside off the money of Christians, but is imagined as a monstrous body that feeds off of their livelihood. The same structure works with the metaphor of the Jew as a parasite. Through these metaphors Jews are imagined not only as feeding off of Christians, but also as contagious agents within the social body. The notion of the Jew as both diseased and
contagious is not new to Christian Identity, but came to be inscribed into the popular imagery and notions of Jews in the late 19th Century (Gilman, *Jew’s Body* 170).

However, this association with the Jew’s body does not stop at the metaphorical level. Instead, the real body of the Jew is taken as a sign of these characteristics. As Sander Gilman writes, “[The body’s] function can be understood once the seemingly concrete, real body of the stranger is understood as a construction of the dominant society, which needs to define itself as permanent, stable, unchanging as opposed to those who ‘come and stay’” (“Proust’s Nose” 49). If the other is the embodiment of one’s innermost split, onto which one projects his or her excess, the body of the other comes to be seen as a literal threat because of its perversity. In effect, the “other” comes to be defined by the reality of his or her body; the characteristics of the body are imagined as dangerous. This is especially true for the Jew, who, for millennia has been a stranger without a homeland. The perpetual outsider, the body of the Jew becomes an even stronger point of focus than for those who are perceived to be members of a bound and stable nation-state. The ultimate foreigner, the Jew thus comes to represent all foreigners and the Jew’s body comes to be the place where all difference is displaced (Gilman “Proust’s Nose” 49).

Christian Identity materials reflect this not only in writing, but also through a host of imagery. While these images are varied, they almost always portray the Jew with exaggerated facial features, which serve to mark difference:
While the lips are exaggerated in both images, the outstanding feature is the prominent, exaggerated nose. According to Gilman, the Jewish nose becomes the racial marker, thought to be associated with the unchangeable, fixed nature of the Jew. Understood as a mirror of the Jew’s psyche, the nose was thought to represent shrewdness, insight into others’ character, and the ability to use these characteristics to profit from others (Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* 180). These characteristics come to be essentialized via repetitive representation.

The nose, thought disproportionate to the rest of the body, indicated the pathological character of the Jew as it was understood to connect the unaesthetic to the corrupt (Gilman, “Proust’s Nose” 50-1). Thus, the nose combines the corrosive excess of money-lending to the Jew’s essential nature. Anti-Semitics have long imagined this corruption not only as disease, but as sexual disease (Gilman, “Proust’s Nose” 51). Jews were thought to have a strong disposition towards specific illnesses, especially syphilis, which marked them as separate from their Christian neighbors (Gilman, *Case of Freud* 21). As was true of the Puritans who imagined that the Amerindians (among others) presented sexual threats, Christian Identity members believe the

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28 At the same time, the nose was also thought to be an analogy to genitalia; the nose was thought to grow at the same time as the penis and it was assumed that there was a correlation between the size of the nose and the size of the penis. However, by the end of the 19th Century, the relationship was assumed to be reversed as the shape of the Jew’s nose was thought to indicate his sexual difference, the shortened form of his circumcised penis (Gilman, *Jew’s Body* 189).
Jew is sexually corrosive. This relates to the interconnected notions of productivity and sexual practices within the Christian tradition that were also thought to be essential to the survival of America.

This belief that Jews had a propensity toward disease became connected to beliefs about Jewish sexual practices; this thinking, as Gilman suggests, mirrors thought about the “…evils of masturbation and other sexual excesses…,” which were understood to waste energy (Jew’s Body 22). All sexual practices which did not work to produce were shunned in the Protestant, and especially the Puritan, tradition. While masturbation is less explicitly addressed in Christian Identity material, it is still often implied in their depictions of Jews. Thus, the Jew’s body was perceived to represent taboo in all ways: as different, the Jew was diseased, as sexually excessive, the Jew was thought to break Christian sexual norms; as masturbatory, the Jew was non-productive. Thus the Jew was imagined to be parasitic because he did not add to the production of capital, or the population, but only took from his host nation.

