

CHRISTODEMOCRACY: THE ALTERNATIVE DEMOCRATIC THEORY OF
AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN RIGHT

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Joni Finegold.

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTODEMOCRACY – THE ALTERNATIVE DEMOCRATIC THEORY OF AMERICA’S CHRISTIAN RIGHT

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This project examines the alternative democratic theory of the Christian Right and how it differs from conventional concepts of liberal democracy typically associated with the United States. Through a discourse analysis of Christian Right advocacy – including rhetorical materials, messaging, alternative history, and group mission statements – I demonstrate that the movement envisions a wholly separate democratic theory rather than merely a bundle of policy preferences.

INTRODUCTION

This project looks at the American Christian Right (CR) and the framework of assumptions behind its activism. Rather than focusing on voter mobilization, coalition building, or any other lens through which the CR is typically examined, discourse analysis is used to identify core postulates of the movement. These are then compared and contrasted with corresponding postulates in democratic theory.

First, the utility and limits of establishing democratic types is examined to determine what exactly can be gleaned from examining normative frameworks based on democratic categorical labels. Then, specific assumptions are identified that comprise a new democratic label, Christodemocracy. Finally, the messaging of the CR is examined in detail to demonstrate evidence of an alternative normative framework.

The CR in America does not compete for political outcomes within an assumed liberal democratic framework. Rather, its leaders make value judgments based on differing assumptions about how democracy should be executed. These value judgments then inform their pursuits. What develops is a portrait of a movement that is essentially democratic but fundamentally illiberal.

TERMINOLOGY

The term “Christodemocracy” derives from the similar term “Islamodemocracy” commonly used to describe hypothetical democracies in primarily Islamic countries. In the early aughts, new terms to describe potential democratic states in the Middle East began appearing, first in academic literature and eventually in popular media. Following the beginning of the war in Iraq, the neoconservative belief that liberal democracy could be exported or implanted inspired new ways of describing best-case scenarios. Democracy seemed like a structure that could be delivered to another country, given the correct intervention. There was seemingly no cognizance of the assumptions that undergird democracy and how those gradually develop within a culture. Terms such as Islamodemocracy and Islamo-Democratic became shorthand for the potential new states in a post-Saddam world.

Stephane Lacroix produced the most enthusiastic imaging of an Islamodemocracy in *Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New "Islam Liberal" Reformists* arguing reform in Saudi Arabia was just around the corner and a Muslim version of Western democracy had vigorous support (Lacroix 2004). In an analysis of what an Islamo-democracy might look like, Richard W. Bulliet of the *New York Times* asked, “Is Islam compatible with democracy? Decidedly so. Does Islam encourage democratic

government? No more than does any other religious tradition. But individual Muslim leaders do find in their faith the resources to sustain a commitment to elections and pluralism” (Bulliet 2012). In *Liberal Democracy and its Critics in Africa*, Lumumba-Kasongo also uses the term to designate the intent of Muslim reformers (Lumumba-Kasongo 2005, 37).

The use of “Islamodemocracy” describes the potential for how democracy will develop outside of the West. There is a body of literature related to this topic. In *The Search for Arab Democracy*, Sadiki explains how Western liberal democracy developed out of a European Christian tradition and assumptions such as personal autonomy and individualized morality bear theological roots. He later reasons that those who assert similar democracies cannot develop in the Middle East and elsewhere are essentially chauvinistic. Democracies could develop in primarily Islamic states, he argues, but would develop out of their own religious tradition and would similarly bear Islamic theological roots (Sadiki 2002). Two works built on these assertions, Sohail H Hashmi’s *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism and Conflict* and Michael Cook’s *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*. Hashmi’s work describes how Islamic teachings can (and, he argues, will) produce something similar to Western liberal democracy with cultural distinctiveness (Hashmi 2002). Cook’s work details how a particular theological tradition would look in an Islamo-Democratic state following internal religious reformation and democratic revolution (Cook 2003).

The uprisings of the Arab Spring again led to hypothetical imagining about what new institutions might replace ousted tyrants. Pundits trumpeted the potential for

democratization while some analysts, like Cory Ellis, warned that existing oligarchies and religious authority would inhibit true democracies from forming. “New political parties are sprouting up in Egypt, meeting the call to lead their country into the future. I’ve mentioned my willingness to accept and even embrace Islamic political parties into the new Middle East and it is because the responsibilities of governance generally have a moderating effect on any extremist parties” (Ellis 2011). Inglehart and Baker find that, as nation-states modernize, common political and economic changes occur worldwide. There are less defined gender roles and better education, for example. However, historical values still pervade interpersonal relations, which then shape new political institutions. They identify eight cultural zones that produce similar values upon democratization: Western Christianity, The Orthodox World, The Islamic World, Confucian hierarchy, Japanese Shinto, Hindu, African, and Latin American Catholics (Inglehart and Baker 2000). In each of these cultural zones, as democracy has developed it has taken on a unique regional character that reflects its history prior to democratization. Like Sadiki, they explain what an Islamic derived democracy would look like and how it would differ from Western democracies.

As with any term, Islamodemocracy is used differently in different contexts. However, in analyzing its general usage, it becomes clear that it broadly references a state in the Middle East that transitions or could transition from being a Muslim theocracy to a democratic state. These new democratic states function as republics with free elections choosing representatives, but with Muslim people, Muslim religious leaders, and Islamic teachings having precedent culturally and politically. Diversity is tolerated in these

imagined states, but Islamic religious leaders retain a formal role in government or have greater influence on political outcomes. All or most citizens are assumed to be Muslim with religious pluralism limited to various Muslim sects.

These examples are referenced to draw a parallel with the focus of this project. Discussions of whether Islamic states can be democracies or what kind of democracy develops from Islam are ubiquitous. It is also nothing new. Most articles contemplating Islamodemocracy reference previous works covering similar topics. Parens' *Whose Liberalism? Which Islam?* is the most comprehensive detailing of how democracy might develop from an Islamic tradition. In it, he specifies different theological strains within Islam and predicts some will lead to democracy and others will not. To Parens, it is a question of intra-faith struggle, which tradition of Islam will win out. From this premise, he makes a bold assertion about the possibility of liberalism developing in cultures with religions based on revealed truth.

Liberalism stands the revealed religions on their heads. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam traditionally claim that they each possess the true doctrine about the one God, which should ultimately be the correct account of the whole of humanity. Consequently, the revealed religions in their traditional forms are intolerant. Liberalism, on the other hand, requires all its citizens to avoid intolerance. The result has been a politics that is capable of embracing the revealed religions within limits. The tolerant liberal will not tolerate those who are adherents in the traditional sense of the term of one of the revealed religions. In other words, the tolerant liberal will not tolerate those who are as intolerant as their religion commands them to be. Indeed, one of the highest expressions of the love of liberty is the toleration of the differing beliefs of others about the good (Parens 1994, 215).

Variations of “Can Islamic countries be democracies?” appear frequently, but few ask similar questions about Western Christendom. It is held as an axiom that we already have. There’s an implied, “We did it. Why can’t you?” Liberalism is assumed to have

already triumphed over revealed faith, creating modern democracies in the West. Or has it? Do cultures with a strong Christian tradition similarly struggle to be liberal and democratic? How does religion alter the outcome of that struggle?

It is not difficult to imagine doubts about the possibility of liberal democracy applied to the United States. As with Perens' parsing of Islamic theological strains, there are Christian traditions that enable and hinder democratic thought. There's an intra-faith Christian struggle that preceded democratic revolutions and reverberates still. So, similar to the way Islamodemocracy has been used in projections of democracy's potential in the Islamic world, Christodemocracy can be used in a critique of liberal democracy in the West.

A Christodemocratic state is then a democracy in which a majority of citizens are assumed to be Christian and Christian theological traditions are assumed to have more influence culturally and politically. Christian religious leaders are expected to hold formal positions or have greater influence on political outcomes. And Christian theological arguments are more heavily weighted in political discourse. The influence of other religions or the absence of religion in political outcomes is automatically suspect because it threatens an ontological assumption of what the United States *is*. Non-Christian or perceived anti-Christian identities are tolerated but "otherized" as internal outsiders. And, "Christian" is considered the most legitimate American identity. What is meant by a more legitimate identity in a democracy is explained in greater detail later during the analyses of assumptions and specific examples of rhetoric. For now, it suffices to say that some argue that ideas connected to Christian theology should carry more

weight in law because America is supposedly a Christian nation, founded for and by Christians, in a covenant relationship with the Christian God. Arguments that violate Christian theology or fail to perpetuate Christian privilege are often labeled “anti-American” because the religious and national signifiers are conflated. Rhetoric in which the country is “taken back” often refer to an imagined past of Christian supremacy that was a more “real” America than some current example of religious neutrality.

The point is not to analyze democracy’s prospects in Islamic states *per se*, but to show similar critiques of the West are warranted, and less common. When examining the rhetoric and stated goals of America’s CR, a similarly comprehensive view of the state to descriptions of Islamodemocracy becomes apparent. Only, America was never a Christian theocracy and the story of Christianity’s influence on the development of liberal democracy does not really produce the outcomes leaders of the CR would like to see implemented. So, to forward their idealized view of the state, a sort of alternate history has to be invented. Academic and professional experts must be generalized as part of an anti-Christian or anti-American agenda. Alternative sources of expertise and history must supplant academic consensus to create a vision of a Christian democracy and historically derived.

The resulting view is a United States that could be but never was. It is, itself, a normative view of democracy built on a framework of assumptions. Those assumptions can be revealed and deconstructed using discourse analysis, then compared to other normative assumptions associated with the United States. The result, then, is to show how this set of assumptions and their subsequent value judgments amount to a different

normative framework. This frame of analysis has more explanatory power than other examinations of the CR's activism and longevity because it uses a foundational rather than behavioral critique.

THE OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

Both academic and popular literature have examined the CR. There are numerous efforts to describe exactly what the CR is, what it hopes to achieve and how it engages in the pursuit. Usually these focus on a particular aspect of the CR, such as its ability to mobilize supporters in elections or the demographics that make up its supporters. There is a significant difference between how the CR is viewed by outsiders and how it describes itself. Usually leaders of the CR view the movement as a ministry, engaging in politics as an extension of their faith. In the *Manhattan Declaration*, one of numerous mass statements that seeks to solidify and consolidate CR activism, CR leaders describe themselves and the document's signatories as:

We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right—and, more importantly, to embrace our obligation—to speak and act in defense of these truths. We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in its fullness, both in season and out of season (“Manhattan Declaration” n.d.).

From this brief self-description it is clear the CR is more beholden to its faith than anything and is compelled by a spiritual obligation to engage politically. Merely acting on their faith to engage politically or “bring religious transformation of the political” (Klemp 2007, 531) is a far cry from how the CR is seen by many of its critics. The CR's reliance on scripture to justify policy preferences, often at the expense of members of other faiths and sexual minorities,

can make its ends seem theocratic. Many CR materials contain dominionist ideas that suggest hegemonic intent. Alan Dershowitz opens his book *Blasphemy: How the Religious Right is Hijacking the Declaration of Independence* by saying:

Lest anyone be fooled into believing that the ultimate goal of the religious right is merely to introduce some generic religion into the public square, rather than convert America into a Christian theocracy, just listen to the words of their leaders, especially those spoken to the “faithful” rather than more general audiences (Dershowitz 2007, 1).

This project follows Dershowitz’ suggestion. It examines the words of the movement’s leaders, paying specific attention to messages intended for supporters. Unlike Dershowitz’ assertions, however, this analysis reveals a consistent respect for democracy. That is not to say there aren’t theocratic sentiments also, but the messaging from elites in the movement appears to endorse some vision of democracy, albeit illiberal. For one thing, the CR extends beyond politics to form a complicated subculture. There is a CR version of everything from fantasy novels to news sources. Any definition of the CR should acknowledge the political and apolitical aspects of the subculture. Rosenblum describes the totality of the group identity as more than a political movement and more than religious.

The CR in the U.S. is rooted in white, Southern Protestant fundamentalist churches and a veritable subculture of schools and home schooling associations, colleges, local associations, newspapers and magazines, publishing houses for music and books, radio and television stations, think tanks, missionary movements (Rosenblum 2003, 29).

Many in the Christian Right tend to get their information—and thus their political worldview—not from major corporate media, but from alternative media produced within the large Christian Right subculture. The most exclusionary and antidemocratic members of the Christian Right are often members of Christian political action groups such as Concerned Women for America (Stevenson 1994).

Chris Hedges also notes the totality of the subculture in *American Fascists* but sees that subculture's purpose as training believers politically to ultimately create a different type of governing system.

The Christian Right, for now, is forced to function within the political system it seeks to destroy. Judges continue to judge. Teachers continue to teach. The media continue to report. Politicians continue to campaign. But in the world of fundamentalist rhetoric, only "Bible-believing" judges are worthy of respect. Only Christian teachers are true educators. And only the pseudo reporters seen and heard on Christian broadcasts, who portray the course of historical and world events as conforming to purported biblical prophecies, report the real news. Finally, it is only the men of God, those who champion the Christian State, who have the right to rule. The movement is creating a parallel system, complete with parallel Christian organizations, to replace the old one (Hedges 2008, 152).

Hedges is correct in his recognition of the CR's respect for many political values associated with democracy, even if those values are applied differently. It seems more than just strategic. The CR works within current law to create new, Christian-dominated governing bodies. Its vision of what the U.S. should be – or once was – is essentially democratic but also primarily Christian in a way that lends itself to illiberalism. This is not the same thing as a theocracy with no political liberties, nor is it as innocuous as transforming the political process via religion.

One reason it is difficult, but necessary, to define the CR is its lack of homogeneity. Supporters of the movement that are influenced by its messaging are typically white and Evangelical, but not exclusively. In recent years the CR has become much more ecumenical, joining forces with Catholics and even, in the case of Proposition 8 in California, Mormons. Its leaders overlook theological differences to pursue common political goals, but it's more than legislative outcomes and electoral victories. It's not just criminalizing abortion, but a role for the state in encouraging morality that it advocates.

Its activism is not so much anti-Islam as it is concerned with preserving its view of a national identity.

In examining rhetorical patterns in CR activism, it is clear the movement acts from illiberal assumptions while remaining essentially democratic. To examine that claim, the focus remains on the elites in the movements rather than variations in its supporters. An examination of CR advocacy – including campaign materials, TV and radio appearances, alternative historical texts and education materials – demonstrates that the movement envisions a wholly separate democratic theory rather than merely a bundle of policy preferences.

DEMOCRATIC TYPOLOGIES

The term “Christodemocracy” refers to that framework of democratic assumptions that informs CR activism. It is used similarly to the way “Islamodemocracy” is used in other writings to describe a normative model for a democratic state based primarily on Christianity. The hypothetical state differs from the U.S. that most democratic theorists conceive. This section explores the way authors have tried to categorize and describe democracy and how the concept of Christodemocracy interacts with that larger discussion.

Several authors have created typologies of democracies for comparative purposes. Each categorical label comes with abstract criteria with which state action can be evaluated. Typologies allow democratic theorists to arrange nation-states or actions along continuums. This country is more authoritarian than that one. There are higher degrees of political freedom in this or that type of democracy, for example. The categories are useful for comparative and evaluative purposes but always require agreed upon parameters.

Dahl’s *A Preface To Democratic Theory* discusses both what criteria best apply to the U.S. and the limits of what he calls, “model theories.” Dahl categorizes the U.S. as a liberal democracy and then subdivides that category into Madisonian and populist theories that “compete” for best descriptor. He also explains how model theories can

quickly become outdated and inadequately describe how actors actually behave within any assumed framework. He settles on a list of ten hypotheses that he thinks best capture the American Madisonian ideal. These hypotheses and the definitions they contain summarize the assumptions of liberal democracy (Dahl 1956, 6–33). Later, he explains less defined criteria for other types of democracy to compare to his Madisonian model.

His work is useful in that it shows the simultaneous interplay of more than one type of democratic theory. Dahl posits that one can look at the same nation-state at the same time and come away with the impression of different model theories. So, the final chapter describes a “hybrid theory” that fits no category neatly but still produces an agreed upon set of liberal, democratic values. He makes an interesting claim that "with such a consensus [on basic values] the disputes over policy alternatives are nearly always disputes over a set of alternatives that have already been winnowed down to those within the broad area of basic agreement" (Dahl 1956, 131–132). The basic values he refers to derive from his description of Madisonian democracy exemplified by *Federalist 10*. They encompass a challenging balance between will of the majority and rights of the individual that sort themselves out eventually given adequate checks on state action. This balance of liberal and democratic principles is reflected by Plattner’s definition of liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy – which is what most people mean when they speak of democracy – is indeed an interweaving of two different elements, one democratic in a stricter sense and the other liberal. As its etymological derivation suggests, the most basic meaning of the word democracy is rule of the people. But for the many’s rule to have meaning, it needs to be limited by respect for individualism (Plattner 1998, 172).

Dahl explains how political competition and protections against tyranny of the majority and minority protect democratic liberalism in a populace that shares these basic values. But, he does not address players in pluralism that do not accept these basic values.

Since 1956, several democratic theorists have echoed Dahl's work to try and pin down the exact criteria of a liberal democracy. Diamond has produced the most specific list in *Defining and Developing Democracy* that he uses as a reference to evaluate newer democracies in *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Diamond 1999).

Pennock defines liberal democracy more precisely in *Democratic Political Theory – A Typological Discussion*:

What I take to be fundamental to the concept of liberal democracy is that those who are legally empowered to determine basic policies should be selected, directly or indirectly, for limited terms, and ultimately accountable to the electorate (which must include all sane adults, with certain generally acknowledge exceptions) in some fashion that entitles each of its members to an equal unit of political power, the vote. In addition, a liberal democracy must in some way give protection to certain individual rights, most of which help maintain the integrity of the vote, although they may be thought of as being valuable also for other reason. These rights include the fullest practicable opportunity for self-expression; maximal education and reasonable access to politically relevant information, freedom of association and organization, protections against arbitrary arrest; minimal protections of human dignity (Pennock 1971, 61–62).

If selecting from a list of categorical labels for democracies, such as those produced by Dahl, Diamond, Plattner, Plotke, and Pennock, the best descriptor of the United States is “liberal democracy.” But, there are many different ways to describe and evaluate the U.S. not captured by these typologies and no categorical label or normative framework perfectly fits the U.S. or any country. There are citizens within liberal democracies that do not accept the basic tenets of liberal democracy, however those tenets are outlined. And within any liberal democracy, there are many illiberal and

undemocratic aspects. These can be reflected in terms of formal institutions, legislation, and attitudes within the public. For example, in the U.S., the Electoral College and Senate are less democratic than the House. State laws that ban felons from voting and crafty redistricting obfuscate representation. And, residents of DC have limited voting rights.

Even if one assumes “liberal democracy” is the preferred framework for evaluating state action, the label comes with its own baggage and debates. There is much disagreement over what must be present to be sufficiently liberal. There’s an idea of personal autonomy that assumes volitional morality, but to what end? What imposition of the law, and with what justification, amounts to an infringement on personal autonomy? If, for example, one wants to bludgeon a dog to death and that action is not prohibited by that individual’s personal morality, what legitimizes a law that protects the dog? Mill’s harm principle would only limit personal autonomy if the death of the dog harmed a human. Kant would hope no harm would come to the dog because the person would arrive to the conclusion that such an act is evil through reason. Locke would not care what happens to the dog because it is part of nature that God gave to men in common to do with whatever they will. Rawls, hypothetically, might be concerned that an inadequate social safety net contributed to the perceived need for a dog to be bludgeoned that supersedes any state interest in protecting a moral concept of animal rights.

This example, admittedly silly, shows the limits to asserting “liberalism” to define a value judgment. To use a framework of liberal democracy to evaluate state action, one makes an implicit claim that the cannon of liberal democratic thought handles personal morality consistently. It does not.

Many liberals acknowledge the importance of autonomy in their political and moral theories. Liberals, however, differ markedly in their understanding of this concept and about the role it should occupy in their theories. Rawls, for example, assumes that we have a higher order interest in autonomy, understood in part as the capacity 'to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of one's rational advantage or good'. Yet he is critical of the 'ethical' autonomy of Mill and Kant, as well as that of contemporary liberal theorists such as Joseph Raz. (Apperley 2000, 291)

Diamond is essentially silent on personal morality. He claims “cultural, ethnic, religious, and other minority groups are not prohibited from expressing their interests in the political process” (Diamond 1999, 48) but he does not specify the degree to which moral pluralism should be tolerated in a liberal democracy. Does “religious freedom” include only the ability to identify and practice a particular faith or does personal autonomy include the ability to construct one’s own personal concept of the good? Are Christians “prohibited from expressing their interests” when depictions of the Ten Commandments are disallowed in public buildings? Do white supremacists count as a “cultural minority”? Westboro Baptist members have a “right” to their religious beliefs, but, according to Diamond, would a prohibition against their protests at military funerals illiberally prohibit their political expression or protect the personal autonomy of the cultural minorities they target?

Immanuel Kant allows an endless amount of time for humans to discover the highest good because they are rational beings, and he assumed there was a highest good out there capable of being discovered. Joseph Raz, on the other hand, thinks state action must have a moral purpose in order to be legitimate. Raz includes popular consensus in his construction of morality that Kant would likely reject. To Raz, there is no “the good” out there to be discovered but it is constructed, in part, by law. John Rawls thought moral

neutrality was the highest good for the state. Liberal thinkers premise their moral philosophy on personal autonomy, but there is no single, unchanged definition of personal autonomy throughout liberal thought. Kant never wrote specifically on homosexuality, but it is valid to conclude that he would likely suggest human reason leads an individual to conclude homosexuality is wrong based to similar conclusions on adultery. Raz elevates “freedom” as the highest civil morality, arguing that social condemnation of homosexuality can only occur as a product of state action (Raz 1988). Rawls’ social justice theory has commonly been used to argue in favor of LGBT equality. David Miller, in *Principles of Social Justice*, claims anyone behind the veil of ignorance would envision an ideal state without anti-gay discrimination (D. Miller 2001, 55–57). Schauer and Armstrong, in their commentary on *A Theory of Justice*, go further in claiming that Rawls requires affirmative action like programs for LGBT students as a societal check on historic discrimination (Schauer and Sinnott-Armstrong 1995, 529).

Mill envisioned individuals as so autonomous that the state served no purpose other than to regulate harmful interaction. Mill also assumed a self-sufficient agrarian lifestyle. Rawls felt the same about state intervention, but not because of agrarian independence. He cited the state’s ineptitude at arriving at a moral conclusion.

According to Rawls, the liberal state ought to be 'neutral' amongst rival conceptions of the good life. Rawls criticizes Mill, Kant and Raz because they treat autonomy as a substantive conception of the good, whereas he takes autonomy to be a non-controversial background cultural feature of liberal democratic societies. Given that liberal democratic societies are marked by a plurality of conceptions of the good, Rawls believes that a state that attempts to promote a conception of the good will have to resort to coercion in order to suppress rival conceptions, and this he believes will threaten the stability and unity of a well-ordered liberal democratic, pluralistic society (Apperley 2000, 292).

Diamond is likewise silent on the immorality of wealth disparity. He does not mention the economic conditions necessary to assure liberalism. He omits the threat of oligarchy and plutocracy to liberal democracy, only that “individuals also have substantial freedom of belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and petition” (Diamond 1999, 48). Dahl’s preference for Madisonian liberal democracy assumes some degree of social cohesion if not outright homogeneity. He balances power by a supposed pull in the individual’s self interest but never describes how one knows his self-interest or whether the perception of it can be manipulated. Utility is so undefined in *A Preface to Democratic Theory* that its assumptions of rational actors makes it seem impossible that any action could be against someone’s self interest. And, there are different versions of self-interest Dahl does not take into account. Economic wellbeing and moral obligation can pull against each other in any framework based on self-interest.

The nature of political conflict in our society is deeply paradoxical. Despite our unprecedented knowledge of the workings of the natural and social world, we remain bitterly divided over the dangers we face and the efficacy of policies for abating them. The basis of our disagreement, moreover, is not differences in our material interests (that would make perfect sense) but divergences in our cultural worldviews (Kahan 2007, 153).

Kahan highlights an important shortcoming of liberalism. It differs wildly and offers no cohesive view on the role of morality and the law. It endorses individualism as necessary for democracy but is generally silent on a source of morality that limits individual behavior. This leaves huge disagreement about how the state should handle moral questions and what secular neutrality actually means. The CR offers greater certitude when it comes to moral philosophy. By comparison, liberalism’s cacophony of

disagreement over how right action may be judged is unsettling. This lapse is further explored in the description for Assumption 1. However, Kahan is correct. Many of the most fundamental disagreements do not involve our material self-interest, as Dahl would suggest. They are disputes over worldviews.

By virtue of the moderating effects of liberal market institutions, we no longer organize ourselves into sectarian factions for the purpose of imposing our opposing visions of the good on one another. Yet when we deliberate over how to secure our collective secular ends, we end up split along exactly those lines (Kahan 2007, 153).

When Kahan claims “we” no longer organize into sectarian factions, he is speaking from a modern, liberal set of assumptions. He’s right, in much of modern political discourse we seek irreligious justifications for politics, if “we” do not include the CR. He’s also right that those secular justifications still produce political advocacy that appears quite sectarian even if its technically religiously unaffiliated. That is because Kahan doesn’t see the people behaving in modern liberal democracies as themselves very liberal. In, the *Cognitively Illiberal State*, Kahan examines central moral directives informing political behavior in liberal democracies. “Liberalism requires a state to disclaim a moral orthodoxy and instead premise legal obligation on secular grounds accessible to persons of diverse cultural persuasions,” (Kahan 2007, 115) but, “cultural status competition still occupies a familiar place in our political life” (Kahan 2007, 126).

Kahan’s claims that actors within liberal democracies still act as if motivated by faith in sectarian competitions for status – what belief system will win out – even if at least one side claims to only be operating from public reason. Citizens in liberal democracies give lip service to the ideas of a value neutral state while often pursuing

illiberal political outcomes. It is where his term “cognitive illiberal” comes from. Similar to cognitive dissonance, one wants a value-neutral state, except when concerning her values.

Laws relating to gay marriage, flag burning, late-term abortions, the teaching of “intelligent design,” and the like provoke bitter conflict not so much because of their impact on behavior but because of the messages their adoption or rejection sends about relative status of persons who subscribe to competing cultural styles. There is no disputing the affront to liberal neutrality posed by these sectarian efforts to capture the expressive capital of the law (Kahan 2007, 128).

Another way of summarizing Kahan is to say that even within a liberal morally neutral state, there are faith positions. The belief in intrinsic natural equality is a faith position. The belief that the state serves the greater good by being morally neutral is a faith position. The belief that all humans possess sufficient reasoning ability to reach moral conclusions on their own is a faith position. Claiming one coalition acts irrationally because it bases its premises on faith while the other is perfectly rational because it bases its premises on public reason is unfair. It is more accurate to say that one side values individual liberty in terms of personal morality more than another and then explain what is meant by personal morality. It is for this reason that William E. Connolly answers the question *Why I Am Not A Secularist* by saying,

Secularism, although admirable in its pursuit of freedom and diversity, too often undercuts those goals through its narrow and intolerant understandings of public reason. Secularism, in his [Bertrand Russell’s] view, has failed to recognize the complexity of public views because it has excluded religious and theistic viewpoints. In doing so, it has ignored an opportunity to create public consensus (Connolly 2000, 23).

He equates secularism with intolerance of religion, which is not exactly fair either, but his overall point is clear. To make a liberal/illiberal distinction is not synonymous with making a rational/irrational distinction. There is rational illiberality, but

can it be democratic? In simplest terms, democracies give citizens the ability to vote, directly or indirectly, for laws and representation. But, the significance of each vote is limited if the state is too illiberal. Restrictions on information or the ability to form groups as well as large wealth disparity lessen individualism and lessen the value of voting. In Iraq's first post-Saddam elections, it was meaningful to see citizens holding up purple fingers to indicate they had voted in a free and fair election. But, many of those voters knew nothing about the person for which they were voting because candidates ran in secret, afraid of ethnic or pro-Saddam reprisal. Citizens need some degree of open information, some degree of personal autonomy and liberty of conscience for their voting in elections to have meaning. At what level can political liberties be suppressed and a state remain democratic?

Pennock answers that uniquely in *Democratic Political Theory – A Typological Discussion* by looking at various criteria within democracy and how each contributes to normative or operational democracy: individualism, radicalism, utilitarianism, collectivism, etc. These are treated like ingredients in a democratic recipe. He makes a sharp distinction between *should* and *is* in each of the democracies he examines. The U.S. is normatively a liberal democracy but operationally a dozen or more different entities; things to which he does not want to ascribe a categorical label. It is the ever-expanding list that Pennock bemoans, warning against “yet another theory of democracy” that seeks to “argue for the superiority of one of those already in existence” (Pennock 1971, 62). The frameworks themselves have limited utility if one seeks to adequately describe a state with a theoretical label. Przeworski expresses similar frustrations when addressing

the desire to define democracies typologically. To him, people have normative desires for government that they then include in their definition of democracy to validate them.

Perusing innumerable definitions, one discovers that democracy has become an altar on which everyone his or her favorite ex voto. Almost all normatively desirable aspects of political, and sometimes even of social or economic, life are credited as intrinsic to democracy (Shapiro and Hacker-Cordsn 1999, 23).

It leaves serious doubts as to how worthwhile typographies are. They do not perfectly capture the political character of the states they seek to describe. They leave core questions unanswered. No categorical label ever suffices; it just serves to come up with a new categorical label. The utility of normative models for democracy is their basis for value judgments. Value judgments precede the creation of policy and inform support and opposition for agendas. Normative models have identifiable assumptions that undergird the establishment of formal government structures and the less formal development of political institutions. They seek to answer large questions of political theory such as what the government should do, what legitimizes power and how should control be implemented.

Terms included in normative frameworks, such as “liberal” and “democratic” have comparative and evaluative utility. One can look at an individual state action – the passage of the original Patriot Act, for example – and evaluate its specifics on how democratic and liberal the act is as compared to other actual or hypothetical state actions. In another hypothetical, the same state action can be evaluated differently and found to be necessary or threatening to democracy depending on if one’s normative assumptions

place greater value on preserving Christian morality or assuring neutrality toward religion.

That is not to say that internal illiberalism cannot threaten the functioning of a liberal democracy. When Plotke addresses the ways “democratic polities and pro-democratic citizens respond with respect to citizens who act politically to reject democratic ideas and practices,” his solutions all assume liberalism is a greater social good than racial purity or religious orthodoxy (Plotke 2006, 6). His analysis looks at any group that seeks illiberality in the pursuit of its agenda, including leftist anarchist groups, environmental extremists, white supremacists, and the CR. He notes three options for dealing with them: toleration includes recognizing their basic individual political liberties while not engaging them in the political process, repression uses state power to limit expression, and incorporation seeks to challenge them via electoral politics (Plotke 2006, 28). He uses other countries as examples, particularly Turkey’s reactions to Islamic fundamentalist citizens in the mid 1990s. He concludes that incorporation tends to de-radicalize sub-groups by forcing them to accept greater democratic norms in order to remain competitive (Plotke 2006, 31). But, what is most interesting is the way he evaluates each of the three options. He does so by seeing which approach best upholds liberalism, using “liberalism” as an evaluative criterion without labeling Turkey a liberal democracy. He is not saying Turkey is *not* a liberal democracy but instead noting the prevalence of criteria rather than ascribing a label. He uses that case study to make recommendations for how the U.S. government can engage “undemocratic” elements within its populace (Plotke 2006, 39). One does not have to concede that America *is* or

should be a liberal democracy in order to note that Plotke is using a liberal democratic framework to evaluate the response options.

Related to which type of normative framework produces which outcomes in democracy is the relevance of democratic values within a citizenry. “Democratic government depends on more than formal institutions; namely, on democratic political culture with the commitment of citizens to democratic values” (Canetti-Nisim 2004, 377). One of those democratic values can be liberalism, but it does not have to be. Diamond claims that democracies thrive if the citizens in them believe deeply in the goodness of democracy. Belief in democratic values nurtures “democratic deepening, reflecting the continuous ability of democratic institutions to improve, political parity of democratic institutions to improve, political participation to become more open and vigorous and accountability to be enhanced” (Diamond 1999, 113). Stable democracy requires a belief among the populace in the legitimacy of democracy.

Fails and Pierce reverse the directional arrow. Their study finds that the success of democratic functioning fosters democratic values. When citizens do not think their democracy is working, they tend to embrace undemocratic values; exclusion, ethnic scapegoat, reductions in civil liberties for the promise of reduced chaos, etc. (Fails and Pierce 2010, 179). In other words, illiberality breeds in environments of low efficacy. Those that feel less served by democracy are more inclined to embrace anti-democratic mentalities. This brings up another large question. Does religion increase or decrease democratic deepening?

It depends on how a religion is used. In *The Effect of Religiosity on Endorsement of Democratic Values: The Mediating Influence of Authoritarianism* Daphna Canetti-Nisim finds “greater amounts of religiosity do not decrease appreciation for democratic values” (Canetti-Nisim 2004, 378). She admits it sounds counter-intuitive and she cites previous data showing strong correlations between religion and intolerance and intolerance and authoritarianism. One would logically assume that some transitive property of cause and effect would show religion contributed to authoritarianism, not help resist it. But religion, including religious political parties, does have success in resisting creeping authoritarianism. This is mentioned briefly because it provides a counterpoint to the common *What’s The Matter With Kansas* conclusions many draw about religion in public life. As the analysis moves to codifying the assumptions of the CR, it is necessary to resist reflexive judgment. The idea is not liberalism vs. Christian conservatism but, rather, understanding the normative assumptions of the CR using the normative assumptions of liberal democracy as an exemplary counterpoint.

The point is not to answer whether America is a liberal democracy. That depends on which America, when, and what is meant by “liberal” and what is meant by “democracy.” What democratic category does the U.S. fall into? It depends on whether one is selecting from a pre-set list generated by authors that create typologies or merely noting the degree of a defined criterion. Questions of democratic type are useless unless some parameters are established.

This project attempts the ambitious endeavor of detailing a cohesive liberal democratic theory – something most democratic theorists will be familiar with – for the

purposes of comparing and contrasting alternative assumptions. This is done without the assertion that liberal democratic theory is the “correct” normative framework and with the acknowledgement that it does not answer many questions pertinent to democracy. Liberal democratic theory and its historical antecedents undergird many value judgments in American political life. But there is ample evidence of illiberality at play among the spectrum of political actors. The CR can best be understood as operating from differing assumptions that are decidedly illiberal. The comparison of these assumptions to those of liberal democracy serves to highlight and evaluate them using the feature of starkest contrast.

THE TEN CORE ASSUMPTIONS OF CHRISTODEMOCRATIC THEORY

Here, Christodemocracy is compared to the baseline assumptions of liberal democracy. Such a comparison should not be interpreted as representing the real or true U.S. as opposed to some false vision of the U.S. Rather, it is useful to recognize assumptions via their contrast with corresponding assumptions. Neither Christodemocratic nor liberal democratic value judgments are perfectly prevalent in the U.S. or anywhere. Instead, these are abstractions from which value judgments are derived that then explain policy preferences and advocacy. The tenets of liberal democracy are familiar to democratic theorists, even if there are relevant disagreements within literature or questions left unanswered. The tenets of Christodemocracy are less familiar but can be elucidated through comparison. In this section, each pair of assumptions is followed by a brief theoretical explanation. More detailed examinations of specific CR materials occur in the discourse analysis section later.

The ten base assumptions of Christodemocracy are:

- 1. Law/state action is rightly an expression of *Christian* morality.**
- 2. In a competition for formalization, positive religious identity supersedes negative liberty of conscience.**
- 3. “Christian” is a more authentic, legitimate American identity than other identities, especially those considered “anti-Christian” (homosexual, atheist, secular, humanist, communist, socialist).**
- 4. Failure to receive an identity-based privilege is a form of oppression. Christians are “persecuted” or “oppressed” when their religious views do not trump civil law because they embody a more legitimized identity.**
- 5. The purpose of freedom and rights is to live within the parameters of Christian law. Theology justifies rights. The exercise of freedom that results in amoral or anti-Christian conclusions is a misappropriation of rights.**
- 6. The Good and the True have been revealed. Subsequent knowledge must comport with that initial revealed Truth.**
- 7. Pluralism is either limited or layered. Either it is only for Christians or Christians have a greater place at the table because they are the legitimate identity.**
- 8. God judges nations and can remove protection or punish a nation based on how much sin is tolerated within the population.**
- 9. Power/leadership is legitimized and evaluated by how well a leader reflects Christianity because a particular theology is the rightful source of national identity, rights and the law.**
- 10. State action justified by theology is automatically legitimate. Theology and majority moral opinion are sufficient justifications for authority. (Theological arguments fulfill a rational basis test.)**

ASSUMPTION ONE

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
<p>1A. Law is an expression of Christian morality</p> <p>Law is an expression of group morality. Morality is the product of religion. The True religion is Christianity. Ergo: Law should reflect the majority of religious people and the one True faith.</p>	<p>1A. Law is an expression of an aggregate competition among disparate personal moralities.</p> <p>Law is an expression of moral consensus. Morality is informed by religion but it is separate and contains irreligious considerations. The state is formally neutral toward religion even if a majority of citizens self-identify with a particular religion. Ergo: Law should reflect... Amoral consensus ~ Irreligious consensus ~ Specific implications of generalized civil morality.</p>

Within classical liberalism and all its subsequent branches stretching into postmodern critiques of liberalism, there are a variety of answers to the question of what, if anything, guides right governance. The intellectual descendants of Locke have innumerable denominations not unlike fracturing and constant reorganizing within Christianity. Civil moralists, like Schmitt, are burdened by an abundance rather than dearth of answers. It exists somewhere within a melee of Habermas discourse theory, John S. Mill Harm Principle, or some sort of mythical balance between will of the majority and rights of the minority/individual ruminated by Rousseau, Mill, Madison, and

numerous others. Ultimately, a final source is not identified and the point of discourse is the discourse. Political competition itself is as valued as deriving law from the correct source of the good.

As Paren's details previously, liberalism requires an abandonment of certitude at the state level. Religions based on revealed truth are incompatible with liberalism because liberalism needs tolerance and notions of The Truth are exclusionary. Critics of liberalism might label this conspicuous lack of conclusion a fundamental flaw in liberalism that necessitates theology. How can a nation not have a final source of the good? What inevitable chaos ensues? Absent a specified religious narrative or source for morality, the idea that either majority will or personal autonomy can be protected lacks a base. The source-less "good" is overly reliant on flawed human reason alone. At the core of Christianity is the premise that human nature is irredeemably indebted since the fall of Adam. Appeals to reason unguided by the perfection projected in the form of God are then absurd. This is why Locke was troubled by his enlightenment contemporaries' insistence that notions of revealed truth and heavenly guidance be jettisoned and replaced with reason alone.

It is normatively unsettling for the premises of liberalism to result in an unspecified conclusion. To remedy this, Christodemocratic activists overtly substitute The Bible, or the Christian God, often deceptively titled "traditional morality" that neither reflects tradition nor uncontroversial theology. A concrete source of the good is far more palatable, especially if it is reinforced by a legitimized identity (Christian) both nationally and individually. The removal of certitude not only challenges that dominant

identity but also leaves a disconcerting gap in one's self-assurances. That gap, that vacuum of certitude, is something liberal democrats trumpet as an essential good in and of itself and a vital ingredient within liberalism.

Accepting a lack of certitude or an unspecified source for human good supposedly allows for the greatest amount of personal, even existential autonomy. But it also challenges the goal of self-determination that is intended to be a product of liberalism. Filling in the gaping lapse with "God" is attractive then to individuals within a liberal democracy, especially for those with a reduced sense of efficacy.

It is easier for many to conceptualize a system as grounded in a specific religion, even if that religion is fraught with its own cacophony of interpreters, rather than the purely human and material discourse of liberalism. If law and institutions are thought to rightly be the product of aggregate morality expressed via political participation, then a named, extra-human source for morality is more reassuring than an un-sourced civil morality grounded only in human reason.

When a specific element is then introduced into the syllogism, represented by a variable below, the divide between liberal and Christo- democratic assumptions widens and the contrast becomes starker.

1B. Developed further,	1B. Developed further, Liberal Democratic
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Christodemocratic Assumption	Assumption
<p>The law is a reflection of majority morality.</p> <p>Morality comes from religion.</p> <p>The majority religion is and has always been Christianity. It is definitional in an American identity.</p> <p>Direct expressions of religious identity are valued over liberty of conscience.</p> <p>[X] is incongruous with Christian theology. Ergo: [X] cannot be legitimate if empowered because, <div style="padding-left: 40px;">It does not comport with the majority religion, and</div> It contradicts an essential component of an identity, i.e. what it means to be “American”.</p> <p>Example: Access to legal institutions (voting, marriage license, drivers license, license to own and operate a business, license to broadcast) should be granted or denied based on the applicant’s adherence to religious teachings.</p> <p>(Each syllogism can mirror Christodemocratic activist discourse if the phrase “religious teaching” is changed to “majority moral opinion.”)</p>	<p>The law is informed by majority moral opinion but cannot enact singular moral opinions without violating personal autonomy.</p> <p>There are different types of morality, including civil morality which includes axioms such as equal access, fair treatment, civic responsibility, that may or may not be reinforced by an individual’s religious narrative.</p> <p>The majority morality is civil morality rather than theological. It is definitional in an American identity.</p> <p>Liberty of conscience is valued above direct expressions of religious identity.</p> <p>[X] is incongruous with civil morality. Ergo: [X] cannot be legitimate if empowered/formalized because, <div style="padding-left: 40px;">It does not comport with the majority morality, and</div> It contradicts an essential component of an identity, i.e. what it means to be “American”.</p> <p>Example: Access to legal institutions (voting, marriage license, drivers license, license to own and operate a business, license to broadcast) should be granted or denied based on equal protection among identities.</p>

The core of the difference is demonstrated by the reversal of phrasing. Put simply, in the competition for “right”, liberal democrats and Christodemocrats differ on the

trump. For Christodemocrats, expressions of religious identity dominate liberty of conscience. Liberal democrats prefer the counter-positive. That counter position explains why certain policies are illegitimate within a system regardless of majority support. Refusing public accommodations based on religious identity is unjustifiable within a liberal democracy because it assumes the negative liberty of conscience supersedes religious identity. Within Christodemocracy, the idea that private business owners might be forced to accommodate moral aberrations with the provision of goods and services is equally unacceptable. Both aversions are premised by different assumptions about right morality, civil vs. theological. These assumptions constitute different species of democracy in so much as the disagreement is less about policy preference and more about normative assumptions.

For the liberal perspective, Mill's understanding of governable space and the bifurcation between public and private is a useful contrast. There is an idea that the state respects a personal, corporal, and spatial autonomy, choosing to only regulate harmful interaction. There is also a respect for the conscience as essentially who a person *is* and a rejection of legal or social coercion as it relates to individual conscience (Dworkin 1997). Other authors in the liberal tradition expressed a similar division. John Milton thought "the enabling condition of democracy is not the rapprochement but, rather, the rupture of the human and the divine (Hickman 2008, 186). This is a product of the Enlightenment and centuries of European religious conflict that many devout religionists that do not recognize a sharp distinction between public and private. During the Thirty Years War among Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics, the total population in Germany was reduced

from ten to six million. The war was waged over which understanding of God would garner state authority. None of the sides won the war, but the Catholic Church lost. The Treaty of Westphalia declared Germany neutral in terms of religious doctrine so no religious groups gained control. But, religious neutrality cemented the loss of Catholic absolutism, forcing it to compete with other belief systems. The ideological victor was civil morality.

Similar religious wars and subsequent treaties followed in The Netherlands and France and eventually England. The brutal conflict between Catholics and Protestants in England would have a significant impact on the writings of Hobbes and the fate of poor King Charles I. Centuries of religious strife inspired liberals to reduce man-made authority structures in favor of a state of natural equality. This natural equality required each individual to hold conscience but for no group to have its vision of god control the state. This division was not atheological. According to Roger Williams, for example, the purpose of democracy in a fallen world was “to serve as a practical shield against man’s tendency to profane the spiritual kingdom of God” (Hickman 2008, 187). It was deemed “blasphemous to read the presence of God in human transaction” (Hickman 2008, 187). Hickman notes that such positions were adopted to preserve spirituality and reflected Williams’ journey from Puritan to advocate of religious liberty. The liberal democratic concept of separation of church and state is the result of violations of natural rights of the individual by religious based authority. These natural rights include liberty of conscience.

According to CR rhetoric, there never was a separation between church and state, or public and private. There is no sphere of personal into which the state is unwelcome.

Rather, every personal action and belief falls within governable space because it affects society. This is a medieval mentality about personal morality – if not ancient – that Mill soundly rejects.

CR activists use the rhetoric of religious liberty but interpret it differently in a way that does not reflect this historical conflict. Specific examples of usage are found in the discourse analysis section later. The most prevalent CR assumption, however, from which many value judgments are made is that the Christian God is the author of morality, and American law should be based on that morality. Arguments regarding secular sources of morality or the morals of other faiths are not automatically rejected, but they are always secondary to a value judgment based on Christian morality.

ASSUMPTION 2

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
2. In a competition for formalization, positive religious identity trumps negative liberty of conscience.	2. In a competition for formalization, negative liberty of conscience is paramount to positive religious identity

Deriving from Assumption 1, since Christian morality cannot be divorced from law in the CR worldview – and there is only one True morality – there can be no liberty of conscience that permits un-Christian or anti-Christian identity or behavior. Morality is understood as received from original truth and authority rather than discovered through individual reason. This mirrors the theological debates among Medieval Catholics and Protestants. The former claimed Truth had been revealed and was interpreted/applied by authorities within the hierarchy of the Church. The latter claimed that God had made men’s minds free and capable of discovering truth (or a version of truth) through reason. The idea of discovering truth via reason rather than religious authority is echoed in Jefferson’s *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*¹, a pre-cursor to the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment. This great divide is another way Christianity, and Protestantism specifically, contributed to the development of liberal democracy.

¹ A full copy of the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* can be found in Appendix A

Religion is protected in liberal democratic theory not because it is immutable but because it is critical in the construction of one's identity. The underlying liberal assumption is that liberty of conscience is a negative right against compulsion to follow the majority or any authority's faith prescriptions. But, a negative liberty of conscience extends beyond faith to irreligious components of identity construction. One has a right to be wrong and discover truth individually. That discovery is part of the overall identity construction that liberalism protects. In many ways, positive religious identity (the faith label and practice one chooses for herself) and negative liberty of conscience (the beliefs or worldview and morality one eschews in the construction of self) are two sides of the same coin. The distinction matters when the ability to identify with a specific faith competes with the ability to reject that faith.

"Liberalism" is treated as synonymous with "individualism." Individualism assumes a unitary self, but a fixed identity or "self" is typically rejected in more recent democratic theory. Concepts of the self are at the forefront of many current works of political theory because understanding of what the self is and how it comes to be are constantly evolving. For Foucault, the self is "the direct consequence of power and can only be apprehended in terms of historically specific systems of discourse" (Callero 2003, 117). In other words, the self is primarily externally constructed. Rather than assume a rational actor with bound preferences separate from externalities, the self is the result of external authority. The self cannot be separate from the "technologies" of "surveillance, measurement, assessment, and classification of the body, technocrats, specialists, therapists, physicians, teachers, and officers serve as vehicles of power in

diverse institutional settings (prisons, schools, hospitals, social service agencies)” (Callero 2003, 119). Callero accepts the self as a product of external forces, largely beyond one’s agency, as the basis of his argument in *The Sociology of the Self*.

Cerulo agrees but includes a greater degree of individual control. He rejects essentialism, the idea that any identity is automatically the product of some trait because, like identity, the meaning and presence of said trait is itself socially constructed. He particularly rejects essentialist dichotomies, the idea that a person is either X or not-X. The self changes over time. Just as the body’s atoms constantly renew, so too does the perceptive construction of self. The constraint construction occurs in is what Tonnies called the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, German terms that loosely translate to community and society (Cerulo 1997, 400).

Community refers to those with which one shares a common emotional bond. It is family, one’s social circle or “my people.” Society is understood as “the people” or groups that share a geographic or political bond. Religion can, and often does, play an integral role in both community and society. In other words, it plays an integral role in the construction of what one knows to be herself. It is just one factor, but it is often a critical aspect of identity.

So, if liberalism assumes less coercion of identity construction is a social good, then it recognizes the important role religion plays in one’s concept of self. Many who argue for secularism sound as if someone can leave his religiosity at home when entering into the public square. And, understandably, many in the CR reject that division, claiming faith practice is necessary in the public square. Activism itself can be a faith practice.

When liberal democratic theorists speak of a division between church and state, they are making a broader distinction between public and private. It is the difference between a crèche in City Hall and a crèche on someone's front lawn. Liberal democratic theorists assume a secular state is the necessary environment for identity construction. That is not the same as claiming liberal democracy assumes secular citizens but rather recognizes the division between public and private as a desirable trait in society.

Religion can provide the individual a sense of being and belonging; her life has meaning and she is part of something larger than herself. So can a secular national identity. In liberal democratic theory, the concept of crosscutting cleavages explains how a democracy's longevity depends in part on divisions among individuals not being redundant. A person is considered a nexus of group identities, meaning, every individual might best be understood through a unique profile of group identities, some political, some not (environmentalist, Asian, union worker, sister, tennis enthusiast, violent crime survivor, homeowner, etc.). Identity continues to be fluid through the forming and reforming of membership in various group identities. Many liberal democratic theorists see the political and religious components of this nexus as separate, but other theorists, sympathetic to the assumptions of the CR, see "religious-political identity" as "overlooked as a significant variant of religious identity" and "overall identity construction" (Rosenblum 2003, 37).

Rosenblum's term for this is the "association nexus." She argues that, for many people, their identity is not just determined by their religious group ID but by their religious-political group ID. Her focus is the CR, which she describes as providing

political education. The role of the CR in identity construction goes beyond political mobilization; it provides a worldview and becomes part of who someone is. It is for this reason that calls for people to leave their faith out of political participation seem absurd to the deeply religious. Their identities, who they see themselves as being, are shaped by this religious-political association. *In Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought*, she points out that many liberal democratic theorists do not understand that. She summarizes the revolt against feudalism, church-state union, and monarchy succinctly with “strangling the last king with the guts of the last priest” (Rosenblum 2003, 26). But, the democratization and liberalization of the West divorced state and church, not individual and church, particularly not in the U.S. The assumption that one’s religious component of identity is to be stifled as a prerequisite for political participation is essentially illiberal to Rosenblum because it presents an external coercion on identity construction as serious as a state sponsored religion.

Iris Marion Young provides an expanded contemporary critique of how individualism has come to be understood in liberal democracy (or post-liberal democracies, depending on how one characterizes the development of the West after democratic modernization). According to Young, social justice is the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression. It is more than just the distribution of material wealth. No identity is preferred. Justice is not merely impartiality. Rather, one group identity cannot be regarded formally in law or informally in culture as more worthy of expression. Group identities that have been historically oppressed can be understood differently than those that have enjoyed privilege. A single individual can have a

multitude of group identities each experiencing varying degrees of oppression. However, one's desire to live as 'X' must be balanced with another's desire to live as 'not-X.' For example, a person's intention to live by his/her interpretation of Christian doctrine cannot supersede another's desire to not live by that person's interpretation of Christian doctrine (Young 2011).

Under this assumption, identity construction is again culturally contextualized without direct coercion. Liberal democratic theory assumes the greater social good is a negative liberty of conscience, the ability to reject others' moral parameters in the process of discovering one's self. That does, or at least should, include the role of a religious-political identity. Christodemocratic assumptions assume many of the same things about identity construction but emphasize the religious and religious-political components and more paramount than any other group identity labels. To them, the positive right to identify as Christian and live out their faith in public and private trumps another's negative liberty of conscience. Examples of this are explored more thoroughly in the discourse analysis, but one quote from former Senator and presidential candidate, Rick Santorum, sums up this division in democratic theory quite nicely.

[A] country that is given rights under the god, under god, not any god, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that God that gave us rights also gave us a responsibility, and laws, by which our civil laws have to comport with. A higher law. God's law. (Tenety 2011); (*Rick Santorum Speaks About A Higher Law & Religious Liberty* 2011)

The Christodemocratic assumption differs with the liberal democratic understanding of a negative liberty of conscience. The former emphasizes the right to

discover authentic Christian truth and exercise that specific faith while the other emphasizes a negative right to discover and live by different conclusions.

ASSUMPTION 3

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
3. “Christian” is a more authentically American identity than other identities, especially those thought to be anti-Christian.	3. The state does not legitimize particular identities. Rather it allows for social autonomy in perpetual group (re)formation within a neutral competition space.

Implicit with Santorum’s quote concerning “The [Christian] God” as the basis of rights in the U.S. is a related assumption of Christian national identity. The idea that America is a Christian nation founded by and for Christians carries a great deal of currency in American politics. The U.S. is not *formally* Christian. The first clause of the First Amendment prevents favoritism. Its first treaty declared “the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion” (Smethurst 2006). But, a majority of citizens have been Christian in the country’s history and Christian is still the most commonly used religious ID (Barna Group 2011). The Barna Group has also repeatedly found that few professed Christians adhere to an orthodox or even strict theology. (Barna Group 2009)

Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan “is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they “agree somewhat” with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan. Although a core teaching of the Christian faith is the divinity and perfection of Jesus Christ, tens of millions of Christians do not accept that teaching. More than one-fifth (22%) strongly agreed that Jesus Christ sinned when He lived on earth, with an additional

17% agreeing somewhat. Holding the opposing view were 9% who disagreed somewhat and 46% who disagreed strongly. Six percent did not have an opinion on this matter. Much like their perceptions of Satan, most Christians do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a living force, either. Overall, 38% strongly agreed and 20% agreed somewhat that the Holy Spirit is “a symbol of God’s power or presence but is not a living entity.” Just one-third of Christians disagreed that the Holy Spirit is not a living force (9% disagreed somewhat, 25% disagreed strongly) while 9% were not sure (Barna Group 2009).

A similar study from Barna found that, of the 40% of self-professed Christians, only 8% percent accepted all nine criteria essential to the Christian faith, including the virgin birth and physical resurrection of Jesus. That is 3.2% of the general population that hold personal beliefs in line with evangelical teachings.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has had similar findings. In its survey of professed Christians, only 48% believed Christ would return (Pew Research Center for the People & The Press 2010) and white, Evangelical churches continue to see a net drop in affiliation with the fastest growing religious group being the religiously unaffiliated (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008).

This data belie claims that America is demographically a Christian nation. But they may support claims that America once was or should be a Christian nation. CR rhetoric focusing on “taking America back” and “reclaiming America for Christ” are premised on the notion that real America is Christian; that the Christian represents the founding population and has the legitimate American identity.

This Christodemocratic assumption incorporates the identity construction described under Assumption Two. Its difference with liberalism is found in the way it limits identity construction by delegitimizing non-Christians. Under liberal democratic

assumptions of pluralism, there is no one identity that is more legitimately American than others. Equal protection for citizens is the greater social good.

To convince followers that America is or should be an explicitly Christian nation, authors such as David Barton create an alternative version of American history. This version of American history contradicts the academic consensus among historians so a corresponding effort to undermine academic authority accompanies the alternative history (Assumption 4).

Identity construction is played out in pluralist competition. Miller's social choice theory describes how individuals form groups with likeminded individuals to pull in the direction of their self-interest (N. R. Miller 1983). In order to combine their pull with others', they sacrifice a bit of their preferences to satisfy influence. Electoral and other political outcomes favor those that can form and hold coalitions together and pull effectively in the same direction. A hegemonic strategy involves reducing the pull of smaller groups. This can be done by keeping them from organizing (target community centers) or disenfranchising them at the ballot box. It can also be achieved rhetorically by delegitimizing a group's activism as somehow not belonging within American democracy. "Real" citizens, i.e. "us" carry the torch for the true national identity. "The other" seeks to change or negate the true national identity through its activism. Therefore, the organization of "the other" should be ignored or restricted in the interest of national self-preservation.

In almost all accounts of identity construction there is an assumption of agency. A person is able to passively develop or actively construct a concept of self personally or

s/he is not a self. When the CR delegitimizes certain identities, it generally happens in two ways. One, a person is not *really* American if he does not fit a list of criteria. It is not a question of citizenship, but aspects of identity that inform what it means to be American. It's not just beliefs, it's who someone is (even who she chooses to be) that make her not part of "us". The second is more personal. Certain aspects of self are not recognized by the CR as created through agency but are the result of external forces. Belief in a false religion or no religion means one is a victim of "The Deceiver." Political, social, and professional affiliations are the result of searching for God in one's life, which is diminished as lost, lacking, damaged, and casually equated with pathology.

To realize the liberal principle of legitimacy in the modern context, certain reasons cannot be offered as justifications for matters of basic justice. Modern states, after all, consist of citizens with a vast diversity of religious and moral conceptions of the good. Such conditions of pluralism mean that no single moral or religious tradition can be used as the grounds for legitimately justifying laws and institutions of the state. If such a pluralistic state were to ground its constitutional commitments on something like the will of the Christian God, after all, many citizens would be unable to endorse these structures. For those who believed in a different God or no God at all, the state would be justified on grounds that they could not fully endorse. This illustrates the primary problem with such non-public reasons-namely, they exclude some citizens from full membership in the political community, thereby failing to treat all citizens with equal respect. So the basic idea behind public reason is that if we are truly committed to treating all citizens with equal respect and if we accept the fact of pluralism, then we should justify matters of basic justice on terms that all citizens can endorse (Klemp 2007); (Klemp 2007, 525).

When Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore writes an op ed arguing that the House of Representatives should not allow Keith Ellison, the first Muslim American elected to Congress, to be sworn in, he is delegitimizing Ellison's identity.² When Moore writes, "The Islamic faith rejects our God and believes that the state must mandate the worship

² A detailed analysis of Moore's piece along with other examples of delegitimizing identities appears in the discourse analysis section. For now, examples are referenced briefly to clarify the summation of assumptions.

of its own god, Allah,” it is clear what he means by “our.” Ellison is not one of us. Later in the piece, Moore says,

Ellison cannot swear an oath on the Quran and an allegiance to our Constitution at the same time. Our Constitution states, “Each House [of Congress] shall be the judge of the qualifications of its own members.” Enough evidence exists for Congress to question Ellison’s qualifications to be a member of Congress as well as his commitment to the Constitution in view of his apparent determination to embrace the Quran and an Islamic philosophy directly contrary to the principles of the Constitution. ...Congress has the authority and should act to prohibit Ellison from taking the congressional oath today (Moore 2006)!

His legal status as a citizen is not in question, but his place as a representative or even to compete in politics is condemned. Tim Wildmon echoed similar sentiments in the Northeast Mississippi News,

Obama omitted the words “by their Creator” from his speech. Why? Given the fact that he was using a teleprompter, I can only conclude that this was intentional. Either he, or his speechwriter, did not want to give credit to Almighty God. This kind of action would be in step with modern secular liberalism which is hostile to the Christian faith and hates the historical fact that America’s founders revered and acknowledged God in so many ways that are indisputable (Wildmon 2013).

There are copious examples of how identities are delegitimized by the CR in the discourse analysis of specific scenarios. Here it is important to highlight why it matters in terms of democratic theory. It not only hinders the identity construction integral to liberalism, it prevents members of groups from organizing and distorts democratic outcomes. Shapiro writes in *The State of Democratic Theory* that giving preferential treatment to any group identity is itself a form of ethnic oppression (Shapiro 2009). The state cannot permit a group to justify the oppression of another group based on claims of a group identity, even if that group identity (Christian) is perceived as synonymous with another identity (American). In other words, one can claim that discriminating against X is definitional to being a member of group Y. In such a case, group Y must accept the

prohibition of discrimination in public accommodations, including membership if otherwise open to the public.

CR activists claim exemption to public discrimination prohibitions based on an assertion that such prohibitions automatically result in oppression against them. That perception of oppression is untenable without a corresponding belief in precedence. It is the assumption of a legitimized American identity that permits the Christian privilege evident in Assumption 4.

ASSUMPTION 4

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
4. Failure to receive an identity-based privilege is equated with oppression. Christians are “persecuted” or “oppressed” when their religious views do not trump civil law because they are the religious identity.	4. The expansion of the social contract over time is preferable to exclusion. The addition of new identities is preferable to hegemony.

Deriving from Assumption 3, CR activists claim persecution when their religious identity is not preferred or given certain exemptions in law. There are numerous examples of this throughout CR news sites. A New Jersey church claimed a violation of its religious freedom when it was not allowed a special tax incentive to provide pavilions as public accommodations (Capuzzo 2007); (B. Johnson 2012). “Administrative judge Solomon A. Metzger ruled that religious liberty did not exempt the seaside retreat, which is associated with the United Methodist Church, from renting its facilities out for purposes that violate its moral beliefs (B. Johnson 2012). In 2007, conservative Christians shouted down a guest chaplain because he was the first Hindu invited to open a session of Congress with prayer. Two prominent CR groups organized the protesters in the gallery who expressed anger over the U.S. “drifting away from its Judeo-Christian

roots” (Adams 2007). The Family Research Council uses a book claiming America was founded on the Ten Commandments to discourage Muslim participation in politics.

Whenever CR messaging argues for a tax exemption for its public accommodations or exclusive rights to a public building not afforded to other community groups, it does so using an assumption of Christian privilege. This, of course, is based on the previous assumption that Christian is the authentic American identity and therefore unique treatment is warranted to preserve American heritage. Blumenfeld, Joshi and Fairchild have compiled a collection of all the ways Christian privilege exists. What is shocking in this collection of works is how many laws treat Christians differently in terms of exemptions from regulations or Christian-specific tax breaks. These differ from the more general religious based exemptions in that they apply specifically to Christian denominations. The detailed evidence of Christian privilege demonstrates how powerful the idea of Christian as the legitimate American identity is and how much it is accepted within the popular zeitgeist.

The claim of Christian privilege is not a cynical political or legal strategy. It is a sincerely held belief by many important figures in the CR. Assumption 8 looks at the CR belief in America’s special relationship with (the Christian) God that must be honored to assure the nation’s greatness. Many leaders in the CR appear unwilling or unable to divorce national identity from religious identity. This, again, speaks to the psychology of identity construction. Recognition of the liberal democratic principle of government neutrality toward religion is not as simple as accepting or rejecting a premise. It gets to

the heart of who someone sees herself as being. If Christian is not the real American identity, what does that do to other conceptions of the self?