Christian Identity’s visual depictions of the Jew’s body are not entirely unique to their group. However, the images that Christian Identity produces and the context within which they use them (in the current era of late-monopoly-capitalism and in relation to their ideology) are worth reading for new meanings. The following cartoon provides a pertinent example of the paranoid structure of Christian Identity’s construction of the Jew as capitalist, combining the elements of contagion, sexuality, illicit morality and excessive enjoyment. In it, the author incorporates the contemporary with the old, creating one fluid narrative. In effect, the reader understands themselves in relation to a story that is as old as time.
As is depicted above, the cover of the booklet shows the image of a money-loving, greedy Jew. The name of the bank, “The National Bank,” demarcates the space in which this scene takes place. The Jew is likened to a thief, holding his sac of money outside the bank, where the money belongs. His contagious nature is indicated by many sexual references in the image: his nose, clearly exaggerated, suggests a phallus; his right hand grips a sac of money while the other, erect, has money flowing from it, suggesting a masturbatory scene; the money represents semen as each dollar is imprinted with the image of his face.

(Advertisement for “The Temple of Imaginary Money,” Kingdom Identity Ministries)
This representation draws a connection between the notion of dirty money and diseased sexuality, a connection that has a long historical precedence among anti-Semites (Gilman, *Jew’s Body*, 120). In taking the self as the love object in the scene of masturbation, the Jew’s non-productivity is demonstrated as terrifying and dangerous. While this unproductive sexual act emasculates the Jew, it simultaneously and paradoxically imbues him with potency as he has the power to destroy through contamination.

As Gilman states, for anti-Semites, “the perversion of the Jew lies in his sexualized relationship to capital. This, of course, echoes the oldest and most basic calumny against the Jew, his avarice, an avarice for the possession of “things,” of “money,” which signals his inability to understand (and produce) anything of transcendent aesthetic value” (*Jew’s Body* 124). This inability of the Jew to “produce” is echoed in this pamphlet, which references the “illusion” of credit and interest collection. As the cartoon states, “Modern day bank *credit*, which traces its origin to gold receipts of early goldsmiths, has no…”’barbaric’ physical limitation. We borrow and spend mere dollar units that measure absolutely nothing!...CREDIT, which is intangible (spiritual vs. material), does not respond to the five human senses: touch, sight, smell, taste, or hearing” (ii). As Gilman states,

The taking of interest, according to Thomas Aquinas, was impossible, for money, not being alive, could not reproduce. Jews, in taking money, treated money as if it were alive, as if it were a sexualized object. The Jew takes money as does the prostitute, as a substitute for higher values, for love and beauty. And thus the Jew becomes the representative of the deviant genitalia, the genitalia not under the control of the moral, rational conscience (*Jew’s Body* 124).

In the cartoon, the Jew takes and spends without producing. Thus, the Jew is posited as a threat to the community on many levels; he threatens the production basic to society, he threatens the sexual practices required for the existence of society, and he threatens the social order by corroding morality.
“The Temple of Imaginary Money,” begins at the “temple of 13 suns,” where a sign outside the door reads “shekels changed cheap,” clearly marking the owner as Jewish and simultaneously implying his business savvy. In the next window, “came the rich and powerful chief, Omar III (The Third).’ Omar, in his resplendent, if grotesquely stereotyped, glory rides a mare and is followed by a nearly naked servant who wears a sac of “1000 Shekels (14 K)” on his head.

The Jew, upon being asked to watch Omar III’s gold, immediately knows the profit he can make and begins to be overtaken by dreams of wealth.

Dollar signs appear in his eyes, but not wanting to show his pleasure outright, he recovers “his composure,” telling the chief that he is willing to watch it, but that there are risks involved. As such, the Jew claims that he must charge the chief a 10% tithe. In return, Omar receives a “parchment Deposit Slip” and the chief is off to “distant country,” his slave running behind trying to keep up. An underlying message of these frames is that even those in political positions...
who may appear to hold power are subject to the corrosive force of the Jew. His love of money
threatens and perverts all hierarchies in society and thus poses a danger to society at large.

Immediately, the Jew begins his money hording rampage; he sends a scribe to bring news
that money is available for loan and soon the first customer has arrived, ensnared in the Jew’s
grasp.

The Jew convinces his customer to give up everything he owns for the loan, even his “most
personal innermost raiment!!” (3). The sexual thus reenters the scene; the customer’s masculinity
is threatened, while the Jew is depicted as having control over everything the customer owns. In
pledging his house, his slaves, and even his decency, the Jew comes to have total power over the
customer, whose autonomy is now entirely handed over to the money-lender. This narrative
expresses alienation and loss of control felt by workers in a capitalist state; the specific
connection to disenfranchisement is made clear in the cartoon’s narrative which portrays those
who once held power as being forced to give it up because of the corrosive economic practices of
the Jew.