ASSUMPTION 5

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
V. The purpose of freedom and rights is to live within the parameters of Christian law. Theology justifies rights. The exercise of freedom that results in amoral or anti-Christian conclusions is a misappropriation of rights.	V. Rights come from natural law, an equality found in nature

Within democratic theory, there is ample debate about the source of rights. Early liberal democratic thinkers grounded natural rights in natural law. There was an order to the world suggesting there is a right ordering of human behavior. Nature's author is God, but he is a silent god

Rev. James V. Schall, S.J. writes in *The Heaviest Oppression* that Catholic groups are oppressed at public universities if they cannot discriminate against minorities by disallowing gay or non-Catholic members (Schall 2006); (Schall 2012). In the article he argues that the right to access essentially lacks a source, particularly when it punishes Catholics for wanting to restrict membership in student organizations. To him, there is no right to equal access for "wrong" identities. This mentality reflects pre-liberal ideas about the source of rights.

For centuries the Church taught a prosperity theology that upheld tiered social levels in Europe as God's will. The Church enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with European aristocracy by supporting feudal rights and privileges. One son from each landed family went into the priesthood. With the addition of a clerical vow of celibacy, the Church absorbed inheritance for generations while keeping monarchs and lords safe from egalitarian uprisings. One of the major events to erode prosperity theology was the Bubonic Plague. After wiping out a third of Europe in three successive waves, serf uprisings challenged feudalism. The disease struck rich and poor, pious and damned alike so it became difficult to argue that God preferred the rich. Instead nature (and nature's God) seemed no respecter of class or birth. Instead, notions of a natural equality became popularized and later reflected in Enlightenment writings. Although Hobbes and Locke differed sharply on what they thought was the authentic nature of man, their use of a natural order over manmade hierarchy reflected these new ideas. Rights became associated with natural law rather than a personified God. This allowed for a universal morality to be asserted without specifying an author. As Schmitt points out, the concept of natural equality and derivative rights is itself a tenet of faith, one accepted in the new civil religion of a post-Enlightenment West. This new civil morality allows for assumptions or rights based on personhood alone rather than congruence with a particular faith tradition. Many in the CR do not recognize rights that do not direct a person to God. This is an Augustinian mentality in which the state is partially responsible for the condition of man's soul and has the responsibility to pull him away from earthly temptations (Schmitt and ebrary, Inc 2005); (Perreau-Saussine 2012); (Brundage 1990).

There are numerous writings that reflect this change in mentality. Some are included in selected quotes below.

It would, indeed, be very hard for one that appears careless about his own salvation to persuade me that he were extremely concerned for mine. For it is impossible that those should sincerely and heartily apply themselves to make other people Christians, who have not really embraced the Christian religion in their own hearts. If the Gospel and the apostles may be credited, no man can be a Christian without charity and without that faith which works, not by force, but by love. Now, I appeal to the consciences of those that persecute, torment, destroy, and kill other men upon pretence of religion, whether they do it out of friendship and kindness towards them or no? And I shall then indeed, and not until then, believe they do so, when I shall see those fiery zealots correcting, in the same manner, their friends and familiar acquaintance for the manifest sins they commit against the precepts of the Gospel; when I shall see them persecute with fire and sword the members of their own communion that are tainted with enormous vices and without amendment are in danger of eternal perdition; and when I shall see them thus express their love and desire of the salvation of their souls by the infliction of torments and exercise of all manner of cruelties (Locke 2003).

As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion,—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen (Muslims),—and as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan (Mohammedan) nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries. – John Adams, Treaty of Tripoli 1796 (Smethurst 2006)

I have remarked that the members of the American clergy in general, without even excepting those who do not admit religious liberty, are all in favor of civil freedom; but they do not support any particular political system. They keep aloof from parties, and from public affairs. In the U.S. religion exercises but little influence upon the laws, and upon the details of public opinion. but it directs the manners of the community and by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state (Tocqueville 2003).

Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must nevertheless be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country; for it does not impart a taste of freedom, it facilitates the use of free institutions (Tocqueville 2003).

Compare these explanations of core liberal democratic assumptions with similar Christodemocratic quotes.

There is no “right” to do wrong. Homosexuality is not a “civil right”; it is a human wrong — one that is redeemable as proven by thousands of contented former homosexuals and ex-lesbians. Our Founding Fathers, infused with a Biblical view of

fallen man, created limited government that sought to restrain the sinful outworking of men's hearts (including the lust for power, hence our system of checks and balances). The law once punished sin (e.g., sodomy and anti-abortion laws), so it is preposterous to say that homosexuality-affirming laws are necessary to uphold basic, "constitutional rights." ENDA represents the complete rejection of the Judeo-Christian Western legal tradition by creating newfangled legal "rights" that actually reward errant lifestyles and sexual misbehavior." – Peter LaBarbera, Americans for Truth About Homosexuality (LaBarbera 2011)

Sexual perversion movements take their cue from the successful "queer" ("gay") revolution, which has succeeded in convincing millions of people that a human wrong — homosexual practice — is now the basis for government-protected "civil rights." – Brian Carmenker, Mass Resistance (Carmenker 2012)

It took nearly 50 years for Utah to be admitted into the Union for this reason. And it was Republican Party opposition to polygamy that forced the action – just as it was Republican Party opposition to slavery that resulted in an end of that hideous institution in the United States. Today we have even some Republicans in denial of history and in denial of the natural lusts of men throughout history. Believe me, there is no legal or moral argument that can be made against polygamy if the institution of marriage is redefined as one between any two people. At that point, I would have to agree that marriage, as redefined, really would become discriminatory, since it is based on nothing more than judicial rulings and legislative actions by men. Those who tell you that same-sex marriage is no big deal and won't lead to the further diminishment of the 6,000-year-old institution of marriage are either being disingenuous or are just plain ignorant. Marriage is the most important cultural institution in any free and self-governing society. If you want to plunge into the moral abyss of chaos and barbarism, then just cast your vote for same-sex marriage. Just pretend this profoundly faddish idea is only the latest breakthrough in "civil rights." Just don't raise your voice of objection to this bizarre idea being rammed down America's throat by those who have no appreciation for what really works in God's economy. – Joseph Farah (Farah n.d.)

ASSUMPTION 6

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
6. The Good and the True have been revealed. Subsequent knowledge is subject to comportsing with that initial revealed truth.	6. The Good and the True are discovered, never final, constantly evolving and continuously updated with new information.

CR activism is imbued with a preference for a revealed rather than discovered epistemology. CR groups often produce their own studies and research to prove Christodemocratic claims. However, the conclusion is decided before the research is conducted. Any facts or conclusions are evaluated by the degree to which they comport with revealed “Truth.” An academic journal or scientific finding cannot be true if it disagrees with Christian teachings. Groups such as the Ruth Institute and the Family Research Council are established to produce research that contradicts scientific and academic consensus.

The CR creates parallel institutions to mirror sources of authority. These include Answers in Genesis to counter scientific consensus on evolution, The American College of Pediatricians to intentionally be confused with the expertise of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) to challenge the legal opinions of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

These parallel institutions accomplish three things. 1. They discourage critical thought. Analysis in opposition to authority is an affront to God. 2. They support specific CR objectives, such as laws against same-sex parenting and exclusively Christian American history. 3. They create the illusion of controversy in the face of consensus. Often judges, politicians and the media cannot tell the difference between a group that represents the broad professional consensus of a field and a group formed by a CR interest group to endorse alternative “research.” In the interest of being fair or showing all sides, equal respect is given to opinions without equal merit.

Recently, Mother Jones produced a report on textbooks used in sectarian private schools and Christian homeschooling (Pann 2012). *United States History for Christian Schools*, produced by Bob Jones University Press, contains the following:

[The Ku Klux] Klan in some areas of the country tried to be a means of reform, fighting the decline in morality and using the symbol of the cross. Klan targets were bootleggers, wife-beaters, and immoral movies. In some communities it achieved a certain respectability as it worked with politicians (Keesee and Sidwell 2002, 219).

A few slave holders were undeniably cruel. Examples of slaves beaten to death were not common, neither were they unknown. The majority of slave holders treated their slaves well (Keesee and Sidwell 2002, 165).

The same publisher produced *Life Science* in 2007 which says:

Bible-believing Christians cannot accept any evolutionary interpretation. Dinosaurs and humans were definitely on the earth at the same time and may have even lived side by side within the past few thousand years (Batdorf and Porch 2007, Introduction).

[Is] it possible that a fire-breathing animal really existed? Today some scientists are saying yes. They have found large chambers in certain dinosaur skulls...The large skull chambers could have contained special chemical-producing glands. When the animal forced the chemicals out of its mouth or nose, these substances may have combined and produced fire and smoke (Batdorf and Porch 2007, 58).

The textbook endorsed by the Homeschool Legal Defense Fund for 8th Grade History contains an explicitly Christian story of America's founding and passages such as this:

They went to Canada or European countries to escape being drafted into military service. Many young people turned to drugs and immoral lifestyles; these youth became known as hippies. They went without bathing and wore dirty, ragged unconventional clothing and deliberately broke all codes of politeness and manners. Rock music played an important part in the hippie movement and had great influence over the hippies. Many of the rock musicians they followed belonged to Eastern religious cults or practiced Satan worship (Grussendorf 1994).

The Rivionaries, a documentary by Scott Thurman details the Texas State Board of Education textbook review panel and its penchant for Christian criteria over “liberal” bias in public school textbooks (Thurman 2013). Because Texas is the largest purchaser of public school textbooks in the United States, its decisions affect what is published in textbooks nationwide. In the documentary, one of the textbook reviewers shouts, “We have to stand up to these experts” because “evolution is nothingness.” At a rally held by faith 2 Action, a minister prays, “God’s will be done in public education once again.” “God’s will” is the use of curricula to support conservative Christian conclusions and “once again” implies an imagined, theocratic American past.³ (Thurman 2013); (“Watch now: PBS Video” 2013)

There is even an effort to push “divine mathematics” in public schools. The A Beka Book Company markets a book titled the *Christian Approach to Elementary Math*. On the website promoting this book, the company claims it is an “unabashed advocates of

³ The entire documentary can be viewed on PBS’ website here: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2325563509>

traditional mathematics” but that traditional mathematics “will not succeed unless it's taught with conviction that something more than arbitrary process derived from arbitrary principles is at work (A Beka Book Co. 2011). It explains, “The elementary student doesn't need to understand $2+2$ equals 4 in order to learn it and use it. The elementary student does need to see his multiplication tables as part of the truth and order that God has built into reality. From the Christian perspective $2+2 = 4$ takes on cosmic significance as does every fact of mathematics however particular” (A Beka Book Co. 2011).

Much of this is done because research findings tend to contradict core beliefs of the CR. The Earth is not several thousand years old. Homosexuality is not intrinsically harmful to individuals. The social safety net is not synonymous with socialism. However, the preference for revealed epistemology goes deeper than policy preferences. It has more to do with the CR's attitudes toward authority. Under Christodemocratic assumptions, knowledge is not discovered but revealed. Individual reason only has value if it leads a person to Christian conclusions. Authority is top-down through Church hierarchy. This reflects pre-Enlightenment, pre-Scientific Revolution thinking in which one could be charged with heresy for disproving a church claim. When Pat Robertson says, “Obama will not be reelected,” because, “God chooses the king,” when predicting the 2012 presidential election, he discounts the will of the majority because it disagrees with his Christian preferences (Robertson 2012). Followers are not meant to reason to their own conclusions but accept conclusions from authority. To question the Genesis account of creation or disagree with a Christian sexual ethic is to rebel against God (and his

spokespeople on Earth). The CR wants obedience and limited pluralism so conclusions cannot be reached via personal reason.

This is nothing new. It comes from an Augustinian, medieval preference for revealed, rather than discovered, truth. Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei died in Italy at the age of 77. Born February 15, 1564, Galileo has been referred to as the “father of modern astronomy,” the “father of modern physics” and the “father of science” due to his revolutionary discoveries. The first person to use a telescope to observe the skies, Galileo discovered the moons of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn, sunspots and the solar rotation. After Galileo published his confirmation that the Earth orbits the Sun, in favor of the Copernican system, he was charged with heresies (ideas that ran counter to teaching of the church) by the Inquisition—the legal body of the Catholic Church. He was found guilty in 1633 and sentenced to life imprisonment, but due to his age and poor health he was allowed to serve out his sentence under house arrest (Hitchcock 2012).

An evaluation of knowledge leads to a justification for authority. If revelation is preferred over discovery, then a claim to authority is dramatically different. Horace Mann’s writings on the necessity of a thinking public within a liberal democracy are useful here. Mann claimed that liberal democracy was a new and untried political voyage that required individuals to be able to read and think for themselves.

I know that we are often admonished that, without intelligence and virtue, as a chart and compass, to direct us in our untried political voyage, we shall perish in the first storm. But I venture to add that, without these qualities, we shall not wait for a storm - we cannot weather the calm. If the sea is as smooth as glass we shall founder, for we are a stone boat. Unless these qualities pervade the general head and the general heart, not only will republican institutions vanish from amongst us, but the words prosperity and happiness will become obsolete.

In every nation that has ever existed - not even excepting Greece and Rome - the mind of the masses has been obstructed in its development. Amongst millions of men, only some half dozen of individuals - often only a single individual - have been able to pour out the lava of their passions, with full volcanic force. These few men have made the Pharaohs, the Neros, the Napoleons of the race. The rest have usually been subjected to a systematic course of blinding, deafening, crippling. As an inevitable consequence of this, minds of men have never yet put forth one thousandth part of their tremendous energies. Bad men have swarmed the earth, it's true, but they have been weak men (Mann 1845, 119).

Later, Dewey echoed Mann's claim for the necessity of individual thinking in liberal democracy to resist tyranny. He described how, in the 1930s, many Americans feared the totalitarians in the Soviet Union and Germany would cross the ocean and invade the United States. Instead, he encouraged Americans to pay attention to the mentalities in Russia and Germany that preceded totalitarian control. Scapegoating minorities and discouraging intellectualism prepares a citizenry for autocratic rulers (Boydston and Sharpe 2008, 367).

There is evidence that CR rhetoric rejects the scientific method and the hallmarks of critical thinking that enable authority to be questioned. Its materials reject a discovered epistemology in which knowledge is built through observation and testing in favor of a revealed epistemology.

ASSUMPTION 7

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
7. Pluralism is severely limited or layered. Either it is only for Christians or Christians have a greater place at the table because they are the legitimate identity.	7. Pluralism and equal protection apply to all citizens regardless of group identities. No group is automatically privileged by law.

First Amendment, Establishment, Free Exercise Clauses: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Fourteenth Amendment, Section 1: All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. U.S. Constitution

Early concepts of religious freedom, such as England under Elizabeth I or Maryland under Lord Baltimore, protected Christians but punished Jews and atheists. Similar mentalities pervade today. Many CR activists claim that the First Amendment should never have been applied to non-Christians. In 2007, the American Family Association promoted a protest of the opening prayer in the U.S. Senate because a Hindu chaplain delivered it. The prayer was interrupted repeatedly and the guest chaplain was shouted down by prayers from the gallery requesting God forgive the U.S. for recognizing a false God. Observers repeatedly shouted “no God but God” when the chaplain tried to pray. The explanation by the AFA was that America was a Christian

nation founded by Christians. Chaplains in the Senate had to be limited to Christian pastors or Jewish Rabbis to “honor our history” (The Associated Press 2007); (“Senate Prayer Led by Hindu Elicits Protest” 2007).

In a later radio show, the AFA’s Bryan Fischer claimed,

Islam has no fundamental First Amendment claims, for the simple reason that it was not written to protect the religion of Islam. Islam is entitled only to the religious liberty we extend to it out of courtesy. While there certainly ought to be a presumption of religious liberty for non-Christian religious traditions in America, the Founders were not writing a suicide pact when they wrote the First Amendment. Our government has no obligation to allow a treasonous ideology to receive special protections in America, but this is exactly what the Democrats are trying to do right now with Islam. From a constitutional point of view, Muslims have no First Amendment right to build mosques in America. They have that privilege at the moment, but it is a privilege that can be revoked if, as is in fact the case, Islam is a totalitarian ideology dedicated to the destruction of the United States. The Constitution, it bears repeating, is not a suicide pact. For Muslims, patriotism is not the last refuge of a scoundrel, but the First Amendment is. – Bryan Fischer, AFA Radio (Fischer 1011)

Fischer revisited this theme later referencing a USSC justice to bolster his claims of limited religious freedom.

As Joseph Story, a long-serving Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court said: ‘Probably at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, and of the amendment to it, now under consideration, the general, if not the universal, sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state, so far as was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience, and the freedom of religious worship. An attempt to level all religions, and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference, would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation...’

The real object of the amendment was, not to countenance, much less to advance Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity; but to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects, and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment, which should give to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government. – (Fischer 1011) Bryan Fisher quoting Joseph Story

Christian historian Robert William Brock correctly points out that early state constitutions made specific religious requirements,

This Christian consensus is easily verified by the fact that prior to 1789 (the year that eleven of the thirteen states ratified the Constitution), many of the states still had constitutional requirements that a man must be a Christian in order to hold public office (Brock 2009, 158).

But, who cares? Early state constitutions referenced slavery. Identifying a component of history is different from using that component to justify a privileged identity. The same rationale that justifies white privilege is used to justify Christian privilege. Chris Hedges identifies this as “selective populism.” It’s a kind label. It’s used when “American people” is supposed to be code for “Christians.” A Christo-centric history is no different from an Anglo-centric history in that both are used to perpetuate privilege.

There is a well-established pattern of CR leaders rejecting “seats at the table” for identities with which they disagree. Equally prevalent are accusations that groups like gay rights activists want to exclude them from public discourse. Both claims are examined in detail in the discourse analysis sections, including GLAAD’s Media Accountability Project, which discourages news outlets from inviting Christian conservative pundits.

ASSUMPTION 8

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
8. Christodemocracy: God judges nations on a whole and can remove protection or cause bad things to happen to a nation based on how much “Sin” is allowed.	8. Liberal Democracy: Assumes individualism and personal autonomy based on reason. Only an individual can be held responsible for his/her actions and tolerance of other identities thought to be “wrong” is essential.

Exodus 22:18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

A popular quote used by evangelist Billy Graham in his sermons is, “If God doesn’t punish America, He’ll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.” Graham is actually quoting a comment his wife, Ruth, made after reading one of Graham’s books about America’s moral decay. Graham recently used the quote in a form letter posted on his association’s website. (Piatt 2012) The quote references the two cities in the Old Testament God destroyed for wickedness. The idea that God judges nations or that the U.S. is in a covenant relationship with God, much like ancient Israel, is common in CR rhetoric.

On Election Day, Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council (FRC), said in an interview on Tim Wildmon’s show *American Family Radio* that, if Obama were not reelected, God would delay his judgment on the United States.

What could happen here today if we are successful in removing someone from office who has basically set themselves in defiance to everything that is biblically oriented in terms of the history of our country and the word of God, that's it's a reprieve, it's not a solution. We chose the economy over the moral foundation of the country when we selected Barack Obama for president (*Perkins: If Obama Loses, God will Delay Judgment* 2012).

On election night, 2012, Joseph Farah wrote a piece titled, *America Pronounces Judgment On Itself*. In it, he argues,

We have allowed our fellow Americans to pronounce judgment on the nation. That's what Obama represents to me – God's judgment on a people who have turned away from Him and His ways and from everything for which our founders sacrificed their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor (Farah 2012).

He also includes this dire warning,

It's time to form new communities of people who understand just how much Americans have been disenfranchised from our God-given rights and responsibilities. But, at the end of the day, people generally get the kind of government they deserve. When you turn away from the ways of God Almighty, this is what you should expect, if you are a student of the Bible and history (Farah 2012).

Farah is explaining how he believes the economy will get worse and the U.S. will likely face other negative consequences as a result of reelecting President Obama. He thinks these negative consequences are deserved as a sort of punishment for abandoning God. God hasn't moved away from the U.S. as much as it has moved away from him. So, people in the U.S. should know that they've allowed their circumstances because they've moved away from God. Reelection of Barack Obama and being disenfranchised from God given rights are the same thing. A week after Election Day, Matt Barber, Associate Dean at Liberty University Law School and Vice President of Liberty Counsel, appeared on Matt Staver's radio program and claimed God's judgment was upon us for electing and enacting sin.

That is what America has adopted, a Romans 1 platform that elevates homosexuality, that elevates death through abortion, that denies God. So that's why this election has been like no other election in history. We talk about the wrath of God and God's judgment on a nation. As a nation we can only be judged in the here and now, in the temporal. Right here, right now. People don't understand, God's wrath, God's judgment is left to us. His judgment is sin and what we're talking about is a nation that has adopted sin as official public policy, and enacting sin as policy. Well, when god departs from us and allows us to our own devices, the judgment is exacted by ourselves, by our own hand upon ourselves. The judgment itself is sin and we as a nation are adopting sin as a platform (*Liberty Counsel: In Re-Electing Obama, America Has Adopted "Sin As Official Public Policy"* 2012).

James Dobson, formerly of Focus on the Family, reacted to the Sandyhook school shooting by saying,

I mean millions of people have decided that God doesn't exist, or he's irrelevant to me and we have killed fifty-four million babies and the institution of marriage is right on the verge of a complete redefinition. Believe me, that is going to have consequences too. And a lot of these things are happening around us, and somebody is going to get mad at me for saying what I am about to say right now, but I am going to give you my honest opinion: I think we have turned our back on the Scripture and on God Almighty and I think he has allowed judgment to fall upon us. I think that's what's going on (Garcia 2012).

Joseph Farah of World Net Daily, Randy Sharp of the American Family

Association, and Janet Mefferd expressed the same interpretation.⁴

Earlier this year, Pastor Dave Buehner said on Kevin Swanson's radio show that,

Homosexuality will reap divine punishment just as a hot stove will burn someone's hand. If we put our hands on the stove, we'll get burned. If we embrace homosexuality, we'll destroy society, we'll destroy lives, we'll destroy families, we'll destroy everything. It's not just that God just hates homosexuals, there's a reason why he hates it. It's the same reason you would hate your daughter putting her hand on a hot stove (Tashman 2013b).

⁴ There are numerous examples of this same message repeated. Rather than produce a tautological list of each one with quotes, I include here a collection of links as examples.

[Tea Party Nation Blames Sandy Hook Shooting On Sex In Media, Teacher's Unions And Bureaucracy](#)
[WND publisher Farah joins the 'more Sandy Hooks are coming to godless America' parade](#)
[Focus on the Family's James Dobson Blames Sandy Hook Shooting on Gay Marriage, Abortion](#)
[Sharp Reflects Christodemocratic Assumptions that God Judges Nations](#)
[Janet Mefferd blames Newtown Shootings on Evolution, a Culture that Rejects Christ](#)
[Contortions of Logic Attempt to Connect Newtown Shootings to "Homosexual Agenda"](#)

There are numerous occasions in which the CR expresses the inevitability of God's judgment. Some get high profile media attention but most go unnoticed. It is so common on Christian radio that a record of its occurrences would require its own dissertation. It is a convenient device used to convince followers to oppose political positions in order to stay safe from God's judgment. But, it also reveals much about their understanding of what government is established to do. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, they show an Augustinian viewpoint that governments are there to facilitate human closeness to god. God allows civil authority and autonomy only so long as it acts to instill morality. Civil law that pushes humans away from him invokes God's wrath. The judgment is not meant to be spiteful, but used by a "loving father" to draw his children closer to him (Tashman 2013b); (Garcia 2012).

The problem with this mentality is that it is fundamentally illiberal. Liberalism assumes a degree of personal responsibility and self-determination. Individuals are not judged by their group ID. Liberalism allows others to be "evil", or come to their own moral conclusions, without punishing the society as a whole. The Christian God would need to judge a nation of 300 million people because federal law permitted personal autonomy. This type of mentality predates the Reformation even, in which Luther argued for personal responsibility to God alone. It harkens back to early theological debates in Christianity about how best for the Church to assure Christian obedience, not if it should.

Quotes like Barber's above, in which he talks about "enacting sin" touch on other assumptions regarding the role of the state. He is an associate dean at an accredited law school and he worries about enacting sin as official policy. It is remarkably illiberal.

ASSUMPTION 9

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
9. Power/leadership/authority is justified by comporting with Christian theology as the true source of the nation, law and rights. Knowledge is revealed therefore authority cannot be divorced from revelation.	9. Majority will alone legitimizes power and personal autonomy limits state power. Knowledge is based on discovery so authority is only verified through fair processes.

According to Christodemocratic assumptions, a non-Christian cannot be a legitimate leader because Christianity is the true American identity. Therefore, regardless of electoral outcomes, his or her legitimacy is always questioned. “Non-Christian” is equated with “anti-Christian.” Many CR leaders and their supporters consider President Obama insufficiently Christian. Regardless of whether they accept his self-profession, he is almost uniformly treated as non-Christian or anti-Christian. So, any and all actions are not merely a-Christian or non-Christian but anti-Christian. He or she is considered part of a conspiracy of forces against Christianity.

The European monarchies needed the approval of the Pope to be legitimate rulers and Elizabeth was not the legitimate queen of England as long as she was a bastard from a Protestant divorce. A similar mentality persists. Some CR activists advocate that non-Christians be excluded from elected office. Despite the specification of no religious test for office specified in the Constitution, they insist leaders must be Christian. This derives

from other assumptions such as the belief that Christian is the legitimate American identity and God judges nations.

U.S. Constitution, Article I Section 2: The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice-President chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows:

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

Christodemocratic activists usually cite three places in Bible to assert that the Christian God actually chooses civil leadership, Romans 13:1, Daniel 2:21, and I Samuel 12:13. Citizens have a right to vote, but the outcome of elections can please or offend God.⁵ This concept sounds similar to what those referenced above referred to as Islamo-democracy. Muslim states that used to be theocracies can have democratic revolutions. The resulting states allow voting for representatives but Islamic leaders still heavily influence the outcomes of elections or, at the very least, Islamic leaders play some role in the legislative process. Again, America was never a Christian theocracy so an alternative history and claim of Christian privilege are required. See: Roy Moore's op ed

⁵ Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Daniel 2:21 It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

I Samuel 12:13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired. For though God chose their king for them, it was at their request; they chose to have a king, and desired one, and they approved of and consented to, and confirmed the choice he had made, and so it was in effect their own: and, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you; he gratified them in their desires; though he did not suffer them to make themselves a king, he suffered them to have one, and he gave them one; this power he reserved to himself of setting up and pulling down kings at his pleasure.

encouraging the House of Representatives to prevent the first Muslim American elected to Congress from being sworn in (detailed below).

ASSUMPTION 10

Christodemocratic Assumption	Liberal Democratic Assumption
X. Christodemocracy: State action justified by theology is automatically legitimate because it forwards Christian goals and the supposed majority will of the true Americans, true America	X. State action is limited by respect for individualism and subject to review based on the degree of intrusion into personal autonomy

Here, the Locke-Boyle debate becomes particularly useful. Writing long after the Reformation bloodied Europe, Locke incorporated an assumption that all humans possessed reason and natural equality before God. The most notable source of contention between the two men lies in their descriptions of primary and secondary qualities in objects. The arguments – equal parts philosophical and scientific – suggest differing assumptions about what is real in the universe and therefore, what is a more correctly understood role for government. Both men emphasized the necessity of observation but neither were pure empiricists. Pure empiricism inspires materialism. To the pure empiricist, there is no meaning outside what can be observed through one's conscious perception and experiences. Locke believed much of the world could not be empirically observed (Rogers 1966, 208). What is now better understood as a universal theory of the mind included the idea of a spiritual plane. The inner identities of humans, animal spirits and even certain imperceptible consciousness in inanimate objects in nature were thought

to be “real” by Locke. But, the observable, material world was more primary. The influence of spirits/minds/souls could be deduced, but it was less real than the physical world (Rogers 1966, 20).

Boyle on the other hand believed the physical world was *less real* than the spiritual world. The material world could be perceived, measured, observed etc. but behind it is a spiritual realm. It is a-theological – meaning, not specifically described by any particular religious text – but there none-the-less. The spiritual realm was as real as the physical realm because there was no way to disprove the presence of ethereal entities.

Both men knew the physical world was made up of tiny particles and that the speed of light was finite. But *Boyle’s New Experiments Physical-Mechanical, Touching on the Spirit of Air* (1660) suggested the empty space between particles is ethereal and potentially occupied by spiritual beings. Empty vacuums in space were less likely than the occupation of spiritual entities. The concept, though unusual by current standards, still has some scientific merit. Physicists like Einstein and Hawking refer to an as yet misunderstood field of quantum mechanics as where to find God. What they mean is that, at a subatomic level, some rules of matter seem either inconsistent or inexplicable. The force that holds sub-atomic particles together is not fully understood. Like many similarly situated things in history, the tendency is to fill in the blank with a heavenly entity until a better explanation is found. Boyle did just that with his anonymous “ethereal substances” (Rogers 1966, 22)

The idea of a spiritual world interactive or evidential within physics references ancient and medieval mysticism. But, both Locke and Boyle were silent in terms of pure

metaphysics. They did not proffer explanations as to the nature of spiritual phenomena. They simply recognized its potential (Rogers 1966, 210). Locke was sensitive to the criticism of religion common in his time because he thought it dismissed what *could* be true. Both Boyle and Locke could be considered deists with Locke more accurately described as an unorthodox Christian. But Boyle's ordering of what was primary and secondary lent scientific credibility to the Augustinian notion of a world more "real" than our physical reality. If the ethereal was really part of the substance of the material, then observation and measurement alone could never produce full truth. Some spiritual interpretation would always be necessary. Boyle claimed that using only the "real" (i.e. physical) to evaluate influence missed something important. He suggested direct spiritual involvement in the physical world, even the political constructs of humans.

Locke viewed the physical world as wholly independent of any spiritual world. While the spiritual world was possible, in Locke's view, it existed separate from materialism. As such, observation and measurement alone could obtain understanding of the physical world and human consensus alone could justify earthly authority. Locke – though sympathetic to spiritual beliefs – did not ascribe to the Augustinian ideal that the kingdom of heaven and an eternal fight between good and evil superseded temporal political structures. To him, such spiritual notions were secondary. But to Boyle, they had primacy. Boyle thought we could not discover the world without some revelation. He criticized his former student for being overly reliant on human reason without sufficient guidance from something spiritual.

Locke *did* rely on human reason, believing it was adequate to both discover morality and science. To Locke, both wisdom and knowledge were products of reason. Boyle thought wisdom was the product of revelation and knowledge was the product of reason. Both men influenced social contract theory in different ways. If the physical world is enough, then consensus justifies authority. However, if reason and the physical are not primary, then servants of God can still think the results of popular elections are illegitimate. These assumptions are still prevalent. To the CR, laws – even those supported by supermajorities – are only legitimate if they forward God’s will. Elections and rights are preferred to tyranny but alone do not always justify power. The kingdom of heaven is still primary and electoral, legislative or judicial outcomes are only legitimate in so much as they are the victories of the servants of God and forward the mission of heaven.

This principle difference between Locke and Boyle’s understandings of the world marks a precise split in the direction of Western thought. While Locke influenced many liberal principles, Boyle represented a *City of God* application of state power in which the role of government is as spiritual as it is physical. This division leads to differing interpretations of the liberty of conscience and different value judgments regarding state action. If individual reason alone is enough to discover the good without the moral coercion of religious authority, then a purely liberal freedom of conscience makes sense even if it produces immoral conclusions among some. However, if the spiritual world is more real than the physical world and governments really are part of a larger spiritual

battle, then freedom of conscience cannot be used to justify immorality in society and the need for the state to correct morally wayward citizens becomes more obvious.

All of the preceding assumptions converge with Assumption 10.

Christodemocratic activists fundamentally believe that the spiritual world is of greater importance than the temporal world. Governments are useful and valid only if they recognize and follow a higher truth. Liberal democracy dethroned the Church. The events leading up to the Enlightenment and continuing through the founding of the first modern democracies chipped away at the Church's absolute authority. Any religious authority became just a viewpoint among many in a pluralistic competition. Government divorced itself from religious affiliation, first in the Treaty of Westphalia and continuing through the French Revolution. CR activists accepted some of the changes that came with the advent of democracy but not the essential liberal components: liberty of conscience, equal representation, pluralism, minority protections.

As a result, CR leaders support a different version of democracy in which God is a greater signatory to the social contract. They support elections, laws, voting, freedom of speech, freedom of information, privacy – each within limits that most democratic theorists would identify as illiberal. They do not desire a Christian totalitarian regime, *per se*. But, they do envision a Christian utopia in which the elements of liberal democracy are applied only to specific people for specific ends. Some specific moral teachings are considered universal, regardless of demographics of government structure, because the spiritual plain is more “real” than the physical.

With these two normative frameworks outlined, the discourse surrounding different scenarios can be analyzed. Does the CR just want a certain bill passed or is its concept of pluralism essentially illiberal? Does it actually hate certain groups or merely consider its own identity more legitimate and seek to preserve that privilege in the interest of preserving a separate view of what the U.S. is? For both cases, the answer appears to be the latter option, but it is a difficult case to make. Placing discourse within its proper normative framework requires evidence of messages repeated within a group identity that indicate a separateness of worldview. One cannot simply record the numerical frequency of certain terms and establish a correlation with voting behavior. Instead, discourse analysis has several guiding parameters required to make the analysis useful.

METHODOLOGY: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis allows for a deconstruction of language to reveal underlying assumptions. Language here is more inclusive than just verbal or written communication and includes symbols, signifiers and intimations. The isolated words of an individual are useless except for when they can be situated within the context of a group or class.

Discourse analysis can be applied to any field. In the medical community it is usually used to explain why some otherwise equivalent abnormalities are pathologies and others are mere innocuous variations. When used to examine political rhetoric, it usually exposes the way language is used to perpetuate subordination or the status of a particular class. Often, one of the greatest benefits a privileged party enjoys is not having to think about its privilege.

Julia Kristeva points out that white Americans do not *have* to think about race. They do not notice the race of fictional characters or think of how standardized tests may be culturally biased because whiteness is uncritically accepted as normality. So, white people may use language to perpetuate a privilege they have never really considered. An example of this is the use of race only to indicate difference. “I saw a man at the end of the street,” vs. “I saw a black man at the end of the street.” Unwittingly, a person that demonstrates this pattern of recognition only references race to indicate difference. A

man, with no description of race, is white unless otherwise indicated. Seeing subtleties repeated over time in a person is not necessarily evidence of racism *per se* but unexamined assumptions that preserve an unchallenged worldview (Kristeva 1982).

“The contribution of the postmodern discourse analysis is the application of critical thought to social situations and the unveiling of hidden (or not so hidden) politics within the socially dominant as well as all other discourses (interpretations of the world, belief systems, etc.)” (University of Texas 2010). The “unveiling of hidden politics” often exposes the universality fallacy. This is the use of an implied “but of course” or “everyone knows.” Of course America is a Christian nation. Everyone knows children do best with a married father and mother. These claims require an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends" (Dewey 1997, 9). An examination of outcomes when two parties’ rights come into conflict may focus on demographics or rational self-interest and miss that the two parties mean something totally different by “rights.” Discourse analysis helps to deconstruct the use of language and reveal each party’s differing definitions.

Rights are often assumed to exist outside of majority competition. Tyranny of the majority is checked with the assertion of a right, which then terminates discussion. But recognition of rights is the also the product of competition.

Philosophers who talk about rights should pay much more attention than they do to the processes by which decisions are taken in a community under circumstances of disagreement. Theories of rights need to be complemented by theories of authority, whose function it is to determine how decisions are to be taken when the members of a community disagree about what decision is right. Since we are to assume a context of moral disagreement, a principle such as ‘Let the right decision be made,’ cannot

form part of an adequate principle of authority. It follows from this that, if people disagree about basic rights (and they do), an adequate theory of authority can neither include nor be qualified by a conception of rights as “trumps” over majoritarian forms of decision making (Waldron 1993, 221).

Assertions of rights can be insidious in political debates because they are often the most unexamined assumptions and are used (poorly) to substitute for an argument. It is not enough to merely assert a right that contradicts majority consensus without a rational argument to justify that right. It is difficult to counter an assertion of a right without challenging its underlying assumptions. When an employee claims to have a right to access to birth control counter to her employer’s right to free exercise of his religion, both claims of rights must be examined and unpackaged. Similarly, when Bryan Fischer claims there is no right to behave immorally because rights come from God, his basis for rights is different from someone who assumes state action should be religiously neutral. Each is a product of majority competition. Fischer only recognizes rights that comport with his construction of divinity. Liberals often assert rights based on their construction of innate equality. Both instances can be viewed as articles of faith in need of rational support. Rights, therefore, do not transcend political competition but derive from it.

***Politics* in discourse theory is not to be understood narrowly as, for example, party politics; on the contrary, it is a broad concept that refers to the manner in which we constantly constitute the social in ways that exclude other ways. Our actions are contingent articulations, that is, temporary fixations of meaning in an undecidable terrain which reproduce or change the existing discourses and thereby the organisation of society. Laclau and Mouffe understand politics as the organization of society in a particular way that excludes all other possible ways. Politics, then, is not just a surface that reflects a deeper social reality; rather, it is the social organisation that is the outcome of continuous political processes.**

When a struggle takes place between particular discourses, it sometimes becomes clear that different actors are trying to promote different ways of organising society (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 36).

Discourse analysis allows us to unpack the assumptions beneath the rhetoric of the CR and its “opponents.” The opposition is in quotes because many groups identified by the CR as threatening only present a threat in the context of a particular set of assumptions, theirs. Since targeted groups do not necessarily view their subject position as automatically opposed to conservative Christians, their opposition only has meaning contingent upon the assumptions that need to be examined.

A spokesperson for a CR group is not going to look into a news camera and claim that “Christian” represents the legitimate citizenry. But his talking points may position a subject in opposition to Christians knowing that some in the audience will uncritically accept his universality. “Americans overwhelmingly support strengthening the family,” can be a matter-of-fact assessment of a poll or may reveal that the speakers assumes, without analysis, that conservative Christians are the truer American identity, their support is then the only political opinion that has merit and they agree with him that only a particular set of relationships constitutes a family.

It is for this reason that passive supporters do not need to be labeled as homophobic, Islamophobic, or ascribed any “ism” or irrational fear. Instead, it is enough to say that elites use unexamined universality to perpetuate privilege. There is no need to “prove” everyone who voted for Proposition 8 in California intended malice toward gay people, only that rhetoric about “protecting children” was persuasive in the context of unexamined assumptions.

Laclau and Mouffe’s deconstruction approach allows assumptions to be revealed and associated with particular groups. But taxonomy of phrasing has limited utility if it

cannot be attached to objectives, in this case, a normative organizing structure of the state. In other words, discourse analysis in democratic theory needs to do more than show linguistic differences among segments of the population. It needs to provide evidence that different groups envision democracy and its implementation differently and compete structurally at a deeper level than mere policy preference and party competition. Critical discourse analysis abandons the neutral cataloging of language and focuses on agendas, such as the use of language to “otherize” people within democracies for the purposes of political subordination.

Critical discourse analysis engages in concrete, linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction. This distinguishes it from both Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory which does not carry out systematic, empirical studies of language use, and from discursive psychology which carries out rhetorical but not linguistic studies of language use. In critical discourse analysis, it is claimed that discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups – for example, between social classes, women and men, ethnic minorities and the majority. These effects are understood as *ideological* effects (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 63).

If one wants to plummet down the rabbit hole, discourse analysis can deconstruct and apply the use of language to pre-social power struggles. When some pre-historic homo sapiens claimed exclusive access to a resource or one claimed authority over others, some form of language was used to justify dominance. These are the early roots of political hegemony. *I/we* should dominate *you*. Humans have sophisticated their ways of legitimizing authority but the principle remains the same. A saying, attributed to Voltaire, says, “To reveal who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize.” Critical discourse analysis allows us to reveal who has privilege by finding out what assumptions lie unexamined.

Although there are many directions in the study and critique of social inequality, the way we approach these questions and dimensions is by focusing on *the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance*. Dominance is defined here as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality. This reproduction process may involve such different modes of discourse power relations as the more or less direct or overt support enactment, representation, legitimization, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance, among others. More specifically, critical discourse analysts want to know what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction.

One crucial presupposition of adequate critical discourse analysis is understanding the nature of social power and dominance. Once we have such an insight, we may begin to formulate ideas about how discourse contributes to their reproduction. To cut a long philosophical and social scientific analysis short, we assume that we here deal with properties of relations between social groups. That is, while focusing on *social* power, we ignore purely personal power, unless enacted as an individual realization of group power, that is, by individuals as group members. Social power is based on privileged *access* to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge (van Dijk 1993, 254).

Rhys Williams performed a similar analysis when he examined how early incarnations of the CR used rhetorical equivalency in the Civil Rights Movement. A certain sanctity or religious cover for racism was effectively deplored because “Christian” to some audiences was synonymous to “white.” So, challenges to white hegemony could be characterized as “threats to Christian America” using this false equivalency. Williams also shows how civil rights advocates used Christianity. Citing how an “an influential dominant discourse can lend to multiple interpretations” he argued that civil rights advocates “drew on religious elements that emphasized opening” while the religious right relied upon “elements that emphasize closing.” In many ways the conflict over equal protection was as much a conflict over what the correct interpretation of Christianity was and who got to decide. (I. D. S. M. A. P. of S. U. of California, College, and I. B. R. A. P. of S. U. of California 2002, 207)

The utility of such analysis may at first be unclear. After all, what does it matter if segments of a population have beliefs about God that inspire their political participation? No political behavior occurs absent some moral antecedent and no political actor inhabits some perfectly rational, non-culturally defined reasoning space. Political preferences derived from a faith tradition are not automatically inferior. Discourse analysis is not concerned with the beliefs of individuals. At an individual level, all people represent a nexus of group identities with a web of influences and contradictory drives. Instead, discourse analysis is useful to demonstrate how a group retains privilege in history or actively influences systems to dominate other identities. This can be subtle, as in an indication of deserved dispensation from public accommodations laws, or overt, such as putting “marriage” in quotes when referring to same-sex unions.

“In large measure, popular politics arises from the stories we tell about the world we share in common” (Burack 2008, 114). It is not enough to say that same-sex couples do not deserve civil recognition for their relationships because that on its face sounds quite unfair. Instead, a framework of assumptions to support that assertion must be applied and asserted as true without explanation. Gay people must be depicted as unqualified to be Christian and situated as opposed to Christianity itself. “Christian” must have elevated legitimacy. A historical narrative, however invented, must be used to rationalize that elevation and institutions that allow criticism of that history and privilege – like academia – must be suspicious, demonized, or otherwise part of an anti-Christian agenda. Actual or potential state action, primarily legislation, can then be compared and evaluated to the “correct” normative framework depending on how the discourse has

been situated. A remarkably successful political movement that has disproportionate representation in office and is deeply imbedded in bureaucracy sustains its dominance in liberal democracy using illiberal assumptions.

These assumptions can be revealed using discourse analysis. It does not look at individual faith or the degree of acceptance of tenets within a populace. Rather, it examines elite messaging (mailing, speeches, websites, radio programs, etc.) to establish patterns that reveal the assumptions described above. Considered in their totality, these assumptions constitute a unique normative framework for democracy present and active among other, contradictory sets of assumptions.

SPECIFIC SCENARIOS – EXAMPLES OF CR MESSAGING THAT REVEAL CHRISTODEMOCRATIC ASSUMPTIONS

Although there is variegated literature on the CR, most fails to be holistic. Sources examine only the political strategies or the attitudes toward history. Some look at the success of the Christian home schooling movement while others examine closely the contemporary Christian music industry. When looking at these various analyses together, an entire alternate landscape develops. In many ways, the CR can be seen as a comprehensive subculture. For every popular culture commodity there are corresponding Christian conservative versions, from Upward Basketball (as an alternative to Parks and Recreation basketball) and AWANAs (as an alternative to Boy and Girl Scouts). But the term subculture fails to account for its dominance within mainstream politics and popular culture. In many ways, the CR counterculture has mastered the biblical commandment of being in the world but not of the world. That suspicion of “the world” is heavily emphasized throughout the CR landscape. Academia is suspect and part of a liberal agenda so CR families are encouraged to send their children to Liberty, Patrick Henry, or Regents University. Science and public schools are depicted as deception factories, so pulling children out of public school and educating them in the ideological security of a Christian household is a safer choice.

In many ways, this counter culture is as prevalent as the “world” it seeks to escape. It is not so much insular as clearly delineated with known calls and answers and loosely coded language indicating who and who is not a member of the tribe. CR culture emphasizes obedience and homogeneity as high values, each being dependent upon the other. Part of how it sets its demarcations is through a carefully outlined alternative history. The alternative history of the CR should not be viewed as particularistic like so much analysis of the movement. Instead, it should be viewed holistically as both a cultural construction and movement mobilization tool. It constructs culture by imaging certain identities – not ideas, per se, but identities – as more legitimate in history. It functions as a mobilization tool because it takes that privileged concept of identity and uses it to re-imagine equal treatment as persecution. When Christians are not exempted from certain laws, such as state inspection for daycare facilities or distribution of pharmaceuticals, the response includes accusations of religious persecution. These accusations seem particularly odd when viewing the prevalence and clout of the Christian identity in American culture and politics. A dispensation from certain regulation that other similarly situated groups should not receive because they are the true and real identity is what is actually being advocated. Not recognizing that specialty demotes them to the rank and file of the world and denies them exclusivity and privilege, a privilege that can only be justified if history has thus far favored their identity.

Rhetorical patterns and messages that repeat – often verbatim – among a set of political actors reveal the assumptions behind the advocacy. This section looks at specific examples of CR messaging to reveal democratic assumptions. Like all groups, the CR

engages in message leveling in which some things are worded for a general, perhaps persuadable, audience while others are intended to be internal. The terminology Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, uses when appearing on *Hardball* differs from that which is used in emails to the FRC's list serve. Communication among elites and directed toward supporters is often more revelatory than carefully produced materials for general consumption. Speeches at the Faith and Freedom Conference (formerly Value Voters Summit) at which attendance is strictly monitored and recording prohibited sound remarkably different. So do the conversations on the Janet Mefford show and American Family Radio. But every now and then a CR leader will use internal messaging in a public forum.

In some ways it is difficult to establish a rhetorical pattern. Out-of-context sound bites or selective quote mining leaves ample room for manipulation. To minimize that potential, messaging is contextualized and shown to repeat over different media. In this section, references are used to demonstrate that a view of democracy is prevalent within a movement and that it differs from the assumptions of liberal democracy. What CR leaders think America is or how democracy should operate is illiberal while still minimally democratic. Sometimes the contrast is blatant, such as rhetoric concerning God judging entire nations. Other times it is subtle, in which seemingly democratic sentiments, such as "worshipping God as one chooses," take on an exclusionary and intolerant tone toward non-Christian faiths.

Here, to introduce the analysis of specific messaging, Janet Mefford, host of the popular conservative Christian *Janet Mefford Show* and former reporter for The Dallas

Morning News, describes the differences between two ideas of democracy. One is clearly a Christodemocratic framework in which democracy requires Christian orthodoxy and the original intent of the republic was a Christian populace. The other, seemingly alien to her, is a democracy in which tolerance and equality are elevated as civic morals above obedience to her faith.

Yeah, we are in the mist of revolution. We're in the midst of an absolute revolution and I don't think there has been much thought given to what will come of it at least from the side that supports this revolution. They're remaking all of society in their own image: 'I have decided what is fair what is just what is right' and in a democracy it has to be about what man wants and the highest good is tolerance and the highest good is equality. Tolerance and equality, that's what we get in a democratic society when Christianity has been stripped from the equation. See, even our founders understood (I was talking some good friends about this yesterday after church) even our founders understood that the system they had put into place had no chance of standing long-term were it not for the virtue, the *Christian* virtue of the people who were under that Constitution. And when you lose virtue, you lose the ability to self-correct to repent to put your mind and your morals and your ideas under the authority of God himself. Then anything goes! And when the majority in the country are on board with the revolution the people who were in the minority Are out of luck... maybe" (Mefferd 2013).

Mefferd describes the contrast between Christo- and liberal democracy. A Christodemocracy is one designed by and intended for Christians. A liberal democracy elevates equality and tolerance regardless of one's religious identity. Mefferd's description is rather clear, but not all CR materials are quite so obvious. Examining the various ways the CR gets its message out reveals core Christodemocratic assumptions again and again. The following looks at specific examples from a variety of sources to establish rhetorical patterns to reveal these assumptions.

**CR RHETORIC CONDEMNS STATE NEUTRALITY TOWARD RELIGION
AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES BY CLAIMING THAT THE ROLE OF THE
GOVERNMENT IS TO ENACT CHRISTIAN MORALITY.**

There is probably no bigger question a political theorist can answer than what is the role of the state. What is the government there to do? It is too complicated a question for a simple answer. Rawls thought the government should intervene in markets and influence the distribution of resources to facilitate individualism while Locke thought the way to facilitate individualism was for the state to protect life and property but otherwise leave people alone. There is no single answer within the branches of liberal democratic thought. Likewise, there is no single answer in CR messaging. There's a strong libertarian strand when it comes to the economy and gun control. The Tea Party Movement overlaps considerably with the CR. The CR is illiberal, however, when it comes to personal morality. Particularly when addressing anything related to sex, the CR believes the government should play a role in assuring morality. But, it is not a vague sense of morality but a scripturally inspired legislation of a parsing and interpretation of Christian teachings.

Former Senator Rick Santorum captured this sentiment concisely while campaigning in the New Hampshire Primary in 2012. Part of his stump speech included warnings of the advent of Sharia law in the United States. "We need to define it and say

what it is. And it is evil. Sharia law is incompatible with American jurisprudence and our Constitution” (Tenety 2011). But Santorum did not claim the supposed imposition of Sharia violated American jurisprudence and the Constitution because of the Establishment Clause. Rather, Santorum disagreed with the source of Sharia law, Islam, in favor of, in his view, a more legitimate source for American law. He describes the United States as “a country that is given rights under the God, under God, not any god, the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob, and that God that gave us rights also gave us a responsibility, and laws, by which our civil laws have to comport with. A higher law. God's law” (*Rick Santorum Speaks About A Higher Law & Religious Liberty* 2011).

Civil law must comport with God’s law. Santorum assumes a West in which the Thirty Years War and other bloody conflicts over sectarian dominance never occurred. He is concerned with the “right” version of Christianity winning formalized power rather than the civil value of state neutrality toward religion. His argument derives more from Augustine’s *City of God*, in which temporal governments are secondary to a more eternal, transcendent spiritual warfare and princes submit to the authority of priests. He offers a view of the United States as a democracy in which a majority of citizens are assumed to be Christian and Christian theological traditions are assumed to have more influence culturally and politically. Christian religious leaders are expected to hold formal positions or have greater influence on political outcomes. And Christian theological arguments are more heavily weighted in political discourse.

In Santorum’s democracy, Church authority was never challenged and the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 and the British Toleration Act of 1689 did not divorce church from

state. His vision of democracy does not contain the liberalism these historical events preceded. The “revolution” Mefferd describes in the quote above, in which the church’s authority was replaced with civic morals like tolerance and equality, is real. Only, that revolution occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries. Liberal democracy as a normative framework derived from Western Christian history *and* the rejection of formalized church authority. Jefferson reflected this development in his Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom when he wrote “That our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry” (Jefferson 2012, 36). Jefferson was so proud of that statute that he had it, along with the First Amendment, listed on his tombstone (Jefferson 2012, 112). The Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses in the First Amendment concisely contain the division between public and private that is a paramount attribute in liberal democracy. Whereas Robert George rightly (though misleadingly) asserts that “separation of church and state” never appears in the U.S. Constitution, the division between public and private spheres is evident throughout (*Robert P. George on the Separation of Church and State* 2013).

In March, 2013, FRC’s Pat Fagan and Tony Perkins appeared on an episode of *Washington Watch* to comment on *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, the 1972 case that overturned a Massachusetts law banning the distribution of contraceptives to unmarried people. They both referenced the case as a precursor to what they view as current moral decline and sexual anarchy. Fagan argued that the Court decided incorrectly in the case because “single people [do not] have the right to engage in sexual intercourse.” Perkins agreed that there was no “right” to have sex outside of marriage, not in natural law or under the

American Constitution. Fagan explained, “Society never gave young people that right, functioning societies don’t do that, they stop it, they punish it, they corral people, they shame people, they do whatever” (Tashman 2013a).

Now sure, single people are inclined to push the fences and jump over them, particularly if they are in love with each other and going onto marriage, but they always knew they were doing wrong. In this case the Supreme Court said, take those fences away they can do whatever they like, and they didn’t address at all what status children had, what status the commons had, by commons I mean the rest of the United States, have they got any standing in this case? They just said no, singles have the right to contraceptives we mean singles have the right to have sex outside of marriage. Brushing aside millennia, thousands and thousands of years of wisdom, tradition, culture and setting in motion what we have. – Fagan, *Washington Watch* (Tashman 2013a)

Many people, understandably, associate the CR with opposition to gay rights. But, its issues and vision go deeper than that. CR leaders think the law should enforce Christian morality and society at large should shame those that do not comply. LGBT people are convenient boogiemens to the CR. They inspire aversion in CR supporters. But examining the rhetoric of the CR is more than pointing out how and why it opposes marriage equality. To these Christian conservatives, there is no right to have sex between straight people outside of marriage and the law should punish it.

In *Lawrence v Texas*, commonly called the Texas sodomy case, Texas’ sodomy prohibitions were reviewed by the Supreme Court because two men were arrested for having sex in the privacy of their home. The Court struck down sodomy laws because community moral disapproval was not a rational basis for a law and the men’s due process rights and equal protection rights were violated because the Texas statute was written and enforced only against gay people. The FRC, like many CR groups, filed an *Amicus Curiae* brief in favor of the anti-sodomy law. Most news coverage of CR

participation focused on the FRC's belief that moral disapproval of homosexuality could be legislated and gay people could be arrested inside their homes for having sex. But, their amicus brief did not apply simply to gay people. Many straight people, even conservative Christians, might be surprised by the degree of control of sexual behavior the FRC advocated before the Supreme Court. Their amicus brief read:

These premises are, first, the sexual intimacies of married couples are constitutionally protected; non- and extra-marital sexual acts are not. Second, marriage is a relation between a man and a woman. In addition to the main premises, some other premises are implied or are needed to hold up the judgment against the argument that discrimination between acts of same-sex and opposite-sex couples is impermissible. These other premises are mostly uncontroversial facts, which reasonable legislators could surely accept as true. They concern the number and range of sexually active male-female relationships - within and outside marriage - in Texas, and the hazards of investigating and prosecuting those sexual acts. Another premise is this: States may discourage the "evils" - as this Court said in *Eisenstadt* - of sexual acts outside of marriage by means up to and including criminal prohibition (Bradley and George 2003, 1); (Kennedy 2003).

According to the FRC, there is no Constitutional right to have sex outside of marriage and laws can and should prohibit it.

II. SEXUAL INTIMACIES WITHIN MARRIAGE ARE CONSTITUTIONALLY PROTECTED; NON- AND EXTRA-MARITAL SEXUAL ACTS ARE NOT AND MAY BE DISCOURAGED. The *Griswold* opinions steadily refer to the marital "relationship," to marital "privacy," and to marital "intimacy" (and "intimacies"). The Court's explicit focus was not a particular sex act, or contraceptives as such. The majority opinions even abstain from express judgments – favorable or unfavorable – about the moral worth of contraception. *Griswold* is best understood as standing for the married couple's right of non-interference, or immunity, for all their consensual, private sexual acts. This understanding of *Griswold*, if not the only possible one, is surely one that reasonable Texas legislators could hold (Bradley and George 2003, 7); (Kennedy 2003).

Rights regarding sex and privacy are reserved for married heterosexual couples. The FRC believes gay sex should be criminally prosecuted. They argued that in their brief before the Supreme Court and representatives of the FRC have said that publically. On the Feb.

3, 2010 of Hardball with Chris Matthews on MSNBC, host Chris Matthews had the following exchange with guest Peter Sprigg of the FRC:

Matthews: Let me ask you Peter, so you think people choose to be gay.

Sprigg: People do not choose to be have same sex attractions, but they do choose to engage in homosexual conduct. And that conduct also which incidentally is against the law within the military. It violates the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It doesn't make any sense for us to be actively recruiting people who are going to violate the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Matthews: Do you think we should outlaw gay behavior?

Sprigg: Well I think certainly...

Matthews: I'm just asking you, should we outlaw gay behavior?

Sprigg: I think that the Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* which overturned the sodomy laws in this country was wrongly decided. I think there would be a place for criminal sanctions against homosexual behavior.

Matthews: So we should outlaw gay behavior?

Sprigg: Yes. (Matthews 2010)

This is more than protecting a definition of marriage or introducing religion into the public square. And really, it is more than merely anti-gay. It amounts to criminalizing disobedience to the Bible. On March 28, 2013, a caller to Bryan Fischer's radio program argued that there are many sins in the Bible, such as adultery, lying, and viewing pornography that the CR does not try to make illegal. Fischer explained to the caller that the CR does want to make those things illegal. He went on to explain that the laws of the Bible should be the basis for laws in democracies and that there should be laws against extra-marital sex, adultery, viewing pornography, and masturbation (*Fischer: Adultery And Pornography "Ought To Be Against The Law"* 2013). Previously on *Rightly Concerned* in an article titled *Will the Supreme Court Disenfranchise The Entire United*

States?, Fischer wrote that the legitimate “exercise of democracy may only lead to Christian ends” (Fischer 2013). “The entire United States” referred to those that oppose same-sex marriage, particularly Proposition 8 in California. Fischer explained his reasoning by saying,

If the Supreme Court overturns [the Defense of Marriage Act], it will be the end of representative government in the United States. [...] For the Supreme Court to dump DOMA in a landfill would mean, from a practical standpoint, that we just ought to close down Congress and turn everything over to our black-robed overlords.

If the Supreme Court overturns Prop 8, it will be the end of democracy in the United States. For the Supreme Court to dump Prop 8 in the landfill would mean, from a practical standpoint, that we ought to officially disenfranchise every American voter - since they will have in effect lost the right to have their votes count for anything anyway - and turn everything - even state policy - over to a nine-member Politburo which never, ever has to answer to the people over whom they exercise such dictatorial power (Fischer 2013).

The CR views the role of the state as enacting and enforcing biblical law. People select representatives and legislative bodies write laws, but those laws should be guided by Christian teachings. Even in a Constitutional system in which the Constitution protects against intrusion from the state into private property and promises no prohibition of expression, the CR argues that there is no right to sex outside of marriage. This is much more than anti-gay and attempts more than “protecting marriage.” It is fundamentally incompatible with the assumptions of liberal democracy. There is nothing more illiberal than regulating the sexual behavior of citizens with criminal penalties.

In *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*, Jon A. Shields notes that CR activists, particularly pro-life activists, educated non-elites on the norms of political behavior within a liberal democracy. Two of these norms are the practice of civility and

respect and the rejection of appeals to theology (Shields 2009). Although there is a tendency to utilize these norms, the examples he uses and the rhetoric examined in this project reveal that these are strategic more than substantive. The CR does deploy “secular” arguments, but only because it has learned that arguing from a strictly sectarian vantage point does not persuade the general public. The Ruth Institute’s *77 Non-Religious Reasons to Support Man/Woman Marriage* is described by Jennifer Roback-Morse as a quick resource for arguments (*77 Non-religious Reasons to Support Man / Woman Marriage* 2012). The guide is strategic, used to convince non-believers, but the motivation and thinking behind it is still faith based. Roback-Morse has repeatedly revealed that the intent of her activism is explicitly Catholic. On the July 6, 2012 episode of *Catholic Answers Live*, Roback-Morse explained that homosexuality, not just same-sex marriage, is “intrinsically disordered” and that society can never accept it because “the church is clear” (Roback-Morse 2012). Shields’ analysis of CR materials is largely limited to things that intended for mass consumption. It does not sufficiently examine the words of CR leaders when they talk amongst themselves. There is a secular strategy, but it is still undergirded by the illiberal assumption that law must reflect Christian morality exclusively.

There are also those within the CR that do not approve of the use of secular argumentation. In *Bracketing Morality — The Marginalization of Moral Argument in the Same-Sex Marriage Debate*, Al Mohler argues that the CR is losing the debate about same-sex marriage precisely because it is forfeiting a moral and theological argument.

This is not to say that those who now defend the natural and venerable definition of marriage deny the existence of a moral argument, nor to imply that they are anything less than fully in agreement with the historic and scriptural assessment of the Christian church that homosexual acts and relationships are sinful. We must, however, note that the current intellectual environment has forced them to leave the moral issue behind — far behind.

Eric Teetsel, executive director of the Manhattan Declaration, also contributed a column just as the Supreme Court was to hear the same-sex marriage cases last week. Teetsel wrote in defense of marriage as the union of a man and a woman, arguing that society has an interest in defending the historic definition of the marital union as “the first institution of society” and “the society that creates and nurtures the next generation.”

But Teetsel’s column, published in *USA Today*, also included this statement: “This understanding requires no judgment about the morality of homosexuality.” He went on to argue that many non-marital relationships, including same-sex romantic couples, “are worthy of rights and relationships,” but the state’s interest in marriage is its ability to create and nurture children. But, he insists, this concern “requires no judgment about the morality of homosexuality.”

The same approach is reflected in the very best book defending natural marriage from a natural law perspective. *What is Marriage?* by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George is a brilliant defense of marriage and a tour de force in terms of intellectual argument. The book is actually an extension of an important article by the three authors that originally appeared in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* (Mohler 2013a).

Mohler accurately notes the use of secular argumentation in court and popular media to argue against same-sex marriage. But he is also honest about what lies behind that argumentation. The secularism is for show. It is useful in arguments before the Supreme Court. But, Mohler criticizes absence of a faith-based argument. Peter LaBarbera echoes Mohler’s criticism by saying,

To say that the struggle to preserve marriage from being homosexualized requires “no judgment about the morality of homosexuality” is pure folly and a recipe for defeat. It is a negation of common sense, like telling pro-lifers not to make the case for the humanity of the unborn in arguing against pro-abortion laws. By pretending that the homosexual “marriage” debate is not really about homosexuality, well-intended people are actually advancing the godless crusade to normalize immoral same-sex behavior and relationships in society. (A neutral response to sin — or a reluctance to confront it — by religious people who know better actually propels sin forward.) We need to rebuild the moral consensus against homosexual behavior, but you cannot do that by running away from the issue (LaBarbera 2013a).