The cartoon depicts the banking system as confusing, obscuring, and illusory; but it is not
the system that is taken to task; instead the Jew takes the fall. Instead, it is the irrational, greedy
Jew who has conceived of and introduced this parasitic system to a once productive and stable
society. Through deceit, the Jew gains and maintains power over society, disrupting the social
order. Each customer who enters his shop leaves emasculated, having been fooled into participating in an illusory system and being tricked into pledging even his “innermost personal raiment.” The Christian customer no longer has control of even himself.

In no time, the Jew holds all of the money, and owns all of the property of the village. This narrative again expresses the fear of losing that National Thing, as outsiders’ practices threaten its singularity. Eventually, these threats are realized and society is entirely taken over:

That the Jew is meant to be specifically targeting Christians is indicated by the texts’ consistent use of the term “Goyim,” spoken by the Jew as he robs “them” of wealth. Again, Christian Identity adherents believe that, as the spawn of the devil, the Jew is genetically conditioned to battle and eradicate Christians. As the Jew’s amass of wealth grows at the expense of the community, it only makes him connive more: “If I can keep it secret for a few years, I’ll collect a
fortune in other peoples property and labor!” (8). As the Jew states, “I’ll rob them, Enslave them…I’ll even make them pay the costs of their own enslavement!” (8). Again, this notion of being enslaved by the Jew clearly points to the way capital becomes the factor that controls people’s lives in liberal societies.

If the reader was unsure until this point that the cartoon was meant to refer to real and contemporary circumstances related to the effects of late-capitalism and globalization, Nixon’s caricatured face leaves no room for doubt. Shrunken in comparison to the Jew, Nixon becomes the puppet through which the Jew’s invention of tax usurpation and enslavement through debt is sold to the public. This combination of past and present creates a fluid and unbroken narrative; the reader can place him or herself as a subject in capitalist society, suffering the same injustices the Jew began so long ago. The Jew remains essential in nature, always a conniving capitalist, destroying society and corrupting the government that used to work in favor of those Christian Identity believes are true, original Americans: white Christians. The notion that the American government simply becomes puppets of the Jew demonstrates Christian Identity’s grievances at the way capital controls much of the political realm.

This parasitic nature spread beyond the “host” country as “…[the Jew] expanded his racket to far off countries to the west and installed his brethren as advisors and educators and even did infiltrate all the Christian churches so that the stupid inhabitants thereof recognized not even their own Savior nor believed His law” (9). This sentiment points to the globalized spread
of capitalism and consumerist societies. The advance of capitalism becomes linked to social and
cultural change, as the cartoon posits the spread of the irrational love of money, to the loss of
Christian morals and perverted interactions between those of different races and genders:

![Cartoon Image]

Clearly referencing the cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, the cartoon suggests that the
Jew’s indulgent and lascivious behavior spreads through his great power to corrupt society.
Sexuality again takes a central role in this cartoon as “the young Goyim” are depicted scantily
clad; the placement of a non-white woman in the middle of two white women suggests the Jew’s
capacity to corrupt morals and perpetuate race mixing to the peril of the white race. The phrase
“LOVE EV’RYBODY OR WE’LL KILL YA!” written next to the “sensual and mindless young
Goyim” suggests that the true threat comes from the openness of liberal thought, which forces its
ideals on everyone, at the risk of death. No longer adhering to Christian morals that ensure an
order, society is forced to become irrational and ensures its own destruction.

The Jew sits back and enjoys the benefits of watching the young Goyim women defile
their race; their enjoyment is at the price of their own survival and thus the ultimate excessive
enjoyment is his. The cartoon ends by summing up: the “fake loan business” grew taking over
the entire temple, converting it to a “place of paper worship for the easily deceived inhabitants of
the land who know not God’s Law” (10). This connection to God’s Law is also presented in the
beginning of the cartoon, framing the entire practice of money-lending and banking as outside of
God’s Law and thus destructive because it is impure. The Jew, then, becomes the element that takes over, ruining the entire society by replacing adherence to God’s Law with the love of money. Returning to Žižek’s theory, one can see how this anti-Semitism is a way to express the desire to have the money, power, and freedoms of the Jew Christian Identity depicts. The Jew is of course only a construction of the author; the hatred is only the hatred of excess desire.