The assumption behind the activism is that government should reflect explicitly Christian morality. The way a political outcome is pursued involves a strategy. In this example, the strategy of concealing the religious motivation in favor of secular argumentation is examined. Shields is correct in noting that many in the CR favor a secular strategy. That does not diminish, or even address, the underlying normative assumption about democracy.

**THE CR BELIEVES A POSITIVE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY SHOULD
SUPERSEDE A NEGATIVE LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE IN A COMPETITION
OF RIGHTS.**

Because “Christian” is legitimate American identity and there is no right to do something immoral, CR activists frequently assert that a positive Christian identity supersedes a negative liberty of conscience. In general, if there is a conflict between one’s faith practice and one’s ability to not follow a faith practice, the former wins if and only if the faith associated with the practice is Christianity. Failure to permit Christians to discriminate in goods and services or hiring decisions is a violation of that person’s liberty of conscience.

The Alliance Defending Freedom (formerly Alliance Defense Fund, ADF) released a pamphlet titled *How Same-Sex Marriage Harms You* that was part of a direct mail campaign before oral arguments in the two same-sex marriage cases before the Supreme Court in 2013. The pamphlet lists five examples of harm that came to Christians after same-sex marriage or civil unions were legalized.

1. **Elaine Huguenin, a New Mexico photographer, received death threats and was fined thousands of dollars for declining to use her artistic talents to photograph a same-sex couple’s commitment ceremony.**
2. **Blaine Adamson, a Kentucky shirt shop owner, is being investigated by the City of Lexington for declining to print t-shirts promoting homosexual behavior.**
3. **Donald Mendell, a Maine high school guidance counselor, was threatened with losing his career for publicly sharing his belief that same-sex “marriage” would not positively impact the education of Maine’s children.**

4. **Emily Brooker, a student at Missouri State University, was ordered by her professor to write a letter to the Missouri legislature expressing her support of same-sex adoption.**
5. **Canyon Ferry Road Baptist Church members were harassed by Montana state officials for taking a stand on marriage (Alliance Defending Freedom 2013).**

The examples are vaguely outlined for a good reason. Examples 1, 2 and 5 do not involve legal consequences, but legal consequences are implied. In Elaine Huguenin case, the photographer refused a public accommodation based on a religious viewpoint. That hasn't been legal for a long time and is not a product of legalized recognition for same-sex unions. A devout Jewish shop owner can refuse service to a Muslim customer. A devout Catholic waitress cannot refuse to bring food to a couple "living in sin." Similarly, the Kentucky shirt shop owner refused service to customers based on his religious opinions. The ADF description sounds like he was asked to produce shirt depicting explicit sex. He was asked to print t-shirts for an event hosted by a gay community center and refused because of the identities of the potential customers.

Examples 3 and 4 relate to curriculum and professional requirements. None of these examples represent actual harm. It's the suggestion of harm. But that suggestion is only effective if one believes Christians, and Christians only, should be given a pass to disobey certain laws or graduation requirements because of their faith. This is a deeply ingrained assumption in CR activism. A suspension of religious liberty occurs automatically when a Christian privilege is not afforded.

A story of a bed-and-breakfast in Illinois is frequently covered in Christian news services but ignored by mainstream journalism. In Illinois, the Religious Freedom

Protection and Civil Union Act of 2011 added sexual orientation to the state's non-discrimination laws. The Act has its cumbersome title because it specifies an exemption for religious institutions. A church (used generally), designated by its tax-exempt status, is not required to hire people of other faiths or people it views as contradicting its faith teachings. For example, a Muslim employer is not required to hire a non-Muslim, a divorced person, a lesbian, or anybody he feels violates his faith's teachings. However, if a Muslim owns a business that is not tax exempt and offers goods and services to the general population, he cannot discriminate based on religion, sex, race, national origin, disability, or now, sexual orientation. If he serves eggs at a counter he has to serve eggs to any customer regardless of his or her identity.

Jim Walder is the owner of Timber Creek Bed-and-Breakfast on Paxton Illinois. He is a Christian and father of five who believes his faith prohibits homosexuality. Because of his faith, he refuses to rent rooms to same-sex couples or allow his premises to be used for civil union ceremonies (legal in Illinois) or receptions following civil union ceremonies. After originally being allowed to schedule his reception, Timber Creek B&B cancelled the reservation of Todd Wathen after learning that his partner was male. Wathen and his partner wrote a letter about their experience to the Illinois Attorney General and filed a complaint with the State Department of Human Rights.

The story of Timber Creek is used ubiquitously in conservative Christian press as an example of the danger of enacting same-sex marriage, civil union laws, or any non-discrimination laws that apply to gays and lesbians. Covering the story for his group, Americans for Truth about Homosexuality, President Peter LaBaBera said:

Jim Walder, who with his wife Beth is owner of the Timber Creek Bed & Breakfast in Paxton, Illinois [is] the latest victim of the homosexualist legal-political agenda in the United States.

The well-financed, big-city “gay” agenda is rolling into small town USA, and it will crush religious freedom in its path if it is not defeated. Paxton is a quiet farming community in central Illinois with a population of 4,600 – and here it is embroiled in the “culture war” battle of our day: whether homosexuals’ supposed “right” to have their sexual lifestyle and relationships affirmed supersedes moral-minded citizens’ First Amendment right to disagree with sexual immorality. (And their right to live out their beliefs) (LaBarbera, Peter 2011).

Laurie Higgins of the Illinois Family Institute wrote:

The desire and efforts of parents to protect their children from exposure to ceremonies and celebrations on their property that honor conduct which God finds detestable are noble desires and efforts that must be supported. I have said many times that there is no greater threat to First Amendment speech and religious rights and parental rights than that posed by the movement to normalize homosexuality. We need look no further than Springfield and Paxton, Illinois for proof.

Arguing that business owners are legally prohibited from making moral distinctions among volitional behaviors undermines the religious liberty of people of faith. Homosexuals and their ideological allies seek to blur the critical distinction between non-volitional, non-behavioral conditions and volitional acts. Whereas it is unethical to condemn and treat people differently because of non-volitional, non-behavioral conditions like eye color, skin color, or disability, it is not only permissible but wise and necessary to make moral distinctions among volitional acts.

How can Christians live out their faith if they are legally required to support with their time, their labor, their goods, and their services behaviors that they know to be an offense to God? This country was founded on a commitment to protect religious liberty — something that homosexual activists believe should now be subordinate to sexual liberty (Higgins, Laurie 2011).

Higgins makes a distinction between mutable behavior and an immutable identity trait. In the article she claims there is no such thing as sexual orientation, only homosexual behavior.

Homosexuality is not an ontological condition analogous or equivalent to race and, therefore, should never have been included in anti-discrimination policies in the first place. Race or skin color is 100 percent heritable and carries no behavioral implications that are legitimate objects of moral assessment, whereas homosexuality is not biologically determined and is centrally defined by subjective experiences and volitional behavior that is open to moral assessment (Higgins, Laurie 2011).

But, religious identity is neither immutable nor perfectly analogous to race. Even though religion was the first thing to be covered under Illinois non-discrimination laws, it does not make her list of legitimate classifications. People convert to different religions all the time. To Higgins, the “right” to live out one’s faith trumpets the right to not follow a business owner’s faith. There is a positive liberty of conscience to practice one’s (Christian) faith but no negative liberty of conscience to not obey another’s (Christian) faith. She makes an odd distinction between “religious liberty” and “sexual liberty” as if both are not related to personal identity and beliefs.

When she says, “America was founded on religious liberty,” she means “Christian” exclusively. When she claims that non-discrimination laws should not cover mutable traits, she does not mean Christian. There is no right to be wrong, no right to come to alternative conclusions about God’s will or scriptural interpretation. There is only the right for Christians to “protect their children from exposure to ceremonies and celebrations on their property that honor conduct which God finds detestable.” There is no liberty of conscience to be that which Laurie Higgins finds detestable because she is a member of the legitimate American identity. Those that challenge her privilege are internal “others” that need to know America’s history.

The Christian Coalition of America covered the story similarly on its website saying:

It's bad enough for a state to grant any sort of legal recognition to homosexual relationships, but it is quite another to threaten legal action (and someone's livelihood) for refusing to accommodate it. But this is what follows when you give in to the basic premise of legal recognition to begin with. In other words, it's not, as gay marriage supporters would have people to believe, all about their "right" to love whomever they wish, because attendant to granting any such "right" is

(eventually) a demand on the rest of the public. Legal recognition is de facto government approval. And that results in someone else's rights, in this case religious rights, being discriminated against (Christian Coalition 2011).

The law does not require Walder to affirm homosexuality as a social good or perform the civil union ceremony. It does not prohibit Walder from attending Church, praying, identifying as a Christian, reading his Bible, proselytizing at his home, workplace or in public. The law does not prohibit Walder from writing articles and books condemning homosexuality. Nor does it keep Walder from speaking at churches across the country on opposing the sin of homosexuality, as he now frequently does. The government of Illinois did not shut down the CR websites that wrote extensively on the subject nor prosecute any of the inflammatory things said about homosexuals in that coverage. And Wathen and his partner never filed suit in any court, despite what some CR organizations claimed. Instead, they filed a complaint with the State Department of Human Rights, which then informed the bed-and-breakfast that if it offers receptions to opposite-sex couples it must also offer receptions to same-sex couples. That same department would also enforce the same law if a business ever denied Walden service for being Christian. And yet, CR activists repeatedly use this story as an example of the loss of religious freedom that automatically accompanies gay rights.

[W]hat keeps churning through my head is why 4,000 or 8,000 conservatives didn't show up in Springfield to oppose the civil union bill or the disastrous anti-bullying bill that will ultimately result in elementary school children being exposed to resources that affirm homosexuality and cross-dressing as normative and good. When will the loss of speech rights, religious liberties, and parental rights rouse the righteous ire of conservatives (Higgins, Laurie 2011)?

Calling it “the beginning of the end for religious liberty in America,” Life Site News, a conservative Christian news website, reported, “Bed and breakfasts have been targeted by homosexual activists where owners have met with legal challenges, fines, and harassment for refusing to host homosexual couples.” (“Gay couple files complaint against Christian B&B owners for refusing civil union ceremony | LifeSiteNews.com” n.d.)

But, the use of this line of argument is not limited to a B&B in Illinois. A similar story of a wedding photographer in New Mexico (Jalsevac n.d.) and a bakery in Oregon (Associated 2013) are used by The National Organization for Marriage and Americans for Truth About Homosexuality to exemplify the threat gay rights pose to liberty of conscience.

Religious liberty and freedom of conscience (i.e., the freedom to oppose homosexuality) will be repressed by the state in the name of “gay rights”; Despite [bills] being amended to protect churches and religious institutions, business owners — even devout Christians — who cater to weddings (such as banquet hall owners and photographers) could be forced to use their facilities or expertise to celebrate homosexual “marriages” (LaBarbera 2013b).

This rhetoric extends beyond gay rights. Any requirement that a Christian “violate” his or her faith by adhering to a neutral legal requirement is handled with the same argumentation. A prominent example of this is seen in the recent news about the craft store chain, Hobby Lobby. Hobby Lobby has refused to provide healthcare coverage to its employees that includes birth control, citing religious reasons. This violates the *Affordable Care Act*. The scenario pits the ability of Hobby Lobby’s owners to live out their faith by denying birth control against their employees negative right of conscience to not follow the owners’ faith.

In an interview with the Inter Collegiate Studies Institute to promote his new book, *Conscience and It's Enemies: Confronting the dogmas of our age*, Robert George says the following:

Contemporary left liberals are hardly relativists! I often wish they were. They are moralists—moralists on a mission. The mission is to shape political and social life, and, to the extent possible, individual belief, in line with their passionately held moral convictions. One sees this everywhere, beginning with the war waged by the Obama administration on the Catholic Church—the largest and most important institution whose moral teachings stand in conflict with left liberal beliefs about the status of nascent human life, the nature and meaning of marriage, and religious liberty (George 2013).

In this quote and throughout the interview, George seeks to attach the same religious zeal and fundamentalism to contemporary liberals that is usually applied to Christian conservatives. But, in characterizing the agenda of his opponents he sets up numerous straw men. He does not distinguish between requiring a person to believe abortion is a social good and requiring that an employer offer contraception coverage from its health insurance provider. To George, allowing employees to live by their own beliefs about contraception is no different than a law requiring employers to support abortion. His argument follows that a law prohibiting an employer from requiring employees to accept a Catholic view on nascent life is the same thing as legally prohibiting Catholicism.

The right to discriminate in goods and services also trumps the right not to be discriminated against if the party that seeks to discriminate constitutes the ‘right’ and ‘good’ group identity. Because their ideas are derived from “historical morality” and the “Judeo-Christian tradition”, their efforts to discriminate are not discrimination at all but efforts to preserve the American identity and an “authentic liberty of conscious” (George

2002). According to George, non-discrimination laws effectively criminalize Christianity *not* because they make Christian beliefs, rituals, gatherings, speech, sacred texts or evangelizing illegal, but because they do not allow Christians to preserve their privilege in society.

There is no “right” to violate Christian teachings because rights come from (the exclusively Christian) God. So those that want to discriminate based on their faith identity are not violating a negative liberty of conscious (a right to not follow the majority faith) but actually protecting religious liberty (i.e. the supremacy of their religious identity). Failure to recognize that supremacy – the correct source of rights, the correct American identity – is, according to George and others, itself a violation of liberty of conscience.

This is clearly an argument for Christian privilege. George dismisses the idea of white privilege in American society as absurd and not at all comparable to Christian privilege. The distinction though is unclear. According to George, discrimination against those that do not adhere to authentic Christian teachings is not the same thing as discrimination against immutable traits such as race. To George, and many in the CR, Christians who want exemptions from public accommodations laws as they relate to “Judeo-Christian morality” are not morally equivalent to Christians who want exemptions from public accommodations laws in terms of race because the former is a legitimate exercise of religious faith while the latter is not.

The tradition of Christianity in America and the nebulous, undefined “Judeo-Christian tradition” are frequently used by George to justify Christians’ right to

discriminate against those deemed to be immoral or Christians' right to require their employees to adhere to their beliefs on birth control. But, the U.S. has just as strong a tradition of white privilege. The argument that Christian men founded America to be in a covenant-relationship with God for the realization of Christianity is historically dubious. But, the observation that voting rights were restricted to white Europeans or that white Americans have enjoyed an accumulation of privilege is inarguable. George never reconciles why tradition justifies Christian privilege but does not justify white privilege, only saying that the comparison between the two is "absurd".

It is unknown, but predictable, how CR activists would react to a Muslim business owner requiring his female employees to wear a hijab at work. Although the Quran's specifications that women remain covered are ambiguous, the Hadith specifies that at least some form of covering is required after a woman has reached puberty. There are varying interpretations of the Quran, but not all Christians believe birth control is prohibited either. The question is whether a Muslim employer, who does believe the hijab is required, can compel his non-Muslim female employees to cover their heads. In this hypothetical, the employees may not be Muslim or may be Muslim women that disagree with a religious prescription to wear a hijab. It is unlikely that Robert George would then argue that it was a violation of a Muslim's liberty of conscience to require his employees to adhere to a tenet of his faith or face termination. Requiring obedience to a particular religious teaching in order to compete in the marketplace would probably be labeled a violation of one's religious liberty if the religious teaching came from a religion other than Christianity. If such a scenario ever existed, CR activists would likely see the

employer's imposition of faith as evidence of creeping Islam or the coming of Sharia Law.

Some Christians are opposed to the use of birth control. They equate certain contraceptives with murder. But, the view that the morning after pill kills a unique human being cannot be distinguished from a specific faith teaching. A person's employment should no more rely on an employee's willingness to mirror her employer's religious beliefs than it should rely on her faith identity. George does not argue that employers should be able to base hiring decision on religious identity in the interest of conscious protections but does argue that the benefits packages offered to employees match the employer's religious beliefs in order to protect conscience.

Similarly, George is an outspoken opponent of ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that has been introduced in Congress nearly every session since 1974. ENDA would make it illegal to discriminate in employment decisions based on sexual orientation or gender expression. George argues that ENDA violates an employer's ability to live by his or her beliefs. George also argues that Christian business owners should be able to discriminate against those that "practice homosexual behavior" in the interest of "authentic liberty of conscience."

In *A Charitable Endeavor*, the Archbishop of Denver Charles J. Chaput addresses a critical type of organization, groups that are not defined solely as ministries but do have a religious affiliation or mission? Should the government allow "faith-based" businesses and charities to use religious teachings to justify discrimination in employment, prohibit such discrimination regardless of religious affiliation, or allow discrimination only in the

absence public funding? The text of ENDA, for example, states that it does not apply to religious organizations based on their tax-filing status. It is worthwhile to question what qualifies for that description. Surely churches are exempt. Are Methodist hospitals (Chaput 2009)?

Chaput argues that not allowing organizations with a religious mission to discriminate in employment decisions violates equal protection because it does not afford these entities the same right to self-define as secular groups. However, what he qualifies as disallowing is the denial of public funds. Chaput argues that charities should take taxpayer money but refuse to employ or serve certain taxpayers.

His primary example is the story of Catholic adoption agencies that were “forced” to shut down after same-sex marriage became legal in Massachusetts. The tale of the closed adoption agencies is a popular narrative in anti-gay campaigns. Recently it has been used in publications in support of Proposition 8 in California, against Referendum 71 in Washington, and in favor of Referendum 1 in Maine. The story is simple. When gay people achieve a political objective, religious people inevitably suffer. Gay activists won something therefore religious groups lost something.

It is easy to see why one would worry about a loss of religious liberty from this story. But, Massachusetts did not shut down charities that failed to serve or employ gay people. Catholic adoption agencies in Massachusetts were faced with a dilemma; employ gay people in customer service positions and place children in same-sex led households or lose public funding. They chose to shut down rather than compete in the free-market without government support on March 10, 2006.

During a recent episode of Maine Watch on the Maine Public Broadcasting Network, an anti-marriage activist said that Catholic Charities in Boston was forced to stop its adoption services because Massachusetts allows same-sex couples to marry. While the claim has been repeated across Maine many times, it is not true. This is a shameful distortion of what actually happened. I should know. I was the chairman of the board of directors for Catholic Charities of Boston (Meade 2012).

Peter Meade continued to explain the difference:

First and foremost, the Church hierarchy was telling us to ignore the best interests of the children we were trying to place. But just as important, the bishops were telling us to ignore decades-old anti-discrimination laws. Catholic Charities had signed a contract with the state and accepted taxpayer money to provide adoption services for hard to place children. Some of these kids were older, had behavioral issues or chronic medical conditions. When organizations accept taxpayer dollars, they have to follow anti-discrimination laws that are in place to make sure everyone is treated equally. If we excluded qualified families simply because they were gay or lesbian, we would violate those laws. When taxpayers are footing the bill, you can't discriminate against people. It is part of the contract to do the work. The decision had nothing to do with marriage, and the conflict would likely have occurred regardless of whether same-sex couples could legally marry. The board reacted strongly to the Vatican's order, voting 42-0 against excluding gay and lesbian families from adoption services. From the board's point of view, the decision was wrong for children and a violation of longstanding law (Meade 2012).

Other religious affiliated adoption agencies in Massachusetts remained in business and either changed their prohibition against same-sex couples or forfeited taxpayer dollars. The Catholic Church in Massachusetts advocated for a voter referendum that would overturn same-sex marriage. When that measure failed to make it on the ballot they closed their adoption agencies. Arguably they could have tried to remain in business. The timing of their decision to close their agencies suggests the decision was based, at least in part, on the desire to manufacture a political narrative in which gay rights are equated with shutting down religious charities. Mormon charities, such as the LDS Social Services of Massachusetts, Inc. in the town of Nashua,

discriminate against gay couples but remain in business after forfeiting some of their public money.

When these critical details are included in the story of adoption agencies in Massachusetts, it becomes difficult to sustain the argument that gay rights groups force religious groups to close their doors. It is a useful argument politically but the facts are not so simple. Following the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts no church was required to marry same-sex couples or preach that such unions are equivalent to their opposite-sex counterparts. At a personal level, no one was compelled to change his or her beliefs. Private belief was not the issue. It was the distribution of public funds to a private entity with a public function.

The CR presents this clash-of-rights argument repeatedly. It has used it in Colorado and Illinois, two places where same-sex marriage is on the ballot. It uses it in the case of Hobby Lobby, which claims it can omit itself from a healthcare law based on an assertion of faith. It makes this case because it is rhetorically effective and some may actually believe it. A combination of the assumptions of Christodemocracy embolden them to claim a more legitimate identity and believe that disallowing discrimination is itself an oppression of Truth.

**CR LEADERS DELEGITIMIZE THE IDENTITIES OF OTHER CITIZENS
USING A FALSE HISTORICAL NATURE TO DEPICT ONLY THEMSELVES
AS AUTHENTICALLY AMERICAN.**

Santorum's assertion of civil law needing to comport with God's law in his quote above is not a slip of the tongue on the campaign trail. The sentiment is ubiquitous in CR rhetoric and Santorum knew to use that wording to stimulate a particular audience. Supporters of the CR accept that assertion uncritically as definitional. These assumptions cannot be reconciled with a founder that divorced civil liberty from religious opinion, created his own version of the Bible by cutting out the miracles, and founded the University of Virginia on the belief that true education must be secular. So, a different history, a different set of founders must be invented and potential critics of that alternative history must be discredited.

Enter Barton and his book *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson* (Barton 2012). Its description reads:

America, in so many ways, has forgotten. Its roots, its purpose, its identity all have become shrouded behind a veil of political correctness bent on twisting the nation's founding, and its founders, to fit within a misshapen modern world. The time has come to remember again.

In *The Jefferson Lies*, prominent historian David Barton sets out to correct the distorted image of a once-beloved founding father, Thomas Jefferson. To do so, Barton tackles seven myths head-on, including: Did Thomas Jefferson really have a child by his young slave girl, Sally Hemings? Did he write his own Bible, excluding the parts of Christianity with which he disagreed? Was he a racist who opposed civil rights and equality for black Americans? Did he, in his pursuit of separation of church and state, advocate the secularizing public life (Barton 2012, inside cover)?

The Jefferson Lies was recalled by its publisher Thomas Nelson Co. after an internal review found it had numerous inaccuracies (Driscoll 2012). It is widely condemned by historians as inaccurate with Alan Pell Crawford of the Wall Street Journal pointing out that “Barton seems to not know [these] facts, and he virtually ignores the cultural and theological world of the young Jefferson's time and place—what it meant to grow up a scion of the Virginia gentry, a classically educated Anglican, and an intellectual whose attitudes toward church and state were informed by a knowledge of the religious wars that had scarred Europe little more than a century before” (Crawford 2012). Barton does know these facts about Jefferson, but Jefferson’s views cannot be influenced by knowledge of religious wars because Barton’s – and other CR activist’s – understanding of democracy is not influenced by knowledge of religious wars.

Throughout the book, “mainstream historians” are treated in much the same way as the CR treats the “mainstream media,” automatically suspect if not intentionally dishonest in the interest of an agenda. Barton dismisses criticism of his book blaming it on an “elevated level of hostility” toward Christians that is “not really rational in many ways” (Hallowell n.d.). But one of his critics is a conservative theologian, Warren Throckmorton. He summarized his criticism of Barton saying, “I [Throckmorton] believe intensely in the value and power of “facts.” As a Christian scholar, one should embrace the truth without worrying about which side it benefits or hurts. Barton’s followers think that if you don’t agree with them then you’re against God and you’re a liberal person” (Hallowell n.d.).

To combine the assumption that America is a Christian nation with the assertion that dissenters are against God puts those that do not accept the CR's theology in the role of *de facto* enemies of the state (or a version of America that the CR accepts), tolerated minimally but threatening if treated equally. So, in the same way a national identity, history, founders, and role of law are re-imagined, so too are rights.

History is most simply understood as a chronological succession of facts with broad consensus on each fact's significance. The CR does not dispute mainstream historians on the dates and places of events. Rather, they emphasize some events more than others and interpret the significance of events differently. Much of the alternative history injects a metaphysical explanation to manmade events. A battle was won because God intervened. A politician was elected because God "moved the people." The net effect casts their version of Christianity and God as the repeated heroes in history vanquishing a large cast of villains in the fallen world. These alternative historical narratives are used then to bolster the argument that Christians are a more legitimate identity and should be favored in laws and society. The assumption of a more authentic American identity based on a skewed historical narrative contributes to Christian privilege.

CR spokespeople project their preferences on heroes long dead. This practice is not exclusive to the CR. Almost any activist in any cause claims some historical precedence. But the narrative weaving in which the CR engages is profoundly propagandistic and it serves a larger purpose than mere issue advocacy. In an effort to justify a cultural and political outcome, the CR constructs an imagined past. Much of

their rhetoric centers on a theme of reclamation. The United States they imagine is not the product of religious strife or the Enlightenment or modernity. Rather, ideas associated with the Enlightenment and modernity have always been the enemy. The division of public and private manifested in the separation of church and state or assertions of privacy rights are depicted as intentional lies of those seeking to drive America further from its original intent. Related, there is a sharp delineation between authentic Americans and inauthentic interlopers. The construction of a historical narrative for the CR primarily serves to establish some identities and opinions as legitimate while others are threatening. The “not us” is always among us and endangers our greatness.

An adequate account of American history requires a narrative that is not anglocentric. Anglocentric history tends to also be christocentric. The former perpetuates white privilege and the latter perpetuates Christian privilege. CR activists are fond of telling a reductive story of America’s founding in which Puritan settlers came from England to worship God as they chose. This is a common, simple narrative that is used by many, not just the CR. But, it often fails to include the greater development of religious tolerance in Europe that influenced America’s founding.

Much occurred between the founding of Plymouth in 1620 and the Declaration of Independence. The British Toleration Act of 1689 was a huge step toward liberty of conscience even if it still severely oppressed Catholics, atheists and other dissenters.

One of the most popular book series, frequently referenced and advertised in articles on CR websites and publications, is the *Discovering God’s Plan for America* series by, Peter Marshall, David Manuel and Anna Wilson Fishel. In the first book of the

series, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, readers experience European and American history “through the lens of the providential-history approach, showing how God intervened over and over again in history just to create a place where His followers could worship” (Marshall and Manuel 2009a). The second book, which examines the early days of the United States, claims God was “intervening on behalf of the struggling nation, or the natural outpouring of technological and social changes,” and “America's future was threatened by greed, pride, and self-righteousness, but in the midst of turmoil, God raised up leaders to uniquely shape our country and character. This is the story of a country moving forward--but always with an eye on the Christian heritage of the past” (Marshall, Manuel, and Fishell 1993).

Keeping an eye on “America’s Christian heritage” is repeatedly emphasized throughout the books. The message that Christians founded America for Christians permeates each story. The connection to CR political objectives is obvious. In order to justify codifying biblical law into civil law, the origin of civil law must be understood as explicitly Christian, not secular. In order to preference religious identity generally or a specific religious identity in law, that identity must be presented as more authentically American and deserving of greater reverence. Placing Christianity on the same level as other faiths then becomes a dangerous detour from the nation’s “true” heritage. The series title, *Discovering God’s Plan for America*, suggests that God himself intends dominionism. That is why the United States exists. To oppose the CR agenda one does not simply take an alternative political position, he actively rebels against God’s plan.

The third book in the trilogy, *Sounding Forth the Trumpet*, explains how the North was equally guilty for the sin of slavery by saying, “Looking at it from a spiritual perspective, the North was also guilty for its perpetuation [of slavery], the Lord required a blood atonement of equal measure” (Marshall and Manuel 2009c). The Civil War was fought because the Christian God required a blood sacrifice for the nation’s early sins and neither the North nor South was “more guilty” for slavery. The authors make the case in the first chapter of *Sounding Forth* that the Civil War “was not fought for economics, union solidarity, or to preserve a way of life” (Marshall and Manuel 2009c).

These authors do not dispute the people or places of famous battles. But, they ascribe a completely different cause and meaning to the Civil War than is usually understood. Their work is frequently referenced in CR articles that warn about current national “sins”, i.e. abortion and gay rights, and the real possibility that God will once again “require a blood atonement.” The rhetoric is effective in equating abortion, gay rights, and slavery as equally egregious in God’s eyes and societal rather than individual sins. It also vaguely hints at undertones of rebellion. One could interpret such reasoning as a subtle argument that, should a godly consensus not be reached over these social issues, Civil War may again be necessary.

In, *From Tyndale to Madison: How the Death of An English Martyr Led to the Bill of Rights*, Michael Farris tells the story of how religious liberty developed in the West, beginning with King Henry VIII. It tells the story of Tyndale, the Protestant reformer credited with translating portions of the Bible into English in the 16th century and his subsequent execution at the hands of Catholic authorities. The book continues to

recount the stories of Protestants persecuted for their religious beliefs until the founding of the U.S. and drafting of the Bill of Rights. It's a terrible story of repeated human cruelty. The endless bloodshed and persecution associated with religious conflict contributed to the development of liberty of conscience. Only, that's not the conclusion Farris draws. Instead, he argues that Protestants were persecuted in Europe until they came to the new world and founded a country in which Protestants could worship freely. And since their arrival led to the formation of a new nation, religious freedom came from the Puritans, Roger Williams notwithstanding.

Like a lot of CR literature, he's partly right. Baptists did promote religious freedom in early America. The stories of Quakers and Catholics in the American colonies are part of the nation's history and do tell of religious strife and desire to worship as one chooses. But the overall story is one in which the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause are somehow pulled from the Bible. Farris claims religious liberty came from the New Testament and originally, American law in the "Judeo-Christian" tradition came directly from the Ten Commandments. It's a concept of the U.S. completely divorced from western Enlightenment or the religious skepticism common in the 18th century. It clumsily tries to connect the founders to Puritan settlers in spite of their chronological and ideological distance. And, even if it were perfectly accurate, it freezes the development of conscience freedoms firmly in 1789.

Susan Jacoby notes how this story of America permeates all levels of political life, even the Supreme Court. In the dissenting opinion in *McCreary County v. the American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky*, one of two cases the Court heard in 2005

regarding displays of the Ten Commandments in public buildings, Justice Scalia writes that the Constitution permits the "disregard of polytheists and believers in unconcerned deities, just as it permits the disregard of devout atheists" (Scalia 2005). This is only true if one both seeks only to apply the exact will of the founders – which Scalia likes to do – and buys into the narrative that they were all Protestants envisioning religious freedom to apply to Protestants only. Later Scalia claims, “Those who wrote the Constitution believed that morality was essential to the well-being of society and that encouragement of religion was the best way to foster morality” (Scalia 2005). Again, partly true, if one ignores the founder that cut the miracles out of the Bible and the Constitutional Convention that failed to include an encouragement of religion in its final document. Also, encouragement of religion generally morphs into *the* religion as Scalia contends that the Ten Commandments deserve recognition in public buildings as part of “Our religious heritage.” There’s that “our” again. Jacoby describes the appearance of that version of history in a Supreme Court dissenting opinion as “a revealing portrait of the historical revisionism at the heart of the Christian conservative campaign to convince Americans that the separation of church and state is nothing more than a lie of the secularist left” (Jacoby 2005).