However, knowing that the Jew is in fact a projection of Christian Identity’s internal split, the embodiment of the excess of members’ own enjoyment, does not explain why Christian Identity would hold onto the dream of America. Why did America’s biggest patriots simply not disavow their nation in the face of feeling neglected? Here, I argue that this is because patriotism gave their lives meaning as it posited their work and their lives as essential to the project of nation building. In fact America was what gave their work meaning; work was done in the name of the America’s national Cause. Thus, to let go of America would be to admit that one’s work and one’s identity do not serve a higher purpose. In the face of economic and social change, the imperative to hold onto meaning is both stronger and more difficult. As a result, members of Christian Identity have grasped onto the vision of America while simultaneously ascribing an increasing amount of evil to the figure of the Jew.

The fantasy of the Jew, whose elimination would enable a stable social organism, is the very dream that leads Christian Identity members to attempt to recreate order. For a large number of adherents, this involves living survivalist lifestyles. Many members of Christian Identity live relatively secluded lives on compounds or within fortified communities where they stockpile food, and teach survival skills; some compounds are even entirely self-sufficient. These actions are driven not only by a desire to reinstitute boundaries of space but also out of a desire to subvert the effects of capitalism’s constant social displacement.
However, since a completely stable social body is merely a fantasy, (as living in seclusion does not in fact create a bounded harmonious corporate body), the Other does not disappear. Separation is never complete; even those who live on secluded compounds will often interact with government officials or commit acts of terrorism. In what Michael Barkun calls pseudo-validation, Christian Identity members create the opposition that they predict. As Barkun outlines, Christian Identity members will, for example, verbally attack Jews and nonwhites, which in turn results in counterattacks that are usually verbal. The greater the counterattack, the more that Christian Identity believers feel justified in their belief in persecution and the impending apocalypse (Barkun, 256-7). However, the violence typically does not end there, but enacts more violence, which is responded to by government officials. In what Barkun names “deviance-amplification theory,” initial deviation from societal norms leads to a reaction of punishment, which leads to further alienation, and thus greater deviation, which leads to greater punishment, and the cycle continues (Barkun, 256-7).

While this theory provides insight into how violence escalates, psychoanalysis provides another layer of analysis. First, the belief in persecution exists even when no Jews or people of color are present. Second, the verbal attacks which Barkun bases his theory on are often not responded to; instead they are written on the internet or exchanged in the presence of other Christian Identity members, yet escalation continues. As Barkun rightly suggests, Christian Identity in fact creates the opposition they claim to hate, but they need not have any retaliation from the Other for violence to escalate. In imagining themselves as America’s and God’s Chosen, Christian Identity adherents require an Other in order to maintain their belief; without an Other to remove or reform, believers no longer have a divine project to fulfill, nor a National Thing to protect. Thus, it is clear that this escalation is in relation to a paranoid fear of
persecution, which serves to validate aggression. Violence is then committed in a ritualized fashion under the directive of God.

That Christian Identity’s violence is ritualized is made clear by a number of factors. First, believers step out of societal exclusion to commit crimes that are done in an effort to restore an imagined social order; thus it follows a traditional ritual formula where in practitioners suspend normal moral and social rules, enter another realm, and later come back into their original realm. For Christian Identity, it is clear that this must be done in order to maintain their symbolic cohesion; it is a necessity to interact (here violently) with the Other. Second, this violence is performed in the name of God. Third, some murders have been characteristically ritualized and are always symbolic. Perhaps most obvious was the murder of African-American James Byrd in the summer of 1998 whose face was painted black (signifying his stand in for all black people) before he was dragged to his death behind a pick-up truck. This was more typical of old-style violence among Christian Identity and the radical right which sought to restore order by sending a message to those segments of society they perceived to be gaining power – namely people of color.

Today, violence committed by the radical right often follows a more typical terrorist pattern, as members generally target symbols of political, economic, and cultural power. As is true with most terrorism, this is done with the hopes of effecting political and social change on a large scale. It speaks not to communities of disenfranchised as much as those who hold power in society. Unlike older forms of racist violence, it does not seek to send a message to those who are gaining power in society to “know your place.” Instead, it attempts to reinscribe lines between those who commit the violence and the practices they disagree with and it attempts to effect large-scale change within American society and government, by gaining sympathizers, in
hopes of starting the race war, or by pressuring society to change its practices. With these goals in mind, it is clear that Christian Identity’s terrorism seeks to regain power and control in society.

Thus, as Adorno claims of fascist violence, terrorism is a stand in for Christian Identity’s most prohibited desires (Stars, 9). Further, as Horkheimer and Adorno state, in ritual violence, “Anti-Semites gather together to celebrate the moment when authority permits what is usually forbidden, and become collective only in that common purpose” (qtd. in Bell, 143). As one widely dispersed Christian Identity pamphlet states, “America Must Turn to God’s Law”, “God requires execution of murderers…our refusal to execute murderers has defiled America’s land.” What is disallowed under God’s law – murder – becomes acceptable under his command.

Independence and self-sufficiency is not complete because the structure of Christian Identity is one of hierarchical dependency; adherents require the leader’s approval to act and thus act in conformist ways. As for fascism, Christian Identity presents an ordered corporatism which is the necessary reverse of capitalism’s inherent imbalance (Žižek, Tarrying 210). According to Žižek, in fascism, this role of the leader is essential. With the advent of capitalism, what Lacan calls the Master, no longer exists and thus there is no regulator of excess. Without a figure to introduce balance, the “vicious circle of the superego spins freely” (Tarrying 210). However, fascism provides an answer by returning to the figure of the Master. The leader guarantees stability of the social fabric by locating the excess outside of the social body (Žižek, Tarrying 210). Thus, fascism works to create a system where the antagonism inherent in the social structure is transformed into a relationship of power; those under the Master identify themselves as struggling for domination with an Other, who is the cause of antagonistic imbalance (Žižek, Tarrying 210). Again, for Christian Identity, this is posited as a struggle of cosmic proportions as good and evil battle for the fate of humanity.
Considering Christian Identity’s decentralized nature and its lack of a real authority figure, these propositions appear to present problems. However, there are a number of reasons that they remain applicable. The first is that there are many smaller Christian Identity groups, each with their own Leader. For example, Aryan Nations and Elohim City, two very different types of Christian Identity groups, both have an exalted, elder, patriarchal leader (Hate Groups U.S.A). However, Christian Identity is also composed of many individuals who lack an authority figure to turn to. Here, I propose that God serves as a stand in for a “traditional” Master or Leader.

Thus, as with fascism, Christian Identity provides an order which is the reverse of capitalism’s constant displacement; everyone is relegated to their proper place and there is little room for change. This allows believers to hold onto the notion that capitalism is non-antagonistic. As such, adherents can maintain a belief in their project as those who produce the nature. Even in the face of disenfranchisement, work can maintain its meaning and the possibility for a better future can remain. Through their ideology, Christian Identity members can also maintain a belief that they are both more free and independent outside of American institutions and that their actions and work are meaningful because they are done under God’s directive and in the name of God’s law.

As Adorno suggests of fascist propaganda, Christian Identity propaganda “works” because it presents behavior that reinforces weakness and conformity as if it were the opposite; it does this by positing psychological dependency and conformity that erases choice as if it were a tool for individual advancement (Stars, 13). Thus, fascism works much like mass-culture in capitalist society in that both create and sustain themselves by requiring child-like dependency, corporatist policies, and because repetitive formulae replace individual decision making (Stars,
8). Thus, followers of Christian Identity can maintain lives where capitalist production, strong work ethic, and surrender to a higher authority appear to provide meaning, purpose, and even freedom.
CONCLUSION

One major question still remains: If Christian Identity adherents believe Jews to be the ultimate source of evil, why do they primarily target government buildings, banks, abortion clinics, gay night clubs, and non-Jewish civilians? This question does not suggest that adherents never target Jewish people. In fact, Christian Identity adherents are known to be behind the 1984 assassination of Alan Berg, the Jewish radio talk show host from Denver; they are also believed to be behind the bombing of at least one synagogue. Of course, in asking this question, I am not advocating that adherents begin targeting Jews. Rather, I am attempting to shed light on how Christian Identity adherents’ ideology shapes their behavior. Terrorism is not performed randomly, but is thought out, planned, and systematically executed (Hoffman, 173). As such, the targets terrorists choose hold meaning; for Christian Identity adherents, I argue, these targets hold meaning in relation to the effects of late-capitalism.