Most alternative CR history involves reimagining the influences of the founding fathers and the purpose for the United States’ founding. Conscripting the founders into a political cause is not specific to the CR. It is virtually universal among activists of all stripes. The CR is unique however in the amount of complexity given to the alternative version of history and the currency that version has with the American people.

It is admittedly problematic to ascribe a universal intent to the founding fathers. One reason is that the label of “founding father” does not apply to a defined group. Some men present for the signing of the Declaration of Independence, like John Hancock, were intentionally excluded from the Constitutional Convention. Some men who signed the Constitution did little else at the beginning of the nation while other men who did not sign were quite influential.

Furthermore, however a group of “founders” is defined, its members agreed on very little. They argued, compromised and revised incessantly. There is contradiction even among the *Federalists Papers* and parts of the Constitution were left vague to accommodate differing agendas. Not only did they not agree, the founders anticipated few aspects of contemporary society. In arguing whether or not a particular founder intended an implied right to privacy, one should remember that no founder could have imagined a satellite orbiting Earth that could take pictures of license plates. The founders had no intent on surface to air missiles, warrantless wiretapping, stem cell research and oil pipelines because these things were inconceivable to them.

Despite the limited utility of a founders’-intent argument in a current political conflict, there are some aspects of the founders that are indisputable. We know that some important figures at the time of the founding made public and sincere proclamations of faith while others expressed pronounced skepticism toward religion. As such, claiming the presence or lack of a specific Christianist agenda in the founding is equally suspect. We do, however, know that the Enlightenment and hundreds of years of European history heavily influenced the founding generation. Historians can look at Western history and

conclude that years of religious civil wars and papal justifications for monarchies influenced the division of public and private while positioning religious authority in the private sphere. Or, historians can view the same historical events and conclude that God intervened in the European history in order to set the stage for the founding of a new Christian nation. The latter is a repeated assertion within CR literature.

There is a bigger question of “who cares?” that applies to founders’ intent. They owned slaves, did not give women the right to vote and feared the common man. There are many characteristics of the founding generation that would make its supposed intentions moot. The only reason it matters pertains to its use in contemporary debate. When CR groups oppose evolution in public schools or an Islamic community center being erected near Ground Zero, they typically play the Christian America card. “Our heritage” and “our values” need preservation. Founders’ intent arguments matter because they affect what is meant by “our.” Muslims, racial minorities and sometimes even urban residents are not part of “our” heritage. This can have an effect on vulnerable populations because the unchallenged assumption prevents parity.

The Story of Roy Moore and use of Alternative History to delegitimize Muslims

The Kentucky Ten Commandments case mentioned above is not unlike the saga of Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Roy Moore. Following a loss in the U.S. Supreme Court over a two-ton granite monument of the Ten Commandments installed in the state courthouse, Roy Moore toured the country with the monument as a symbol of lost religious freedom. He then returned to Alabama to serve as president of the Foundation for Moral Law. The foundation’s slogan is “Defend our inalienable right to

acknowledge God” (Foundation for Moral Law, The n.d.). It is a public interest law firm that intervenes in cases concerning religious liberty. The list of categories of cases in which the foundation is involved includes, “Acknowledgement of God in Law, Bible in Juries, Bible in Schools, Islam and Sharia Law, and Public Evangelism” (Foundation for Moral Law, The n.d.). Within each category are descriptions of cases and the foundation’s position. Throughout its explanations, the foundation describes a need to protect religious liberty by acknowledging God in public and in the law. It is not difficult to decipher what the firm means by, “Defend our right to acknowledge God.” “Our” refers to Christians exclusively, evident in their advocacy that only the Ten Commandments and specifically Christian displays belong on public property. And the “right to acknowledge God,” refers to the use of public buildings and public funds to favor a specific religion (Foundation for Moral Law, The n.d.).

The foundation’s website also contains a separate section titled, *Defending the Monument*. In that section,

The Federal Court declared that, the state may not acknowledge the sovereignty of the Judeo-Christian God. However, the First and Tenth Amendments to the Constitution prohibit the federal government from interfering with the right of each state to acknowledge God. So who violated the law? Clearly the federal judge did, not Judge Moore. No person, to include a federal court judge, has the authority to place himself above the Constitution he is sworn to uphold, and no man can put himself above the God upon Whom he has taken his oath (Foundation for Moral Law, The n.d.).

Throughout the foundations site and the Roy Moore legal briefs it posts is a story of history in which religious freedom means the state, not an individual, has a right to acknowledge *the* God. The whole site contains Christo-democratic reasoning that compels the government to acknowledge (the Christian) God while preventing Islam and

Sharia Law claiming, “allowing the influence of Sharia in American courts—and there are examples of it in several states—raises greater problems of government establishment of religion as courts will be forced to pick and choose one of the many variants of Sharia law in Islam” (Foundation for Moral Law, The n.d.). It is an interpretation of the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the Constitution that permits state endorsement of Christianity but “protects” against the “Influence of Sharia.”

Roy Moore, after the Supreme Court decided his Ten Commandments case, wrote the following commentary when the first Muslim was elected to the U.S. Congress. It is long, but contains numerous examples of each of the ten assumptions of Christodemocracy.

Last month Keith (Hakim Mohammad) Ellison of Minnesota became the first Muslim elected to serve in the United States Congress and shocked many Americans by declaring that he would take his oath of office by placing his hand on the Quran rather than the Bible. Can a true believer in the Islamic doctrine found in the Quran swear allegiance to our Constitution? Those who profess a sincere belief in Allah say “no!”

In 1789, George Washington, our first president under the Constitution, took his oath to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. So help me God.” Placing his hand on the Holy Scriptures, Washington recognized the God who had led our Pilgrim fathers on their journey across the Atlantic in 1620 and who gave our Founding Fathers the impetus to begin a new nation in 1776. Soon after Washington’s oath, Congress passed the Judiciary Act of 1789, which required all judges of the federal courts to “faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties” incumbent upon them “agreeably to the Constitution and laws of the United States. So help me God.” Placing their hand on the Bible, the members of Congress had already sworn to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States ... So help me God.”

Thus began a long tradition that extended both to state and federal government of acknowledging the Judeo-Christian God as the source of our law and liberty. Today, some believe that it does not matter what we believe or before Whom we take our oath. But as Keith Ellison is demonstrating, it does matter.

To support the Constitution of the United States one must uphold an underlying principle of that document, liberty of conscience, which is the right of every person to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, without interference by

the government. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, in his "Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States" in 1833, observed concerning the First Amendment that "The rights of conscience are, indeed, beyond the just reach of any human power. They are given by God and cannot be encroached upon by human authority without a criminal disobedience of the precepts of natural, as well as revealed religion." Justice Story echoed the sentiments of Thomas Jefferson in his Bill for Religious Freedom in 1777 in which he stated that "Almighty God" (El Shaddai in Hebrew) "hath created the mind free and manifested His supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint." It was a specific God who endowed us with a freedom of conscience with which government could not interfere.

The Islamic faith rejects our God and believes that the state must mandate the worship of its own god, Allah. Last week, the Associated Press reported that the Islamic Court in Bullo Burto, a small town in southern Somalia, had ordered that residents would be beheaded "according to Islamic law" if they failed to pray five times a day. Sheik Hussein Barre Rage, chairman of the Islamic court, stated, "As Muslims, we should practice Islam fully ... and that is what our religion enjoins us to do." In other regions of Somalia, Islamic courts have introduced flogging, public execution and other punishments for those who deny Quranic law or refuse to worship Allah.

Islamic law is simply incompatible with our law. Jaafar Sheikh Idris, founder and chairman of American Open University, a radical Islamic school that has received funding from suspected al-Qaida sources and which supports Islamic law, recently stated that "Islam cannot be separated from the state," and that no Muslim elected to Congress or the White House can swear to uphold the United States Constitution and still be a Muslim, because the law of Allah as expressed in the Quran is supreme. Idris was recently deported for his illegal activities. While we certainly disagree with Idris' radical extremism, he at least knows what Islam is all about!

According to a Dec. 6, 2006, WorldNetDaily article, Keith Ellison's campaign was not only backed by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which shares the views of American Open University, but he also spoke to the North American Islamic Federation in November in Minneapolis with American Open University on the same program. Perhaps Ellison is confused about what he believes, or else he has another agenda. In either event, according to Idris, Ellison cannot swear an oath on the Quran and an allegiance to our Constitution at the same time.

Our Constitution states, "Each House [of Congress] shall be the judge ... of the qualifications of its own members." Enough evidence exists for Congress to question Ellison's qualifications to be a member of Congress as well as his commitment to the Constitution in view of his apparent determination to embrace the Quran and an Islamic philosophy directly contrary to the principles of the Constitution. But common sense alone dictates that in the midst of a war with Islamic terrorists we should not place someone in a position of great power who shares their doctrine. In 1943, we would never have allowed a member of Congress to take their oath on "Mein Kampf," or someone in the 1950s to swear allegiance to the "Communist Manifesto." Congress has the authority and should act to prohibit Ellison from taking the congressional oath today (Moore 2006)!

Liberal democratic theorists would contend that the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses represent a division between public and private that reflects an Enlightenment understanding of the role of government. The Establishment Clause prohibits the Federal Government from showing favoritism toward any religion (public) while the Free Exercise Clause prohibits the government from personal expressions of religion (private). The Civil War and 14th Amendment clarified that federal prohibitions apply to the states. Displaying a monument in a public courthouse constitutes a government endorsement of religion.

Roy Moore was elected in Alabama to serve as its chief justice once again running on a platform of defending religious freedom. But it is hard to understand how his vision of religious freedom could operate within a liberal democracy.

Reinterpreting the Declaration of Independence

CR literature reconstructs the meaning of founding documents and credits their origins to a Protestant religious tradition more than Enlightenment philosophers. In *Blasphemy: How the Religious Right is Hijacking the Declaration of Independence*, Alan Dershowitz explains in acute detail the ways in which CR leaders misinterpret and misapply founding documents. Dershowitz also deconstructs the rebranding of Jefferson as an early evangelical hero.

Dershowitz opens *Blasphemy* by saying, “The religious right is engaged in a crusade to convert the United States into a Christian theocracy based on the Bible and, more specifically, on the divine authority of Jesus Christ” (Dershowitz, I); (Dershowitz 2007). While this characterization of the agenda may be overwrought, the strategies he

describes are quite accurate. Dershowitz notes that using religion to influence policy is nothing new in American history, but the present version seeks to create a specifically Christian state rather than “have a seat at the table of pluralism.” Key to this objective is to pretend that the United States already is or once was a Christian state. Founders and founding documents are then reinterpreted to demonstrate – incorrectly – that the United States is the product of theology and religious freedoms were never intended to extend to non-Christians.

In CR literature, the Declaration of Independence is commonly referred to as “America’s Baptismal Certificate.” CR Historian, David Barton, uses this term to refer to the document often without actually saying the Declaration of Independence because he knows his readers already understand the document to which he is referring (Dershowitz 2007).

Because the Declaration references “Nature’s God”, CR activists, including Barton, argue that this is the God of the New Testament. Dershowitz later highlights how frequently Barton argues that the Baptismal Certificate is of equal if not superior significance to the Constitution and should be used just as frequently in judicial review.

Commenting on Barton’s work, George F. Will, in *One Man’s America*, comments that:

Not since the medieval church baptized Aristotle as some sort of early – very early – Church father has there been an intellectual hijacking as audacious the attempt to present America’s founders as devout Christians. Such an attempt is now in high gear among people who argue that the founders were kindred spirits with today’s evangelicals and that they founded a “Christian nation” (Will, 335).

A liberal democratic interpretation of Western history claims that America's independence from Great Britain was as much a revolution in ideas to counter the role of religious authority as much as a military divorce. The Thirty-Years War among Lutherans, Catholics and Calvinists reduced the total population of Germany from ten to six million (Wedgwood and Grafton 2005, 486). The Treaty of Westphalia at the end of the war reflected new neutrality toward religion, robbing any church of its earthly throne. The British Civil War that sent Charles to Paris and forever altered the balance of power between the monarchy and Parliament influenced the development of political theory that inspired notions of natural equality that Americans held certain truths to be self-evident. This theory responded to the dethroning of the church in Europe.

The Christo-democratic version of events claims God took sides and manipulated the outcomes in order to have a specifically Christian nation founded. CR materials repeat a mantra of America being founded by Christian men doing God's work and establishing a Christian republic. Although not as ubiquitous, "New Jerusalem" is a term that is also frequently used to describe the United States.

Dershowitz describes these authors as "not doing Jefferson's work" and "using the Declaration of Independence to Christianize a secular state." He describes how the Declaration of Independence is "revisited" by historians like David Barton. Since the initial publication of *Blasphemy*, Barton has written a work specifically on Jefferson and Christianity. In, *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson*, Barton claims Jefferson's reputation has been "distorted and disavowed" by secular historians. Barton goes on to call into question whether Jefferson

fathered children with a slave, removed portions of the Bible to make his own version, founded the University of Virginia as a secular institution, was a deist, or really meant what he said by “a wall of separation between church and state” (Barton 2012). Each of these details about Jefferson is widely accepted as historical fact. Barton stands in sharp contrast to the broad consensus of what he calls “secular history.” The dichotomy between secular and Christian history is alarming. It suggests two equally valid views of history that one chooses to accept or deny based on “worldview.” It fits into the larger pattern of revealed epistemology vs. discovered epistemology (Assumption 6). In this way of thinking, scientific findings must be accepted or rejected based on whether they comport with a scriptural narrative. Likewise, historical data must be accepted or rejected based on a preset narrative, only in this, the manufactured narrative is one of Christian privilege. The story is predetermined and history is then used to buttress the claims. (Dershowitz 2007); (Barton 2012); (Hallowell n.d.); (Jefferson 2012)

Dershowitz warns of trying to curve fit the words of the past to a particular agenda. Those that seek to cherry pick the founders’ words to construct an early America hostile to religion are guilty of the same thing as Barton. But history is not a single narrative for and by a single people. George Washington’s impassioned professions of faith cannot be ignored anymore than Paine’s appeals to atheistic reason. Even with this recognition of complexity, it is clear that Enlightenment thinking had more influence on the founding generation than biblical orthodoxy. However, CR leaders frequently assert the latter.

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council (FRC) explains:

While it is true that the United States of America was founded on the sacred principle of religious freedom for all, that liberty was never intended to exalt other religions at the level that Christianity holds. Our Founders expected that Christianity – and no other religion – would receive support from the government as long as that support did not violate people’s consciences and their right to worship. They would have found utterly incredible the idea that all religions, including paganism, be treated with equal deference (Goldberg 2007, 32).

Perkins demonstrates quintessential Christo-democratic thinking. America is not a theocracy. There is pluralism. But, one group has primacy within that pluralism. It conscripts the founders into the cause of current Evangelicals who do not want legal parity. In sharp contrast, Thomas Jefferson said he “meant to comprehend with the mantle of it protection, the Jew and the gentile, the Christian and the Mohammedan, the hindoo and infidel of every denomination.” (Jefferson 2012) The United States’ first treaty, the Treaty of Tripoli, states:

As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion,—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen [Muslims],—and as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan [Muslim] nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries. (Smethurst 2006)

And, the Establish Clause of the First Amendment does more than preclude an established religion; it prevents government favoritism toward a faith.

Michelle Goldberg’s, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* looks at another way the CR seeks to justify its vision of America by altering history. She calls the claim that the United States was once a Christian nation founded by and for Christians as “Christian nationalism” and sees the story of Roy Moore as a primary example of the subversion of liberal institutions to justify primacy for Christians.

Goldberg describes the agenda of the CR as:

The Christian nation is both the goal of the religious right and its fundamental ideology, the justification for its attempt to overthrow the doctrine of separation of church and state. It's what divides the religious right from those who see America as a product of Enlightenment secularism. The church/state legal developments that liberals and secularists think of as progress – from the disestablishment of religion in the states to bans on school prayer and classroom Bible reading – strike the evangelical right as a tyrannical suppression of America's Christian character. They see the forces of secularism as internal enemies who must be defeated so that they can declare, in the words of former attorney general John Ashcroft, that America has no king but Jesus (Goldberg 2007, 28).

Goldberg summarizes the mentality of CR activists perfectly. They see the true America as the product of Christian dominion rather than a byproduct of a loss of status of religion. Those that assume the United States resulted from Enlightenment secularism pervert the true history and intent of America. This is the stark contrast between liberal democratic theory and Christo-democratic theory. The former assumes the role of the individual and social contract increased at the same time religious and civil authority were separated. Many CR activists see such rhetoric as a departure from true history that subjects Christians to abjection.

Most CR materials repeat a message that there is no separation between church and state arguing that the phrasing itself is merely a misunderstood part of a letter from Jefferson. Evangelical home-schooling materials place specific emphasis on the myth of the separation of church and state. This myth is described as a lie of Satan. CR activist Rick Scarborough's in *In Defense of Mixing Church and State*, describes the separation of church and state as "a lie introduced by Satan and fostered by the courts.

Unfortunately, it is embraced by the American public to our shame and disgrace, and that lie has led us to edge of the abyss" (Scarborough 1999, 28).

Goldberg makes the case that the “true” American history follows the opposite trajectory. Deists, using ceremonial references to an unnamed “creator,” included a bifurcated Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause in the Constitution when founding the U.S. Should these men have wanted to specify a theological origin for their design, they could have done so. Nothing stopped any founder from quoting scripture or referencing Jesus in a founding document. However, references to anything divine are scant in the Declaration, Articles of Confederation, Constitution, and Federalist Papers. The only references to religion in the Constitution include the above-mentioned clauses of the First Amendment and the prohibition against a religious test for public office. However, many CR activists point to the date of the Constitution as evidence of a Christian God’s influence. The date is written as “in the year of our Lord.” Many CR activists like Barton and Scarborough claim “our Lord” is clearly a reference to the Christian God and the Constitution was written and signed in his name. However, Dershowitz points out that this way of writing the date was traditional and ceremonial while “Lord” is too generic a term to assume a specific god or theology (Bonar 2007).

From founding documents with a conspicuous absence of religious language the nation moved forward adding religion to public life incrementally. The first sessions of Congress met on Christmas Day. The only federal holidays marked Revolutionary War victories and Washington’s Birthday. There were no federal holidays honoring religious observances. God did not make an appearance on the U.S. currency until 1863. He was not included in the Federal Mail service until 1912 and “under God” was not added to the pledge of allegiance until 1954. This was done during the Red Scare to emphasize

contrasts between the United States and Soviet Union. The United States protected the free exercise of religion while the Soviet Union sought to actively eradicate it. During the Red Scare, public proclamations of faith became common to accentuate America's religious freedoms.

Since the 1950s, faith in the public sphere has maintained a high degree of controversy beginning with compulsory prayer disallowed in public schools. Many CR activists see the removal of school prayer as a starting point in the erosion of America's Christian heritage. They depict the United States as essentially a Christian republic up until that point that has sense incrementally lost its godliness. A classically liberal understanding of the United States recognizes its secular beginnings that were eroded during times of threat and crisis.

That is not to say that the true history of America includes sterile secularism among its citizens. Tocqueville correctly noted in the 1830s that most citizens were "on fire" with religion and loved their local pastors and priests. But he also noticed the bizarre phenomenon of varying religious faiths living side by side with little conflict. Having observed the animosity toward clergy during the French Revolution, Tocqueville could not understand at first why Americans held their religious leaders in such high esteem.

Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* explains that Americans were able to coexist and admire religious leaders because the priest and pastor removed themselves from partisanship:

I have remarked that the members of the American clergy in general, without even excepting those who do not admit religious liberty, are all in favor of civil freedom;

but they do not support any particular political system. They keep aloof from parties, and from public affairs. In the U.S. religion exercises but little influence upon the laws, and upon the details of public opinion. Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must nevertheless be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country; for it does not impart a taste of freedom”, it facilitates the use of free institutions (Tocqueville 2003, 32–34).

Religion facilitated the enjoyment of free institutions rather than provide a taste of liberty. He later observed that a plethora of new Protestant denominations spread up all over the United States because religion was enjoyed in the *private* sphere. And because it did not seek temporal political power, it was not a threat to those already enjoying political authority. Churches were not suppressed because they did not seek actualization through civil law. They offered what Tocqueville described as “transcendental” – outside time and space – rather than the temporal rewards of political victories. In this way, religion indirectly influenced matters of state by regulating the heart and home.

Tocqueville described the relationship among individual citizens and religion perfectly. Church’s were able to inspire individuals because their leaders did not seek direct political representation. Religion flourished in the United States because of this separation. Likewise, it largely died on the vine in Europe because of established religions.

That is because a nation that never had an established church and did not grant money or privileges to existing churches left religion in the hands of spiritual entrepreneurs. These people were sometimes domestic missionaries and sometimes local citizens eager to create and govern a religious organization. Protestant churches had to compete in a spiritual marketplace, with many new churches emerging every year, people changing their affiliations frequently, and a few mega-churches emerging under the guidance of the most successful ministers. The system of natural liberty that Adam Smith said would benefit the economy has also aided religion.

As a result, nearly half of all Americans attend churches or synagogues weekly compared to 4 percent of the English, 5 percent of the French, and comparably low levels in most of Western Europe. Some may suspect that our religiosity is sustained

by recent immigrants, especially those from Latin America. But that is only part of the story (Wilson 2006, 138).

America is “exceptional” because of its formal secularism, not because it is designed by God to be a Christian republic. But CR leaders seek to acquire the political authority Tocqueville noted was absent in the U.S. They are not satisfied with influencing the hearts and minds of citizens or believe the correct understanding of religion adequately influences too few citizens. So, they seek to have biblical law enacted as public law. To do this, they reverse Tocqueville’s description and claim America used to be a Christian republic that secularists snatched away.

The CR does not want to suspend all political liberties or preclude elections. They simply do not believe full political enfranchisement was ever intended for non-Christians. Non-Christians are citizens with voting, speech, due process and other rights. But, CR leaders assume Christian privilege is warranted. Goldberg describes this mindset as, “Those who aren’t Christian – or who aren’t the right kind of Christian – can never be full citizens of the country the Christian nationalists want to create. America is not yet close to becoming a Christian theocracy, it is closer to becoming a place where only conservative Christians have a sense of belonging – at least in parts of the country” (Goldberg 2007, 86). The CR vision for the United States is to socially engineer the culture so that those with the correct perception of religion enjoy the greatest political efficacy.

Goldberg later notes that “most American Evangelicals do not want to establish a Christian Taliban,” (Goldberg 2007, 57) but those same American Evangelicals to not

realize the consequences of alternative historical rhetoric. The idea that God intervened through history to establish a Christian republic would be of little concern if it were given the same currency as those that suggest the moon landing was faked or Kennedy was never really assassinated. Instead, the idea that the United States was founded by Christians for Christians is widely popularized among evangelical and non-evangelical citizens alike. The story of original Puritans coming for religious freedom and beginning a nation with that intent is more widely known than the deism of most of the founders.

Puritans came to the United States from Amsterdam after leaving London. They were not represented years later at the signing of the Constitution. They were driven from England precisely because their fundamentalist brand of Puritanism was less tolerated in an increasingly pluralistic England. Both Jefferson and Madison openly derided the Puritan's mentality in favor of religious tolerance. In the Virginia Statute of Religious freedom, Jefferson references those original Protestants and the Catholic Church. Both are guilty, according to Jefferson, of coercing the mind that was created free.

In *Mapping the Political Right: Gender and Racial Oppression in Right-Wing Movements*, Chip Berlet examines why a small group of Puritans are overemphasized in history and popular discourse. He concludes that they are over-utilized because current political factions see them as kindred spirits. As such, their role in shaping national character is enlarged and distorted. Similarly, Abby Ferber's book, *Home-Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism* looks at the oft-repeated claim that America was based originally on Biblical Law. Instead, that hope "was limited to a small population of

Puritans, the ideas of which Enlightenment London had rejected and was rejected at the time of the founding (Ferber 2004); (Berlet and Lyons 2000).

Perhaps the most detailed account of this phenomenon is, *Liars For Jesus: The Religious Right's Alternate Version of American History* Vol. 1, by Chris Rodda. In it, Rodda explains in detail how the CR retells events in history decade by decade. The intent is always to cast Christians as the heroes through history and outcomes in history as glorifying them. The reader is left with a sense that extreme vanity more than politics has been demonstrated. History was made by us for us. We are its winners therefore we deserve to rule (Rodda 2006).

American History in Christian Home Schooling

Alternative history is pervasive in CR rhetoric but nowhere is it more overtly touted than in CR home schooling education materials. Websites and catalogues catering to evangelical families that educate their children at home emphasize the dire need to teach “true” Christian history. They offer numerous texts that purport to tell the “true” story of America.

The Christian home schooling movement is part of a larger rejection of secular society. It follows a pattern of suspicion toward academia and experts and reflects a revealed epistemology that precedes attitudes toward education (see: Assumption 6). Parents are encouraged to pull their children from public schools in order to instill a Christian worldview. But, much of the movement cites examples of home-schooled students outperforming their counterparts in public schools. With this data, CR activists

claim that the education received through their various curricula is not just safer but superior to public school materials.

Websites that market directly to Christian home-school families, like ChristianBook.com, offer thousands of texts and supporting materials in every school subject for every age. The taglines for these texts usually include some variation on instilling a Biblical worldview in children. The hallmarks of a fixed or revealed epistemology rather than developing epistemology are seen throughout. What man, in all his foolish pride, has “discovered” is inferior to what God has “revealed.” Knowledge is accepted or rejected based on its concurrence with agreed upon theology. But the materials do more than merely reject findings that do not comport with the Bible. They carefully construct a narrative that privileges some throughout history while cycling through ever-changing casts of historical villains. There has always been “The Enemy” at work in history, according to these texts, but enemies of God have often taken distinctly human forms and have fought against “Christian heritage.”

Looking at the descriptions of texts offered in American History on the *Christian Book website* and print catalogue and *The Christian Home School Resource Guide*, patterns in word choice become apparent. History is most often described like a possession with a rightful owner. American History is frequently described as “taken,” “hidden,” “seized,” “controlled,” and “discarded.” Corresponding terms reveal the need to “reclaim,” “taken back,” and – a particularly biblically sounding description – “redeemed.” Just as with messaging about taking back America, the correct and incorrect “owner” of the country’s history is largely implied. The impersonal “they” or loosely

labeled “secular humanists” are the thieves that wrenched history away from its rightful stewards and now refuse to give it back. As such, Christian home-school families are encouraged to reclaim history for their children. History is a *thing* that is taken, given and owned.

The reclamation of history always involves inserting a specific divine will within the unfolding of events. The previously mentioned *Discovering God’s Plan for America* series has teen and children’s versions. The children’s version includes small units that repeat a theme claiming, “lands were discovered and conquered, governments were created, and leaders rose to prominence on the part of God for his true followers” (Marshall, Manuel, and Fishell 1993).

Many authors in writing about alternative versions of history correctly point out that the CR in America supposes Christians founded America exclusively with the intent of being a Christian nation. Although that claim is prevalent, the reality goes further than that. It is more than the supposition that America is a Christian Nation. It is, instead, the message that God worked through the entire history of the West with the purpose of creating a Christian America. *The Light and the Glory* explains how “Jamestown's proximity to swamps shows that they didn't seek the Lord's direction” and “King Phillip's War was due to God lifting protective grace,” and how “this fighting was more than a war over land. This was a spiritual battle... yet, God continued to take care of His people by showing them special favor.” God shows his people “special favor” is easily transposed to assert that conservative Christians should be shown special favor as history continues to be made. (Marshall and Manuel 2009b)

God causes the Spanish Armada to sink because he preferred Protestants to Catholics and it was necessary to colonize the new world with the “right” people. Such thinking is distinctly pre-modern. It ignores the lessons of religious civil wars throughout Europe. It does not imply that Christians are the true Americans. It explicitly states it and goes through painstaking detail to construct a historical narrative to sell it. CR materials geared toward adults often insinuate the preeminence of Christians in American history. Secularism threatens to undermine our heritage, for example. But these texts marketed for children reveal the agenda more explicitly.

A ten-disk DVD series by David Barton included in the 8-10-year-olds section of the *Christian Home Schooling Resource* site has the following description

Experience the true untold story of our nation's godly heritage! From the separation of church and state to the civil rights movement, from the courage of our Founding Fathers to the building of our nation's monuments, historian David Barton explores the spiritual, educational, judicial, and cultural influences that molded America's Judeo-Christian values (Barton 2000).

“Judeo-Christian” is a frequent descriptive used by the CR. It also has several historical assumptions behind it. Most often it is used to suggest the United States is a continuation of Jewish then Christian history. Judaism came first, then the Messiah, and then a Christian republic was established. It also serves to bolster the us/not-us way of thinking. By claiming America came from a singular line of tradition one can claim other identities are out of step with true heirs of American heritage. It adds Jews with Christians to suggest the real “us” as opposed to the interlopers that pervert with their presence.

Another resource listed in the same age group encourages students to, “Explore the Bible's influence over our nation's past! From the first prayer in Congress to communion on the moon, from "A Fireman's Prayer" to the national message from Billy Graham after September 11, this richly illustrated guide explores profound events in America's history that demonstrated faith, hope, freedom, service, and truth” (Lee 2009). The *In God We Still Trust*, by Richard Lee, includes several activities. The title and events highlighted could be seen as a subgroup of the population that wants to highlight its contributions to history if it were not for its universal tone. The “real” story of the United States is the story of Christians, according to this book, and the “we” are the real citizens that still trust in God, as opposed to the less real citizens that supposedly do not.

Another elementary level work, *The Story of Our Constitution*, by Sol Bloom and Lars R. Johnson, looks at the American Constitution and examines “issues such as morality, biblical principles, and more” (S. Bloom et al. 2001). Another offering, *Never Before in History*, for middle and high school age children promises to “help your teens comprehend the decisive ways that Christianity shaped the founding of America!” (Amos and Gardiner 2011) Another DVD series by David Barton claims to trace “America's history back to the source and navigates our nation's unique religious, moral, and constitutional heritage” (Barton 2009) and examine our nation's founding documents and discover the original intent of our founding fathers firsthand. The first DVD in the series, titled, *Preserving America's Heritage*, warns of those out there that want to “remove Jesus from American history” (Barton 2009). Barton has also authored for home schooling the America's Godly Heritage Booklet through which children “discover the

beliefs of the Founders concerning the role of Biblical principles in education, government, and public affairs.” Despite having dozens of pages worth of resources on American History on the Christian Book website, the vast majority are written by the same author, David Barton. Barton is also the author of *Original Intent: The Courts the Constitution and Right and Eight Steps for Thinking Biblically* (Barton 2008); (Barton 2010). Both of these works describe the correct understanding of the American Constitution and the judiciary. He makes a good case that judicial review was never intended. His claims mirror those of many mainstream historians. Where he departs is in the supposition that, because rights come only from God (presumably the Christian God) courts that produce “anti-Biblical” opinions should be recalled by the Congress.

In Barton’s, *Keys to Good Government and Developing a Biblical Worldview*, he provides the historical precedence for rejecting “ungodly” laws. There is no distinction between civil and ecclesiastical authority. “Thinking biblically,” means codifying Christian theology into civil law. One cannot justify such a proposition without having first written much to convince readers that the rightful understanding of the United States is a Christian republic (Barton 1994); (Barton 2013).