Christian Identity’s targets often represent economic and political arenas they believe were once solely the domain of white male Christians, for example, banks and federal buildings. Thus, when Christian Identity adherents target symbols of political and economic power, they are responding to capitalism’s growing influence in the political sphere and other realms of life, the increasing concentration of power, and changing power hierarchies. To them, government buildings and banks represent these changes they find so opposed to their Christian morality.

However, as has already been discussed, these changes are primarily the result of capitalism’s constant evolution, which is an inherent aspect of the system. Social displacement is at the heart of these changes, a factor which only becomes exaggerated in late-capitalism. While Christian Identity targets economic and political symbols of power because they believe
these institutions have become ungodly, what this really means is that they are no longer structured by the aspects of early American Christian morality which placed white men in positions of power. Capitalism in America (as elsewhere) has evolved to a place where it is no longer driven by, nor relies on, adherence to Christian morality as it once did; in fact, religion is now often a hindrance as capitalism benefits from looser social regulations. Ultimately, Christian Identity’s violence toward political and economic symbols of power is an expression of anger towards the economic and political instability caused by capitalism itself.

In the Christian Identity world view, all things that threaten stability are ungodly and all things outside of their “way of life” threaten the godly way of life and thus threaten stability. It is precisely this dynamic between the stability of religion and the instability of capitalist driven contemporary society that drives Christian Identity’s terrorism. Thus, sites such as abortion clinics and gay night clubs become sites of Christian Identity’s terrorism because they represent challenges to the singularity and stability to what adherents believe to be the Christian way of life. Abortion clinics and gay night clubs do not simply signify other people’s “perversions,” but demonstrate that Christian morality no longer holds the hegemonic power it once did. As is true of political and economic symbols of power, these sites, then, represent the loss of complete cultural dominance by white male Christians and the threat posed by competing points of view to those who once benefited from a more rigid and singular set of social mores.

This suggests why Christian Identity adherents might target these areas, but it still does not explain why they would not target Jews first and foremost. However, this has to do with what they believe is the threat to the Christian way of life. It is not the Jew in and of him or herself, but rather is the threat of “Jewishness” to domains that Christian Identity adherents believe are meant to be white and Christian that draws the greatest ire. Thus, for example,
members of Christian Identity believe that a federal building presents a much graver threat than a
synagogue; whereas the former has “been taken over by Jews,” the later has always occupied a
space outside of their domain. As “Jewishness” is nothing but the inherent nature of capitalism,
Christian Identity adherents target the places where capitalism has effected the greatest change.

However, instead of seeing the problem in the inherent aspects of capitalism, followers of
Christian Identity hold fast to capitalist ideology. To them, democratic government which
continuously enfranchises more groups of people is the cause of changes in social, political, and
economic norms. What they believe they need, then, is a theocracy to stabilize moral norms and
social hierarchies. Of course, what this perspective misses is that it is not the inclusion of those
once shut out of the system that leads to Christian Identity adherent disenfranchisement. Politics
is not a zero sum game wherein only so many people can be empowered. Instead, it is
capitalism’s continually increasing exploitation that has lead to their disenfranchisement.
Capitalism in fact now benefits from multiculturalism, which both obscures the way the system
works and provides a larger labor force for all sectors. What Christian Identity adherents really
seek is an earlier form of capitalism, one which more generally employed Christian morality and
worked in the service of white Christian men.

Of course, terrorism is not simply an act of retaliation against something. The very act of
destruction simultaneously serves to define what one is for; in addition, it seeks to symbolically
claim territory and power. It does this by using force to control a space the terrorist previously
did not have power over. As such, Christian Identity members also often choose targets that are
large and that will have a large impact. Ultimately, this is a way to gain capital: the greater the
destruction, the larger the symbolic gain. The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Olympic Park
Bombing are two examples of large sites which Christian Identity adherents targeted knowing they would have a large impact and thus knowing of the notoriety they would gain.

Power is also symbolically gained in the act of terror, as Christian Identity adherents believe and act as though they are the ultimate judgers, the one’s who can and should show society (through violence) what is right and what is wrong. Thus, Christian Identity members become god-like as they alone can punish society by wrecking disaster upon it. These acts of terror are also attempts to gain converts to the Christian Identity cause. This goal is again ultimately a means to gain power as more believers means more cultural capital and potentially greater political clout. Ultimately, Christian Identity members’ terrorism attempts to transform spaces under the domain of capitalist society into ones which follow Christian morality, thus promoting change to privilege white male Christians. Behind all of these targets lies a desperate attempt to reclaim power; whether it is through destroying symbols of power, attempting to gain attention, or recruiting larger numbers to their cause, all of Christian Identity’s terrorist activities are an attempt to assert and to gain power.

Christian Identity adherents believe themselves to be perpetually on the defensive and to be fighting the forces that are stealing their economic, cultural, religious and national way of life. While the belief that these changes come from an outside “other” is a paranoid product of their ideology, Christian Identity members are nonetheless responding to real grievances born of late-capitalism and globalization. Increasing concentration and obfuscation of power, the increasing disenfranchisement, the decreasing availability of autonomous and meaningful work, and rapidly changing social roles are among the shifts Christian Identity members respond to. Perhaps most importantly, their terrorism is a response to the combined economic and political impoverishment they feel in the current moment. Without a way to have their voices heard,
Christian Identity members attempt to return to a time when stability was more ensured by Christian morals.

While one can, and should, criticize Christian Identity for its reactionary politics that advocate and employ (sometimes deadly, always hateful) violence that serves no progressive end, it is clear that members of Christian Identity believe themselves to be left with few alternatives. As capitalism continually evolves to incorporate everything – even the governmental practices that were designed to serve as its counterweight – contestation within the system becomes increasingly difficult to imagine, let alone carry out. For an increasing portion of the population, violence appears to be the last resort.

The increasing terrorist violence and its relationship to changes in America’s political and economic spheres open a number of questions for further study. First of all, it raises questions about how other political groups and individuals react in response to capitalism’s constant change. What can the similarities and differences between these social actors’ ideological formations tell us about our political and economic structure and its manifestation today? In addition, recent events demonstrate some convergences between the extreme political left and political right in America. For example, groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and the Environmental Liberation Front (ELF) now share some of Christian Identity’s targets including government buildings and symbols of elitism, consumerism, and wealth and its willingness to resort to violence. This is a new phenomenon born only in the last ten to fifteen years (Potok, “State of Hate”). What do these convergences signal both for political experiences today and for what political subjectivities will look like in the future? Perhaps most importantly, this thesis begs the question: what is to be done? If we are to attempt to counter terrorism, regressive extremist politics, hatred, and other undemocratic factors, it is imperative to ask how
the grievances Christian Identity followers and others express via reactionary regressive politics can be better handled by society’s institutions.

While this question is certainly open for further research, one major conclusion of this thesis is that the increasing hegemony of neo-liberal ideology only fuels the problem. Christian Identity’s terrorism is essentially a politics of resistance against what is increasingly becoming a singular way of viewing and acting upon the world; these are the responses of those who, in the face of being washed over by capitalism’s march of “progress” hold even tighter to old ways of life, often to their own demise. But the growth of groups like Christian Identity do show us that, in opposition to the ideals of capitalist ideology, capitalism’s growth does not bring freedom and equality to all, but in fact often increases the number of antagonisms. As Žižek states, “…the contemporary forms of ‘paranoiac’ overidentificaiton are the inherent reverse of Capital’s universalism, an inherent reaction to it. *The more the logic of Capital becomes universal, the more its opposite will assume features of ‘irrational fundamentalism’*” (*Tarrying* 219-220, emphasis original). In other words, the more capitalism becomes the only ideology of the day, the more there will be regressive responses such as Christian Identity’s. For, the more capitalism grows to encompass all, the larger democracy’s lack grows. As such, allowing capitalism to grow unhindered is not the way to combat terrorism and other forms of violence that spout from groups such as Christian Identity. Instead, as Žižek suggests, what is needed is the opposite: the creation of spaces which allow for political contestation outside of the bounds of capitalism. Of course, following this or any other prescription will never bring us perfection. Only when one revels in the tensions inherent in democracy can one effect political change that avoids the dogmatism, oppression and tyranny that are inherent to utopian dreams.
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