CR MESSAGING OPPOSES EQUAL TREATMENT UNDER THE LAW AND THE ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE, EQUATING BOTH WITH PERSECUTION.

Just like what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to the evangelical Christians. It's no different. It is the same thing. It is happening all over again. It is the Democratic Congress, the liberal-based media and the homosexuals who want to destroy the Christians. Wholesale abuse and discrimination and the worst bigotry directed toward any group in America today. More terrible than anything suffered by any minority in history.-- Pat Robertson (Ivins 2009)

An interesting contrast to the messaging that Christian is the authentic American identity is an equally prevalent concern about persecution. Frequent messaging depicts conservative Christians as silenced or forbidden from living out their faith. Christians, of course, are not oppressed. It is still the predominant religion in the United States. No one questions school holidays or store closings for Christian holidays. A vast majority of elected officials must claim to be Christian or risk losing their elections. Usually, what CR materials label as oppression is really a loss of Christian privilege. The unexamined maxims of Assumptions 1 – 3 lead to a perceived status loss. But, a key feature of liberal democracies is that they ideally tend to reduce unwarranted privilege over time. The state is neutral in terms of personal identity and officially secular.

All signs point to the CR losing the political battle over marriage equality, a battle that it set up as make or break for the future of the country. As their views lose saliency

in politics, leaders of the CR can become political liabilities. A record of virulently anti-gay statements can make even a conservative politician keep her distance. The CR is not losing as much ground on all their issues. Strict new limits on abortion recently passed in North Dakota and Kansas. Louisiana and Tennessee are both considering laws mandating criticism of evolution in public schools. But, when a court or public event or campaign rejects the CR, it tends to spin that rejection as a loss of religious liberty.

The CR borrows from the language of actually oppressed groups to couch their claim of primacy in terms of fairness. Disallowing an overtly Christian display at a taxpayer funded building inspires pleas to allow Americans to live out their faith. That sounds democratic, but they really do not want all Americans to live out their faith via public displays of religion. Expecting only one's own religion to have public recognition is a symptom of Christian privilege. Such was the case of Tim Scott, former Charlestown County Council member and newly elected Senator from South Carolina.

In 1996, Scott installed a Ten Commandments plaque outside of the offices of the council to show his support for "moral conduct." It garnered the expected lawsuit that went on for two years until the county decided it was cheaper to settle than to continue spending public funds to fight. Scott did not lose his job or suffer any consequence to his personal finances, but he still gained notoriety for claiming it was "illegal to acknowledge God in the United States of America." This made him a minor celebrity on CR news sites. During the Republican primary, Scott spoke at an event hosted by Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition. At the event, he made the provocative claim that the "greatest minority under assault today are Christians, no doubt about it." (Glasstetter

2012) He continued to tell his story of martyrdom throughout the campaign, eventually triumphing over his oppressed minority status to be elected to the U.S. Senate (Glasstetter 2012).

Christians are not a minority and they are not under assault. Scott was not arrested or prevented from expressing his faith, going to church or evangelizing. But, the Establishment Clause requires government neutrality toward religion. It is not a contemporary interpretation to silence Christians. It comes from hundreds of years of bloody conflict in Europe over which version of Christianity would control the state. Gradually, as liberalism developed, authorities divorced church and state to protect both. Scott may not even believe that Christians are oppressed. The original display might have been an intentional attempt to create that type of controversy with his eye on a higher office. It is impossible to know what Scott really thinks in his heart. What the story shows is that the depiction has currency. It is politically advantageous to claim oppression when denied special treatment.

Prominent leaders of the CR have founded several groups to fight anti-Christian oppression. The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is led by former American Family Association employee, Jay Sekulow. It functions as a conservative Christian version of the ACLU. Matt Staver's Liberty Counsel, originally affiliated with Liberty University Law School, is another CR law firm. But two newer organizations capitalize more directly on the idea of Christian persecution.

The "About" section on *Legalize Jesus*' website reads,

CHRISTOPHOBIA is spreading across AMERICA. Christians must end the silence and come out of the closet. We must RISE UP against the intolerant liberal secular progressive mob. I PRAY more Christians in America will become unashamed, unabashed, public glorifiers of JESUS – no matter where they are or who they are with... especially in public and at public schools. It's NOT against the law to pray, talk about JESUS or wear Christian t-shirts or crosses. Teach your kids to be proud of Jesus and to spread His gospel. Stand up to the liberal progressive Christophobic mob and their ANTI-JESUS agenda. Glorify JESUS NOW ("Legalize Jesus" 2012).

The use of “come out of the closet” and “Christophobia” mirror terminology used to fight bias against LGBT people and Muslims. The group’s site calls on Christians to fight “homofascism.” The term is not really defined but it’s used whenever gay rights groups seek legal parity. Not being able to exclude LGBT people from employment or public accommodations is equated with making Christianity “illegal.” The side bar on the group’s website says, “Christianity is illegal in 55 countries” (“Legalize Jesus” 2012). It’s true; many countries are hostile to Christianity, just not the United States. The juxtaposition of that statement next to a blog of supposed “Christian bashing” from “secularists” suggests Christians do not enjoy religious freedom when really, it points out a lessening of privilege.

The Christian Anti-Defamation Commission is an “education corporation whose purpose it is to become the first-in-mind champion of Christian religious liberty, domestically and internationally, and a national clearing house and first line of response to anti-Christian defamation, bigotry, and discrimination” (“Christian Anti-Defamation Commission” 2012). The intent to respond in politics and media when Christians are insulted is respectable. The group criticized Saturday Night Live when they made a spoof of *Django Unchained* called *DJesus Uncrossed*. However, much of their website is opposed to any loss of Christian privilege, which they label “religious liberty.” On the

opening page, the site advertises a book and presentation materials called, *The Perfect Man? Muhammed, the Founder of Islam*. Clicking on the picture of the book leads to a page that says, “protect your children from the lies of Islam – a revealing resource.” The description of the book reads:

This is the dreadful 10th Anniversary of the attacks of 9-11 when Muslim terrorists killed 3000 Americans. But did you know in the last three decades there have been at least 67 terror attacks in America by Muslims.

Since 9-11 there have been over 14,000 acts of terrorism world-wide in the name of Islam. That doesn't include the many failed attacks on Americans, like the "shoe" and "underwear" bombers who tried to blow up our airplanes or the failed "Time Square" bomb attempt. Another terrorist cell was recently broken up in Texas and three Muslims arrested for plotting to attack Ft. Hood where another Muslim had previously killed 13 and wounded 32.

Christians must get equipped with the truth about Islam, and especially about Muhammad. The politically correct, dangerous tommyrot coming out of our politicians and public schools must be rejected.

Every Mosque, even so-called "moderate" ones, teach Muhammad is the "perfect man" and his life is the ideal example to be followed. But a strong argument can be made that Muhammad is the world's most wicked man. By his murderous example and teaching, far more people have been slain by Islam than from any other ideology in history, some 270 million.

Even these simple facts of history are NOT being taught in our schools, or even in our churches either out of ignorance or fear. Because the evidence against Muhammad is so damning, Muslims threaten to kill anyone who dares to tell the truth about him. All the proceeds from the presentation will go towards our "911 Defend Our Student's Campaign" that takes the truth about Muhammad right through the doors of the public schools in America. Every dollar we raise helps us reach more kids ("Christian Anti-Defamation Commission - The Perfect Man?" 2011).

The Christian Anti-defamation Commission blatantly defames Islam, but it does so as part of defending religious liberty because, according to its site, Islam threatens religious liberty. The logic is contorted but it makes sense through a Christodemocratic mindset. Freedom of religion is the right to practice Christianity. Islam's mere presence threatens this version of religious liberty and Christians because it grants legal parity to a

false faith. So the “truth about Islam” must be told in public schools to protect Christians from defamation. It is difficult to imagine any group in the U.S. advertising a book and presentation to go into public schools and spread the word of how evil Christians and Jesus are. But, Christian privilege allows some Christians to promote condemnation of others’ religion that they would never allow for their own.

After Rev. Louie Giglio was disinvited from praying at President Obama’s second inauguration, Concerned Women For America’s Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse wrote a piece titled, *Obama Committee’s Slap in the Face of Religious Liberty*. In it she says,

By disinviting the clergyman announced as the choice for giving the second inaugural benediction, the inaugural committee established a beachhead of moral rebellion that prohibits the presence of representatives of Christian doctrine in the public square of America.

Now, like the thorough FBI background checks for security purposes of all potential high-profile political appointees, will anyone who participates in any way in a public event have to undergo a thorough background check for statements about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community?

The Obama administration has thrown down a gauntlet, declaring that anyone who espouses historic, biblical Christian teaching will be prohibited from participation in events in the public square, just as nativity scenes, Christmas trees, depictions of the Ten Commandments and other symbols of Christianity have previously been banned (Crouse 2012b).

The Ten Commandments and nativity scenes are not banned. Public buildings supported by tax dollars cannot show favoritism toward one religion because not everyone who pays taxes is a member of that religion. It violates the Establishment Clause. Dr. Crouse can have both a nativity scene and Ten Commandments display on her private property with no legal consequences. No one is banned from expressing faith in the public square. Rev. Giglio differed with the Obama administration on a piece of

theology with current political implications. So, President Obama's inauguration committee wanted a minister that more closely matched the President's beliefs. No one has to undergo an FBI background check for his religious beliefs.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President, Dr. Albert Mohler, expressed similar concerns about the withdrawal of Rev. Giglio. In a guest column for CR news site One News Now, Mohler writes,

The imbroglia over Louie Giglio is the clearest evidence of the new Moral McCarthyism of our sexually "tolerant" age. During the infamous McCarthy hearings, witnesses would be asked, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" In the version now to be employed by the Presidential Inaugural Committee, the question will be: "Are you now or have you ever been one who believes that homosexuality (or bisexuality, or transsexualism, etc.) is anything less than morally acceptable and worthy of celebration" (Mohler 2013b)?

On January 2nd, One News Now's parent organization, The American Family Association, warned its followers that Christians will be treated much like African Americans were prior to civil rights legislation in the 1960s." (Keyes 2013) The full email from Don Wildmon reads:

Dear Friends,

What will religion look like in the year 2060?

Conservative Christians will be treated as second class citizens, much like African Americans were prior to civil rights legislation in the 1960s. Family as we know it will be drastically changed with the state taking charge of the children beginning at birth. Marriage will include two, three, four or any number of participants. Marriage will not be important, with individuals moving in and out of a "family" group at will. Church buildings will be little used, with many sold to secular buyers and the money received going to the government. Churches will not be allowed to discuss any political issues, even if it affects the church directly. Tax credit given to churches and non-profit organizations will cease. Christian broadcasting will be declared illegal based on the separation of church and state. The airwaves belong to the government, therefore they cannot be used for any religious purpose. We will have, or have had, a Muslim president. Cities with a name from the Bible such as St. Petersburg, Bethlehem, etc. will be forced to change their name due to separation of church and state. Groups connected to any religious affiliation will be forced out of

health care. Health centers get tax money from the state, making it a violation of church and state.

Get involved! Sign THE STATEMENT.

**Sincerely,
Donald E. Wildmon**

Wildmon is noting a general loss of Christian privilege and prevalence in American society, which foreshadows a time of great persecution. The state will take your children from birth. Churches will not be allowed to discuss politics even after they no longer have a tax exemption. “We will have or have had a Muslim President.” That fear only matters if the other assumptions of Christian identity are deeply ingrained. Not having every leader be a member of your religion is not oppression. It’s not a hallmark of dystopia. The fact that a Muslim might be able to win an election to national office someday does not mean Christians will be oppressed.

In January 2013, the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) used an appeal in the fight over Civil Unions in Colorado with the title, “Protect Marriage and Stop The Great Persecution” (Hooper 2013). The Great Persecution occurred at the beginning of the fourth century when Roman Emperors literally tried to exterminate Christians. NOM had recently lost four ballot fights over same-sex marriage. Not being able to prevent others from marrying is not the same thing as having members of a faith exterminated. But NOM knows it can use the idea that Christians are under attack, they are persecuted, because it is accepted among some.

Michael Carl, writing for WND, penned a piece called *Persecution of Christians On Rise In US*. It reports on data compiled for a study by the Liberty Institute and Family

Research Council that proves Christians have entered into an age of persecution in America. Among the examples given are prohibitions on the use of Christmas in public schools, removing Christian monuments from public displays and a spokesperson for New York City Public Schools saying, “Public school space cannot and should not be used for worship services, especially if school space is not equally available to all faiths” (Carl 2012). Again, things paid for with tax dollars cannot favor one faith. It is not persecution as the “study” concludes, but a check on Christian privilege.

The CR is “working to redefine existing constitutional protections of freedom to (and from) religion to mean the right of conservative Christian individuals and businesses to practice discrimination otherwise prohibited by law” (Michaelson 2012). What they really mean is that it is becoming more difficult to use personal faith as a justification for discrimination against gay people and followers of other religions can be treated equally under the law. It seems like oppression because it lowers them to the level of identities they deem inferior. It challenges their notion that their country was founded for people like them and not for the other. The U.S. that they picture, the type of democracy, is one in which authentic citizens may enjoy special treatment. It’s illiberal, but it is still democratic, for them.

**THE CR ONLY RECOGNIZES RIGHTS THAT COMPORT WITH CHRISTIAN
MORALITY, *SOMETIMES*.**

Rights are tricky things. One can assert a right, as immunity from authority, but sourcing that right can be difficult. One can say rights are “natural” but nature is indifferent, if not hostile. Natural selection recognizes no right to life or private property. One can say rights come from God, specifically the Christian God. But, there’s no place in the Bible that expresses some inalienable right to a free press or prohibitions against unwarranted searches and seizures. The Bible does not contain the rights associated with a liberal democracy. It has many passages where basic civil liberties are violated. In 2 Kings, Chapter 2, God has 42 children eaten by bears for ridiculing Elisha’s baldness. So, it is not clear the God of the Bible honors rights the way we understand them today. Jefferson, a devotee of Hobbes, thought rights were a product of existence and human reason. But, like nature, human reason is rather shaky. In many ways, one only has the rights that society recognizes. If one thinks rights are the product of natural existence, then citizens in North Korea have all sorts of rights that just aren’t recognized. If one sees rights as the products of societies and authority, then citizens in North Korea have few rights.

Rights are integral to liberal democracies, just hard to justify concretely. It is reassuring to say rights come from God, that there is a higher authority existing outside

humans that will assure we are treated fairly. The problem with basing rights solely on a concept of God is that it is heavily reliant on human interpreters for enforcement. What one says God protects another claims he denies. At best, rights are an ongoing discourse. They are the product of reason, but not in the way Hobbes understood. Human's use reason to evaluate truth claims and assign values to them based on associations. Each individual accepts or rejects a rights claim based on these associations. A person can fool himself into thinking that rights are just there, like physical properties waiting to be discovered, but they are constructs of the mind.

When CR leaders claim we do or do not have a certain right, they are participating in the discourse of values like anybody else. Their claim of religious based rights is no better or worse than claims based on nature or individual preference. To debate rights requires some degree of uncertainty, a humble admission that one can be wrong. To assert a right based on an exclusive truth claim – access to information others do not have – is essentially illiberal if not undemocratic because it imbues earthy authority with metaphysical certitude. In the same way liberal democracy requires a discovery-based rather than revelation-based epistemology, competition over rights in liberal democracy must be able to evolve along with human understanding. Rights claims that are fixed and accredited to sacred texts are illiberal because they disqualify non-members from making equivalent rights claims.

On the subject of rights, there is ample disagreement even within the CR. Certainly there is rhetoric that claims no one has the right to violate the Bible's teachings. But, there are others that recognize the right of others to have different religions and live

by different creeds, even if they think Christianity should have primacy in law. To some in the CR, Muslims are not a legitimate American identity, but outside of politics they are protected with religious liberty to practice their faith. And of course, some in the CR disagree. There is plenty of messaging that claims no one has the “right” to be Muslim, or atheist, or gay within a Christian nation. But these harsher attitudes toward rights are not as prevalent as the other assumptions. The other assumptions are relentlessly repeated and echoed back and forth among leaders of the movement. Still, the limiting of rights to biblical obedience is out there; it is present within the activism and worth examining if for no other reason than its political saliency. Arguments that there are no rights to sin appear in successful political campaigns and are used in court cases, like the FRC brief in *Lawrence v. Texas* described in Assumption 1. This section shows examples of a limited scope to human rights. But, like those that are not part of the CR, the CR’s messaging regarding rights is admittedly inconsistent.

In 2003, *Lawrence v. Texas* overturned *Bowers v. Hardwick* declaring state laws that target same-sex couples by criminalizing sex between them exclusively unconstitutional. The Texas statute under review in *Lawrence* required those convicted of same-sex relations to identify their crime on future job applications and register as sex offenders. The sex offender registry made no distinctions among types of sexual offenses (rape, child molestation, etc.) and required those registered to inform neighbors upon moving into a new neighborhood.

The statute dealt with gays and lesbians, but the case heard by the court dealt with larger issues, such as the freedom to not follow the majority’s religion, the limits or

privacy in the context of property rights, and the dignity of individual identity

construction. Writing for the majority of the Court, Justice Kennedy opined:

Liberty protects the person from unwarranted government intrusions into a dwelling or other private places. In our tradition the State is not omnipresent in the home. And there are other spheres of our lives and existence, outside the home, where the State should not be a dominant presence. Freedom extends beyond spatial bounds. Liberty presumes an autonomy of self that includes freedom of thought, belief, expression, and certain intimate conduct. The instant case involves liberty of the person both in its spatial and more transcendent dimensions (Kennedy 2003).

The assertion that liberty assumes *an autonomy of self* is a core tenet of liberal democracy. It assumes an individualism that developed from Locke into the 21st century.

The condemnation has been shaped by religious beliefs, conceptions of right and acceptable behavior, and respect for the traditional family. For many persons these are not trivial concerns but profound and deep convictions accepted as ethical and moral principles to which they aspire and which thus determine the course of their lives. These considerations do not answer the question before us, however. The issue is whether the majority may use the power of the State to enforce these views on the whole society through operation of the criminal law (Kennedy 2003).

Here, Kennedy showed deference to the deeply held beliefs of conservative Christians. Often, when a Christian references the Bible as a reason for discrimination, their sincere beliefs are dismissed reflexively as bigotry. Instead, Justice Kennedy understands their significance but clarifies that moral disapproval alone is not enough. To the CR, that is enough. That's all there is. Law is the expression of biblical morality. There is no concept of a right to come to different conclusions about the universe.

These matters, involving the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime, choices central to personal dignity and autonomy, are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State (Kennedy 2003).

The CR does not recognize a “right to define one’s concept of existence.” Not really. There may be disagreement about rights in the CR but consistently it advocates the use of law to guide citizens toward Christian morality. In a concurring opinion, Justice O’Connor writes:

A law branding one class of persons as criminal solely based on the state’s moral disapproval of that class and the conduct associated with that class runs contrary to the values of the Constitution and the Equal Protection Clause, under any standard of review (Kennedy 2003).

But, as described in Assumption 1, the CR *does* view moral disapproval as adequate justification for a law. The role of the state is to enact and enforce biblical morality. It is hard to reconcile this with a negative liberty of conscience that protects a right not to follow aggregate moral opinion. Homosexuality is not a religion, of course. Neither are vegetarianism, sports fandom, live-action role-playing or yoga. But each falls under a person’s ability to construct a socially contextualized identity. The CR belief that every law and judicial decision fits into a greater, eternal, spiritual battle leaves little room for the identity construction permitted in a liberal democracy. There is the Truth that one must realize and it is a dereliction of duty for the state to not aid in that discovery.

Bryan Fischer recently revisited Lawrence on his radio show on American Family Radio saying:

They’re [gays and lesbians] not being denied anything and not being denied any constitutional right because there is no constitutional it to engage in sodomy.”

There is no constitutional right to engage in the kind of sexual practices of homosexuals engage in. They do not have a right to do that. They don’t have a moral right to do it. They don’t have an ethical right to do it. They don’t have a

right to do it according to the laws of nature and most importantly do not have a right to do it according to the laws of God. And beyond that, they do not have a right to do it according to the Constitution of United States.

And I believe they should have equal protection for all the other rights that are spelled out in the Constitution. They have the right to freedom of speech. They have the right to freedom of the press. They have the right to keep and bear arms and got the right to a trial by jury. They got [the] right to face their accusers in open court. We absolutely believe 100% equality before the rights that are enshrined in the Constitution. But do not let anybody tell you that a law can give somebody a right. A law cannot do that. A right can only come from God. That's the only place a right can come from. Now the purpose of the law is to protect rights. No law can give you a right to do something that is immoral. There is no right to engage in immoral behavior (*Obama violating his oath of office and doing an evil thing by attacking DOMA* 2013).

In *Clash of Orthodoxies*, Robert George addresses this division. He challenges the notion that “secular liberals” act from reason while Christians are inspired by irrational religion (George 2002). It is difficult to picture the villain of a secular liberal he describes. Individuals are generally more complicated and many balance a faith identity with notions of wealth distribution or equal rights. Still, George claims that both parties – a false dichotomy in which political actors are all one or the other – have their own unquestionable orthodoxies. His point, by Chapter 5, is that disagreement on rights is equally rational/irrational. So, rather than base an assertion of rights on supposedly neutral, rational premises, such as civil equality, rights need to be grounded in some absolute source. Without that source (he means the Christian God) rights are essentially meaningless. He has a point; it is just unclear if rights really do have concrete meaning when backed by scripture instead.

George echoes the Catholic Church's criticism of liberal democracy all the way up to Vatican II. Without an author of rights, protections from tyranny are the whims of man. Consensus among people cannot possibly protect something basic and intrinsic.

There's a point to that. Certainly we have seen democratically elected majorities violate human rights. Hitler was elected. As Kahan points out, we are all illiberal when it comes to our value judgments. Every competition of ideas contains some degree of illiberality in that we want one conclusion to trump another's (Kahan 2007). But substituting 'my' God or anyone else's presents a larger problem. The authority of human discourse is a better assurer of rights than the authority of the right majority's god. The threat of accepting the *True* faith or sinking into chaos is again a false dichotomy, one that was gradually rejected with the advent of new political realities.

If "secular liberals" i.e. anyone who does not submit to the authority of Robert George's God, have an orthodoxy, it includes a Schmittian dedication to personal autonomy over faith-based hegemony, a civil religion with equality and tolerance as its sacraments. But those are still faith positions. The main reason liberal premises are preferable for a rights discourse is that they are changeable. Biblical literalism leaves no room for scientific discovery. Claims of natural rights or positive rights are at least subject to empirical review. Robert George draws upon a theology that barely survived the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and democratic revolutions. It is a naïve notion that we can consult scripture for explicit prescriptions on how rights are to be limited. But it is only slightly more naïve than those that think rights are settled by mere existence. The approach to rights best suited for a liberal democracy is one that encourages people to accept that they might be wrong just enough to permit others to think they are right. It is certainly not universally accepted within the CR, but it is not flatly rejected either.

THE CR PREFERS REVEALED TRUTH AND A FIXED EPISTEMOLOGY OVER SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY.

The best-kept secret in America today is the precipitous drop in the quality of college since the Left seized power in higher education. Every year, various magazines publish a list of rankings for American undergraduate institutions. Forbes assures parents that "Every school with a Forbes grade meets a high standard." U.S. News and World Report assures its readers that they consider a wide variety of factors in measuring a college's effectiveness. While American colleges were once great institutions of learning, those who know higher education today recognize that "high standards" of quality are casualties in the war against traditionalism and American values. Where religion and love of country and family were once revered, radical Leftist ideology now prevails. Traditional values have been replaced by moral relativism, anti-establishment teachings, and the breakdown of the family. – Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse, Concerned Women for America (Crouse 2012a)

Most CR positions are not supported by science and there has been a centuries long conflict between religious authority and scientific discovery. The social sciences have also not been kind to the CR. Findings do not support their claims about populaces needed to be religious in order to be peaceful and prosperous. Few in academia possess a CR worldview and four years of college tends to lessen fundamentalist faith while building critical thinking skills. It is for this reason that Rick Santorum said, "We will never have the media on our side, even in this country. We will never have the elite, smart people on our side - because they believe they should have the power to tell you what to do" (Donahue 2012).

There is a well-worn trope of CR activist criticizing universities. “Experts” is a label used as an insult. CR leaders criticize intellectuals because they tend to differ politically. But it’s more than that. The CR worldview depends on a revealed/metaphysical epistemology. They do not dismiss observation automatically, but new discoveries have to match revealed truth or they are immediately dismissed. Some of this comes from a biblical warning against hubris. Assuming perfect knowledge is a folly of men’s pride. The CR prefers revealed truth because it does not permit doubt to interfere with fundamentalism. To rely primarily on man’s flawed knowledge is to trivialize the omniscience of God.

The problem with this way of thinking in terms of democracy is that scientific knowledge developed at the same time as the cultural changes that prefaced liberalism. The Scientific Revolution cannot be divorced from democratic revolutions. Both challenged the absolute authority of the church. In the same way the social contract and popular consensus replaced the divine right of kings, science replaced religion as the go-to source for information on the natural world.

Much has changed since the 18th century. Even the Vatican acknowledges evolution and the threat of climate change. But CR activism still wars against evolution in public schools. They encourage followers to home school their children and there is a booming industry of conservative Christian education literature. The CR has developed its own universities, its own think tanks, its own law firms and its own journals. But the guiding light for each of these endeavors is a sharply different epistemology than what is necessary for a liberal democracy.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. It seeks to explain how we know what we know. It encompasses methods of obtaining and legitimizing knowledge. When considering epistemology thinkers are encouraged to examine sources of knowledge as well as the validity of truth claims. Within scholarship there are different schools of thought among varying versions of epistemology. For the purposes of this paper, epistemology is generalized in four distinct but not mutually exclusive forms.

In a developing epistemology, knowledge and truth are gradually discovered over time. Research tools are used to build understanding of the world from internal concepts of self to expansive modeling of space and time. In this epistemology, there is no endpoint. There is no time at which any person declares truth to be totally known. Rather, old truths are challenged by new discoveries. One conclusion builds on previous conclusions without ever considering the process complete. Knowledge is not absolute and fixed as much as it is adaptive to subsequent discovery. This epistemology measures truth claims in terms of the methods of discovery. Claims pursued dispassionately with minimized researcher, subject, and conditions-based biases are considered more legitimate than those with higher degrees of bias or discernable intentions behind the discovery.

In contrast to this form is an alternative fixed epistemology. In it, knowledge is absolute and finite. Since original truth has already been received by mankind, usually accredited to an omniscient being, research tools are useful only in so much as they reinforce the original truth. In fixed epistemology, truth claims are measured by the degree with which they affirm the original understanding of truth. Findings that disagree

with the original, absolute truth are rejected. Likewise, messages from a purveyor of truth are accepted or rejected based on that person's allegiance to the original, absolute truth. Knowledge is neither discovered nor developed but reiterated.

Another way to distinguish epistemologies is in their sources for knowledge. Materialistic or naturalistic epistemology looks to physical phenomena exclusively for sources of knowledge. A naturalistic approach does not prevent personal belief in the metaphysical, such as a god, but dismisses metaphysical explanations as unnecessary for achieving understanding.

Contrarily, metaphysical epistemology looks for sources of knowledge outside of the physical world. It is the product of revelation rather than observation. Physical explanations are still used but are supported with metaphysical explanations. In this epistemology physical phenomena are expressions of metaphysical forces so examining the physical world alone provides inadequate and incomplete understanding.

Epistemology is in no way limited to these generalized forms. But, the contrast in the above descriptions highlights differences between irreligious research in academics and their counterparts in religious fundamentalism.

The spiritual/physical and revelation/discovery dichotomies not new. An essential debate between revealed and discovered knowledge has long been a part of Christianity. A pattern of duality pervades early Christian theologians' works (Pollmann and Vessey 2007). Humans are divided between spirit and body (Augustine 2011). Knowledge is divided between revelation and discovery. Revelation refers to absolute Truth as God presents it to mankind. According to biblical texts, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is

useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness" II Timothy 3:16 (NIV). The Second Epistle of Peter claims, "no prophecy of Scripture ... was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" II Pet 1:20–21 (NIV). Discovery is knowledge obtained via human observation and perception. Augustine and his contemporaries placed a higher value on revelation because it was a purer form of knowledge.

These two versions of epistemology run throughout medieval political theology and echoes of this division continue to be seen up through Habermas. These were not merely the framework of early Christian philosophers but necessary distinctions that are perpetuated throughout the development of western political thought. Authority is similarly bifurcated between a temporal state and eternal spiritual warfare by early theologians. The need to instill order vs. the eternal condition of the soul constitutes the two purposes of law derived from this dichotomy (Perreau-Saussine 2012, 22).

Like divisions over epistemology, debate over how knowable or paramount the here-and-now is to the transcendent is ongoing. For each of these pairings, the spiritual is always more real among Augustine and his contemporaries. Augustine's placement of the eternal over the temporal is characteristic of early Christian tenets. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" I John 2:17 (KJV). "The Earth and the heavens will disappear, but my words will never disappear" Matthew 24:35 (KJV). "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" Luke 21:33 (KJV). Humans and the governments they create are best understood as offshoots of a more significant battle between good and evil. According to

Augustine, it is the latter that should guide the former (Pollmann and Vessey 2007); (Hippo 2006).

The assumption of a “more real” spiritual realm predicated the Catholic Middle Ages (Hitchcock 2012). And, the established pairing corresponded to the conflicts that later dethroned the Catholic Church. The utility of human reason, natural equality, a preference for observation over revelation, and the obligation of the state in guiding the souls of men are each debated in the lead up to The Enlightenment (Ayer 2008). Some of these doctrines are literally warred over. This theology remains prevalent in current discourse. The American CR also sees matters of state in the context of an eternal battle between good and evil. It views God as bestowing or withdrawing protection from nations and the need for society not to tolerate sin in its midst. Much of the contemporary CR rhetoric reflects Augustinian ontological assumptions and the need for the state to protect the individual from himself. It relies on revelation beyond Science and moral certitude. Whereas liberal democracy reflects the “new religion” in which “Democracy is the expression of a political relativism and a scientific orientation that are liberated from miracles and dogma and based on human understanding and critical doubt” (Schmitt and ebrary, Inc 2005, 42) .

Understandings of epistemology also have political byproducts. Developing epistemology allows for continued discussion on what is true and not true. It also allows for simultaneous opposing conclusions. This understanding of knowledge lends itself well to a democratic system in which each constituent is allowed a freedom of conscience to accept or reject individual moral conclusions.

Fixed epistemology lends itself to a totalitarian or authoritarian political system. Because knowledge is fixed and absolute, discussion and diversity of ideas challenges the authority of the original truth. Viewpoints are only legitimate to the extent that they agree with the central authority. Fixed epistemology is illiberal because it fails to accommodate disagreement.

Naturalistic epistemology lends itself to secular regimes in which the role of government is limited to the interests of the governed without consideration of metaphysical forces or will. Because metaphysical explanations are unnecessary for law, individual metaphysical beliefs are awarded equal treatment under the law.

Metaphysical epistemology lends itself to a regime with a defined official metaphysical ordering usually expressed in terms of an organized religion. Because metaphysical explanations are considered in law the system privileges a particular religious class and incorporates the perceived will of that religion into governance.

Because different forms of epistemology correspond to deeply personal understandings of the world they can be particularly contentious in the political arena. When it comes to issues in education, conflict is often expressed in terms of independent political positions. A deeper examination looks beyond superficial political issues in education and explains conflict in terms of competing epistemologies.

The fixed and metaphysical epistemologies relied upon by CR organizations stand in contrast to the dominant developing and naturalistic paradigm throughout higher, secondary, and primary education as well as think tanks and professional research institutions. Although metaphysical and fixed epistemologies are more prevalent in

human history, the modern (or postmodern) preference for their developing and naturalistic counterparts tends to exclude CR organizations from the sphere of serious scholarship. For this reason CR organizations express a high degree of frustration with the culture at large that they see as the result of elite cultural influences embracing flawed epistemology. Behind the political positions espoused by the CR is an anti-education undercurrent, as education is currently understood.

Because the CR political agenda is totalitarian and authoritarian, any concession to a developing epistemology violates their understanding of the world and their role in it. Education cannot reflect a developing epistemology because it directly contradicts their exclusive truth claims. Likewise, metaphysical epistemology is necessary, particularly in science, to justify the privileges of the Christian class in the CR ideal government. For this reason, the CR discourages education and research in their current conventional forms and develops parallel alternatives such as CR universities and think tanks.

Advocacy groups use published studies to justify their policy preferences. Groups rely on scientific studies or articles published in prestigious academic journals to provide the intellectual skeleton supporting their agendas. CR groups reliably argue that gays and lesbians should not be allowed to foster or adopt children because studies have shown children do better in homes with mothers and fathers. This assertion about the type of household children thrive in is also expanded to arguments against same-sex marriage. Because, they argue, the primary function of marriage is the production and rearing of children, gays unions should not be legally recognized because states have a rational basis for recognizing opposite-sex couples exclusively. These positions are bolstered by

research done by the American College of Pediatricians including their heavily referenced policy statement, *Homosexual Parenting: Is It Time for a Change?* (American College of Pediatrics 2004). There is a problem, however, with their use of the research. The American College of Pediatricians is a construct of CR activist groups created to provide “scientific” research to bolster the political assertions of the CR.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has reached no such conclusions on gay parenting. In its policy statement on legal recognition for same-sex adoptive parents it says, “Children who are born to or adopted by 1 member of a same-sex couple deserve the security of two legally recognized parents. Therefore, the American Academy of Pediatrics supports legislative and legal efforts to provide the possibility of adoption of the child by the second parent or coparent in these families” (Health 2002). This policy statement and others like it were derived from the Academy’s comprehensive research article titled, *The Effects of Marriage, Civil Union, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children* published in *Pediatrics, the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*. This article looked at numerous studies on the effects of varying family structures on childhood development. Among the many findings were assertions that children of divorced heterosexual mothers develop comparably to those of divorced lesbian mothers and there is little to no propensity to identify as gay or lesbian if raised by same-sex parents. The article is co-authored by twelve professionals with an MS, MD or JD degree. It also references similar policy statements from the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Association of Psychology, and The American Psychoanalytic Association.

Another comparable policy statement from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) reads, “There is no evidence to suggest or support that parents with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation are per se different from or deficient in parenting skills, child-centered concerns and parent-child attachments, when compared to parents with a heterosexual orientation. It has long been established that a homosexual orientation is not related to psychopathology, and there is no basis on which to assume that a parental homosexual orientation will increase likelihood of or induce a homosexual orientation in the child” (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry 2009).

The AAP and AACAP represent the breadth and consensus of their fields. They abide by stringent research and peer-review guidelines detailed on their respective websites. Their academic journals receive submissions from university faculty from around the world. In numerous respects they are reliable sources on which to base policy. The American College of Pediatrics (ACP), however, disagrees with the policy statements of these groups. Their policy statement says, “It is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on homosexual parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or by reproductive manipulation. This position is rooted in the best available science” (American College of Pediatrics 2004). The ACP does not have the broad professional constituency of the other groups. In fact, they are quite small and comprised of only a handful of religious conservative psychiatrists (Kranish 2005). Joseph Zanga, a former employee of the FRC – a CR lobbying group - founded ACP specifically to protest the policy statements of the AAP.

ACP deliberately parallels the AAP in its name, the design of its website, and even its slogan in order to appear equally legitimate.

The studies ACP produces are cited by the FRC in its political lobbying materials and by other CR groups like Americans for Truth About Homosexuality (AFTAH) (LaBarbera 2007). Peter LaBarbera, the founder of AFTAH, is also a former employee of the FRC. This small, closed circle of questionable ethics in generating research is not limited to this isolated example. Often employees of CR activist groups will split off to form redundant satellite activist groups or niche professional organizations that seek to mirror more credible professional organizations. The research each produces is then cited and used by the original advocacy group and further cited by other CR activists.

The citing of questionable research is not contained within the CR political cohort. At the beginning of his second term in January 2005, President Bush was asked about same-sex parenting in an interview with the New York Times. His response was, "Studies have shown that the ideal is where a child is raised in a married family with a man and a woman" (Salamon 2005). The "studies" President Bush was referring to were those produced by the ACP and the FRC. The FRC is one of the CR groups who claimed to have a deciding effect on Bush's reelection in 2004. This could explain why President Bush preferred "studies" from small, religious motivated professional organizations rather than the broad consensus of the larger professional community.

The research of the AAP and similar professional organizations follows a developing form of epistemology because it uses research tools to develop knowledge and reach new conclusions absent the bias of political intentions. For this reason the

research produced by the AAP is considered more scholarly and its truth claims more legitimate. The ACP's research follows a fixed form of epistemology because the purpose of their study is supporting a particular representation of original "Truth." In this case, the original truth is understood as the will of God and the research is valuable to CR groups because it supports their certitude about fixed, absolute moral condemnation of gay people. The use of "studies" in President Bush's anti-gay explanation demonstrates how research conducted under the understandings of fixed epistemology is more convenient for the CR political agenda.

Frustration with the modern preference for developing epistemology is one explanation for the aggressive resurgence of creation theology in recent years. In the past decade, creationism has undergone a makeover and the redesign appears scientific. Intelligent Design proffers the universe is too complex to have developed absent the guiding hand of a superior being. Those that purport Intelligent Design are careful to keep the superior being anonymous in order to circumvent the Supreme Court's prohibition of religious teachings in Science classrooms handed down in *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 1968 (*Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1968) 1968). But the mask on the being is thin and the role CR organizations have played in developing and marketing Intelligent Design (ID) suggests their nameless designer is really the Christian God.

CR leaders support creationism based on a literal interpretation of the Bible. Constructing ID arguments has more to do with public relations than softened beliefs. Throughout the 20th century religion developed a reputation for being unscientific. In response CR leaders no longer rely solely on metaphysical explanations and instead

create think tanks with the impression of a developing epistemology. One example of this is Answers in Genesis (AIG) ("Answers in Genesis" 2012a).

Like the American College of Pediatricians, AIG is a think tank and professional organization designed to counter the overwhelming consensus of a profession. Their mission is to defend the creation story in the Bible literally using science. However, they are not coy in embracing a fixed/metaphysical epistemology. Their priorities statement states, "The scientific aspects of creation are important, but are secondary in importance to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Sovereign, Creator, Redeemer and Judge. The doctrines of Creator and Creation cannot ultimately be divorced from the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Answers in Genesis 2012b). Scientific understanding, in their view, is not developed over time but rather evaluated in terms of an original truth; here a religious belief. AIG was instrumental in establishing the Creation Museum.

Recently the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky celebrated its 250,000th visitor. The popularity of the museum in its first year of business surpassed even the optimistic projections of its founders (Kenning 2007). The Creation Museum houses numerous exhibits touting the scientific accuracy of Young Earth Creationism (YEC) that estimates the universe and all its contents to be about 6010 years old. According to YEC, God created the entire universe in six 24-hour days. Its original truth is Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. All subsequent research and science must comport with this original truth and the rest of the Bible in order to be valid because the Bible is the literal word of God. Needless to say, YEC incorporates a fixed/metaphysical epistemology in their understanding of natural science.

The Creation Museum contains life-size models of the Adam and Eve story. In the tale of original humans God's only commandment prohibits eating from the tree of knowledge. The fruit of knowledge is the discernment of right and wrong. In this story, seeking knowledge is man's original sin. In the CR worldview displayed throughout the museum, the opinion of intellectual pursuits has not improved.

The museum tells a cohesive story from the first exhibit to the last. Always aware that its truth claims challenge those of the empirical scientific community the Creation Museum seeks to explain its conclusions in terms of "different starting points" (Appendix C). One placard near the start of the museum displays a message in three rows. The first row says, "same facts, same world" (Appendix C). The second row displays two lines. One curvy line represents billions of years of development over time while the second straight, short line represents 6000 years of universal history. Under the long, curvy line reads "human reason" (Appendix C). Under the short, straight line reads "God's word" (Appendix C). The third row says, "different views" (Appendix C). The message is that man's understanding of evolution comes from human reason but their understanding of YEC comes from the Bible.

Although the placard is simplified it demonstrates two competing epistemologies with just a few words and pictures. Basing scientific conclusions on "God's word" requires a fixed/metaphysical epistemology. Scientific findings can only be true if they reiterate original truth. However, basing scientific findings on human reason, which includes our capacity for observation, measurement, and testing, leads one to reach conclusions other than YEC. The placard not only shows the preferred epistemologies of

the CR and scientific communities, it bluntly demonstrates the CR's hostility to reason. This explains much about the CR's frustration with science, research, and academia. Reasoning ability is threatening to the central authority of original truth and those that speak for it. The development of reasoning skills through education is an affront to their claims of manifest dominion.

Another placard shows two pictures beside each other. The first picture has the inscription "Rene Descarte said, I think therefore I am" (Appendix C). The other picture says, "God said I AM THAT I AM" (Appendix C). Above the pictures is the message, "Different views because of different starting points." Again, the simple display demonstrates the epistemologies. YEC is the result of adherence to original truth. Evolution is the result of human reason. The CR prefers allegiance to original truth rather than critical thought because it justifies their entitlement.

An interesting aspect of the placards is their summation of competing findings as "different views." The placards suggest evolution and YEC are just two viewpoints from different opinions and beliefs. Throughout the museum evolution is depicted in terms of personal belief. "Do you believe in evolution? Why do you believe in evolution?" (Appendix C). For the serious scientist one can no more believe in evolution than one can believe in photosynthesis and penicillin. There is no doubt personal belief is the primary inspiration for YEC's conclusions but the museum projects the reliance on personal belief onto developing epistemology in which belief is irrelevant. It exploits the popular misunderstanding of the term 'theory.' In informal conversation a theory is synonymous with a hunch or supposition and no more reliable than personal belief.

However, in science a theory is just below a law in the ordered hierarchy. It includes a collection of propositions that have each been independently tested for veracity and the ability to be replicated.

By describing the competing epistemologies in terms of “views” the Creation Museum seeks to invalidate science’s truth claims or at least put its conclusions on an equal plane with religious belief. However, the truth claims of YEC cannot be tested. One belief expressed in the museum is that chemical properties changed when Adam sinned. One placard seeking to explain the presence of venom in snakes says, “Chemicals that once had non-harmful functions at Creation changed to venoms after the Curse” (Appendix C). When Eve bit into the apple, nothing happened. But when Adam took a bite animals started eating each other, humans were forever cursed, and carbon atoms took on new attributes. The belief that elements changed their properties when Adam sinned helps YEC explain away things like radioactive dating that show the Earth is much older than a few thousand years. But, it is not falsifiable. The metaphysical explanation for physical phenomenon precludes any worthwhile examination.

The end of the museum includes scary displays of the “consequences of belief in evolution” (Appendix C). There are pictures from Nazi Germany with the clear message that Hitler’s genocide was the logical consequence of “belief” in evolution. This causal link is common among CR websites. A new DVD garnering a feature story and advertising on WND is called Darwin’s Deadly Legacy. The DVD explains how Darwinian natural selection provided the ideological underpinnings for the Holocaust. In the documentary, D. James Kennedy explains, “To put it simply, no Darwin, no Hitler...

Hitler tried to speed up evolution, to help it along, and millions suffered and died in unspeakable ways because of it" (Coral Ridge Ministries 2009).

Beyond the Nazi connections there are rooms with scary red lighting and collages of social ills including violence and crime juxtaposed with stem cell research and gay marriage. The imagery is a grotesque display of CR politics. The “evils” of gay rights come from the abandonment of God’s word; the same abandonment that leads to “belief” in evolution and Hitler (Appendix C). It is a slick propaganda machine custom made to support the authoritarian claims of the CR. Science, reason, and equal rights are all reprobate blasphemies in the CR province.

At the end of the museum hangs a sign with a screen that says, “Millions of years undermines every major doctrine of the Bible” (Appendix C) Many Christian theologians disagree. Some Christian thinkers, including the former Pope, have argued that evolution and belief in creation are not opposite and exclusive. Evolution is seen as the way in which God carried out his creative forces.

Common rationalizations for balancing religious belief with science include contextual analysis. The 24-hour day is based on the rotation of the Earth that is influenced by the gravitational pull of the sun. The creation story includes three full days of creation before the sun is created on the fourth. It is unclear why an omnipotent being would need to adhere to the confines of Earth time prior to the creation of the contributing factors to that time. Therefore, “day” may have been mistranslated and is more accurate to say “age.” The order in which living things appear in the creation story

roughly matches the development of life through evolution. And evolution is an observable process in nature and does not negate other understandings of the distant past.

Although these explanations use metaphysical and fixed epistemologies to make evolution fit the creation story they are still unacceptable to most CR organizations. While many CR leaders have expressed tacit political support for ID as a covert way to sneak creationism back into the classroom most CR leaders condemn evolutionary theology. Even though the rhetorical devices try to marry the conclusions of developing epistemology with the original truth of fixed epistemology, the recognition of the Earth's age still violates CR interpretation of original truth.

To maintain the certitude that a supreme being designed the expanse of the universe, billions of species of plants and animals, and rational beings for the dominion of you and those that think like you requires an appalling measure of existential audacity. As the diversity and strangeness of the universe – from the nano world of ultra microscopy to radiology viewed millions of light-years away – is revealed with research, CR leaders must continually re-filter scientific discovery through their religious narratives in order to maintain their claims of celestial privilege.

The world needs to be limited, small, and new in order for the CR to justify their political agenda. Human reason challenges dominion so thought and inquiry must be made the enemies of truth. Alternative science must be manufactured instead to enforce their original truth. Therefore, the CR must create entities like Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum that have the veneer of science to dissuade followers from more critical analysis.

In reviewing CR websites it is difficult to find any place in which attending college is explicitly forbidden. No CR leader is bold enough to issue a blanket condemnation of higher education. However, CR websites have a strong degree of message orthodoxy on the topic of education. From site to site the same themes are repeated over a long period of time. The CR discourages attendance at universities in two ways. The first and most common way is subtle. College is depicted as too expensive or physically and mentally unsafe. The second way takes aim at universities for presenting an alternative “worldview” wholly antithetical to the CR agenda. The second, more salient way reflects the CR displeasure with the developing and naturalistic epistemology favored by universities. Articles depicting college life as imbued with the threat of violence appear on CR websites with many cross-posted on several sites simultaneously.

In August 2009, WND ran an article titled, *After Stabbing, University Investigates Backgrounds* (WND 2007). The story focuses on the mental health of several workers at the University of Colorado. It details horrific acts on campus couched in qualifiers such as “allegedly” and “reportedly” with all the fright building of a campfire ghost story. “Astin allegedly slit the throat of an incoming student” (WND 2007). He reportedly had “been charged with various crimes including criminal intent to commit first degree murder” (WND 2007). “Astin then took out the knife and tried to ram the knife into a man’s heart” (WND 2007). Immediately following the last word of the article is a strategically placed advertisement for a book which reads, “Why homeschooling? New resource gives reasons parent education trumps all other options” (WND 2007).

The article is quite disturbing. But the story is obscure and references to the alleged events are scant on the Internet outside of CR websites. It is initially unclear why it captured the attention of WND. It does not deal with religion or cover any of the core CR issues such as abortion or gay rights. To understand why WND ran this article, which was prominent as its lead article on the day of its original posting, one must look at the messages contained by the repetition and juxtaposition of others like it.

One article about violent activity on campus does not count as an anti-college message. Viewed independently the article is little more than a scary, sensational, human-interest story – the kind posted by all news sites. But for WND this article is not isolated. Regularly they post about acts of violence on college campuses. The articles are archived and grouped under headings such as *University Life*. The message when seeing the headlines together is that campuses are scary places, like the bad parts of a city, and parents should be concerned about sending their children there.

Safety issues are not the only way CR websites discourage college. There is also a repeated theme that college campuses are dangerous places for one's mental health. Concerned Women for America (CWFA) a CR organization founded by Beverly LaHaye, whose husband is famous for the popular apocalyptic *Left Behind* series, professes to be a counter-feminism site for Christian women and often posts articles about the mental risks associated with promiscuity and abortion at college.

One such article titled *Psychological Problems Skyrocket Among College Students* covers the rise in reported mental health issues among college students with a particular emphasis on the female student body (Crouse 2003). The article pulls from a

13-year cumulative review of counseling services at Kansas State University published in *Professional Psychology*. It is unclear if the original study of Kansas State is meant to have implications for all universities the way CWFA suggests (Crouse 2003).

Much of what CWFA pulls from the study does not contain direct citations, suggesting there may be some message filtration on the part of the author. Conclusions loosely drawn from the study include, “Female students constituted about 2/3 of the clients [at the university counseling center] over 13 years,” and, “Students are more likely to need counseling the longer they are in college, that is, each successive year brings more students to counseling centers with senior students constituting more than a quarter (26.8%) of the total clientele” (Crouse 2003). One conclusion, which does not seem to be pulled directly from the original study, references the costs of the services by saying, “Some students now receive, dollar for dollar, more in psychological services than they paid in tuition and fees” (Crouse 2003). There is no indication how CWFA came up with that assessment but the message is clear. College is not only expensive and dangerous to one’s mental health; the two problems compound each other (Crouse 2003).

Another article that has appeared more than once on the CWFA homepage is titled, *College Coeds Experiment with Paganism*. The article claims there is a University Pagan Society at Syracuse University that is allowed to meet and use campus facilities. The presence of a student club at Syracuse is expanded to more broad statements about all colleges including, “On campuses today, sorcery and witchcraft no longer carry a negative connotation,” and, “Television series like *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as well as films like *The Craft* and the *Harry Potter* series are fueling interest in

Wicca” (Kleder 2002). The paganism is linked to sex and particularly unsafe sexual practices. The culprit behind this “pagan sexuality” is Women’s Studies department who “spend far more time on Wiccan beliefs, feminist empowerment, and goddess worship than on traditional Christianity” (Kleder 2002).

The assessment of Paganism is echoed in the *American Family Association Journal* in an article titled, *Pagan Sexuality 101*. The article argues that in schools we are seeing, “The latest reincarnation of the pagan sexuality that has smoldered and sulked jealously under the restraining influence of Judeo-Christian morality” (Vitagliano 2003). The relaxed sexual mores on college campuses create an environment in which women are particularly at risk for a host of tragedies.

This understanding of college life was recently covered in depth in the book *Unprotected: A Campus Psychiatrist Reveals How Political Correctness in Her Profession Endangers Every Student* (Anonymous 2006). The author uses the pen name “Dr. Anonymous,” and warns about the “dangers of immorality” for female students attending a university. In a piece for Christian Post titled, *How Universities Can be Hazardous to Student Health*, Anonymous describes her book saying, “Campus counseling centers are whitewashing the painful consequences of causal sex, STDs, and abortion. They are promoting the notion that men and women are the same” (Throckmorton 2007). Predictably, advertisements for *Unprotected* are ubiquitous on CR websites with many articles referencing it. Without knowing who the author is, or at what school s/he works, it is difficult to determine if the observations made in *Unprotected* are really the opinions of a respected professional or just an CR construct.

Colleges are not only unsafe for students' physical and mental health, they are also threatening to students' future financial success. College is condemned as costly by religious and secular commentators alike. No one argues that four years at a university is inexpensive. CR websites, however, have a repeated message that college is not only pricey; it is not worth the money invested.

In *Boundless*, the magazine for college-age singles produced by Focus on the Family (FOTF), there is an article about the unnecessary cost of college roughly once a month. Often the articles seem to be about different subjects but contain messages strongly discouraging investing in education. In *How to Wallow in Debt*, a humorous article about money management in youth, one of the main trappings for financial failure is trying to attend college (Temple 2009). The next month's issue has the article *God, Money, and You*, in which college is depicted as four years in a poverty-induced hell (John 2012). The following month there's an article called, *The Student Loan Swindle*. It looks at factors such as return on investment and opportunity costs to see if the paycheck after graduation justifies student loans (Temple 2012). Not surprisingly, it does not. The simple message of the article is that if you do not have cash-on-hand to go to school, don't bother. The tradition continues month after month.

WND draws similar conclusions. In an article titled *Lower the Boom on High-Cost Colleges*, Len Kinsolving presents a compelling case that an education is not worth the investment (Kinsolving 2007). In an article called, *Is a College Degree Required for Success?*, not only is college not required for success, the article contains a list of "geniuses of humanity" that did not bother getting a degree. (Washington 2007)

Although the commentary does not appear to be intentionally humorous, the list of degreeless success stories is hard to take seriously. The “geniuses” that did not need college include, Jesus, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Napoleon, and Mother Theresa. The article concludes with the derisive statement, “A professor is a mediocrity that is an expert on the works of great men” (Washington 2007).

The examples above are just a tiny portion of the endless articles with similar themes. In perusing the news archives of numerous CR websites going back to the mid 90s there is not one article depicting college as fun or a time of personal growth and priceless memories. Not one article encourages college as necessary to grow critical thinking skills or make lifelong connections that will carry a graduate through a professional career. This is no accident. These messages come from the CR’s view on the role academia plays in politics and culture. In CR rhetoric, the enemy is academic. Among all the articles that subtly discourage college for making students crazy, broke, and diseased there are less subtle messages that bluntly claim universities produce graduates with an anti-Christian worldview.

In articles attacking the dominant epistemology in secular universities *Boundless* takes a more direct aim with comparable regularity. In *How to Become Educated Despite Going to College*, J. Budziszewski depicts a conversation between an imagined student and Christian advisor. In the story, the advisor tells the student, “A lot of people [at universities] laugh, ...because they think that holiness, truth and beauty are matters of personal preference. That’s a false sophistication. Holiness for me has to be the same as holiness for you, because there is only one God, and both of us were made for Him.

Truth for me has to be same as truth for you, because there is only one reality” (Budziszewski 2012). This quote succinctly demonstrates the CR hostility to the developing epistemology in academic departments.

The idea that there is *one truth* is a central theme to CR criticisms of education. Liberal Arts in particular operate on the idea of discovering truth and encouraging debate and disagreement. Critical thinking skills are emphasized over conclusive agreement. The extent to which any one person holds a monopoly on truth is always questioned.

The CR operates on certitude instead. They know the truth and what they know is applicable and enforceable for everyone else. The purpose of education becomes the reinforcement of a set of beliefs about God, and corresponding political positions, rather than an inquisitive examination of the human experience. Just as in the Creation Museum where human reason is the root of all evil, thought at universities is sinister. The competition between developing/naturalistic and fixed/metaphysical epistemologies permeates CR articles arguing subtle and not-so-subtle dissuasion from higher education.

The preferred fixed epistemology coincides with the CR view of the role of government. Deriving from their understanding of knowable, singular truth is the idea that the role of government is the political projection of truth. Because the reigning education philosophy of almost all accredited universities includes the pursuit of truth rather than the proclamation of it in absolute certitude academics stand in opposition to the fixed worldview and the subsequent political objectives that derive from that worldview.

In The Senseless World of Academia, Karla Dial quotes heavily from William F. Meehan, a frequent commentator for FOTF on the state of American universities. Meehan complains, “It’s the whole PC movement, and that just means there’s no objectivity, no absolute truth. History of Western civilization is just one perspective on the world, America is not the greatest civilization” (Dial 2012). Many in academia would not disagree with much of what Meehan says but would take issue with his negativity. Most professors do not assume it is in the interest of free thought to glibly declare America the greatest civilization ever or profess absolute truth from a purely Western perspective. In the CR world, free thought is beside the point. Appreciation of other cultures or ways of thinking is tantamount to rebellion against almighty God. An education that includes less hegemonic cultural analysis is, by Meehan’s assessment, senseless because it rejects fixed and metaphysical epistemology.

Some CR articles dealing with the “worldview” at universities claim that it is the schools themselves that do not allow free thought. Because certain observations are considered unfounded, universities are accused of academic censorship. Like other accusations, these themes appear with regularity across the CR spectrum with headlines such as, *Mind Control University* (Concerned Women for America 2012) and *Anti-Intellectualism Among the Academic Elite* (Williams 2005). The latter argues, “Suppression of ideas that are seen as being out of the mainstream has become all too common at universities. The creed of the leftist religion is that any difference between people is a result of evil social forces. That’s a vision that can lead to the return to the Dark Ages” (Williams 2005). One example from the article of an idea “suppressed” at

colleges is, “The genetic physiological and biomechanical characteristics that cause blacks to excel in some sports – basketball, football and track – spell disaster for those [blacks] who have aspirations to be Olympic-class swimmers” (Williams 2005).

In the CR opinion orthodoxy, racial inequality is not the “result of evil social forces” but rather “genetic, physiological and biomechanical characteristics” that tend to produce different attributes and skills in different races (Williams 2005). Racist ideas like this, of course, are not taught in schools so CR websites label their exclusion as an affront to academic freedom. Other ideas that are “suppressed” because they are “out of the mainstream” are suppositions that homosexuality is a mental disease and humans lived with dinosaurs. Because most colleges do not teach these ideas, CR articles cast them as elite and anti-Christian. The argument claims universities adopt political positions first then come up with the scholarship to support them rather than pursue discovery through rigorous methodology. CR writers that express this view errantly ascribe a fixed epistemology to universities but claim their original truth is flawed. While most CR articles object to academia because of the reliance on developing epistemology, in these cases the authors assume the epistemology is just as fixed as their own but follows from a contrasting reference point of fixed truth.

The idea of one truth and academia’s refusal to teach it exclusively is summarized by a DVD series and accompanying website produced by FOTF called *The Truth Project*. *The Truth Project* challenges the belief that what is true for one may not be true for another. It argues in favor of the existence of absolute truth (www.TruthProject.org).

However, absolute truth as they use it does not carry the conventional understanding found in most philosophical discourse.

Traditionally proponents of absolute truth argue in favor of a cohesive reality outside the constructive capacities of the human mind. The extent to which each understands absolute truth is a product of individual perspective. Disagreement is reasonable because there is a singular reality outside of us but each is limited by their five senses and personal perspective. For FOTF, human perspective is irrelevant. Because the truth has already been detailed by “God’s word” differing conclusions challenge its authority. Diversity of thought is dissent. *The Truth Project* provides an epitomized fixed epistemology. But, like the articles referenced above, the alternative criticized is not a developing epistemology but a competing fixed epistemology in which the original truth is a contrast to the Christian God.

The understanding of truth that *The Truth Project* presents is singular in its assumptions. All of life is summarized into succinct worldviews that the participants are challenged to accept or reject. The reader is presented with an equally singular “secular humanist” alternative. The “truth” worldview comes with ready-made religious conclusions and political preferences. There is no need to think through the complexities of human existence. Just point to the description labeled absolute truth.

Titles such as *How to Get an Education Despite Going to College* and *How to Stay Christian in College*, (Budziszewski and Navigators 2004) suggest that adherence to the prescribed worldview renders academic inquiry unnecessary. The eighteen-year old college freshman must approach her education with certainty in her understanding of

“absolute truth.” Although a degree may be technically required to pursue a career, the student is encouraged to proceed through her requisite course load with an invincible skepticism. In this way FOTF and likeminded CR organizations do not explicitly condemn attendance at a university but the recommended approach negates the value of critical thinking an education provides.

Not surprisingly, part of *The Truth Project* is called TrueU™. (www.trueu.org) Because the stage on which the competition among epistemologies plays out is usually higher education *The Truth Project* and TrueU™ is explicitly geared toward college students. The hope is that college students will recognize signs of developing/naturalistic epistemology in their curricula and supplant them with the preferred fixed/metaphysical epistemology of the CR while in school.

The May 11, 2007 edition of Bill Moyer’s Journal on PBS documented the graduation ceremonies at Regents University (Moyers 2007). The college and law school founded by CR leader Pat Robertson provides an alternative to traditional education. The university’s mission is dominionism with students trained to seek positions of power. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney provided the key address at graduation and former Attorney General John Ashcroft was present to recruit young Christian men and women to work in the government.

Robertson and the school’s dean, Jeff Brock, are not shy about seeking to control the government. Brock first explains how the wall separating Church and State is purely institutional and surmountable through a strategy of placing professionals with a CR worldview in positions of authority. Pat Robertson later argues, “There was never any

intention that our government would be separate from God almighty” (Moyers 2007). Robertson founded Regents to “change the law to reflect God’s law” (Moyers 2007). Because lawyers and justices are needed for that revolution, Robertson also founded the law school 20 years ago.

In the piece, graduates at the law school ceremony repeat familiar mantras of CR ideology. Harley Gammel explains her plans for her degree by saying, “I intend to help further the administration of justice and I believe in absolute truth, not grey or relative truth, but absolute truth and that’s what God’s word is” (Moyers 2007). Regent uses a fixed/metaphysical epistemology in which the purpose of education is affirmation of original truth understood as the word of God. Gammel continues, “Part of the goal of many of us who are going out from this institution is to follow what it really means to be a Christian leader, to share the truth, to offer the truth, and to rely on the truth” (Moyers 2007). Again, the singular, knowable truth is the object of her education and future career. She sees her role in the legal field as seeking avenues to enforce her certitude.

Another unnamed female graduate explains her goals by saying, “The importance to me of having the biblical foundation in the law is because of my belief that God’s law is the highest law” (Moyers 2007). Elevating biblical law over the law of the land is a good example of CR objectives put into practice. In the CR ideal, “God’s law” is the law.

Another unnamed male graduate of the law school explains his take on civil liberties law by saying, “Instead of promoting the individual’s liberties, necessarily, we are looking at what’s good for people in terms of these values that are found in the Bible”

(Moyers 2007). The quote is classically CR. Instead of respecting a system in which all citizens' civil liberties are protected under the law regardless of personal faith, civil liberties take a backseat to Biblical law. In this graduate's understanding of legal theory those not conforming to the religious teachings he accepts are not worthy of full protection. Just as in the CR vision, those not conforming to the authority of original truth have diminished or non-existent rights.

Should comparable questions be asked of graduates at most law schools, the enforcement of absolute truth and "God's law" through government would likely not be such a common career goal. The quotes from graduates at the law school suggest they are not just devoutly faithful but lack basic understanding of the fundamentals of liberalism. The distortion of Constitutional law evident in the graduates' explanations might not be so disturbing if Regents was not so successful in its mission to infiltrate the government.

PBS reports 150 graduates of Regents University worked in the Bush administration at one time and had high-ranking positions in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Commerce, Education, State, Justice, Veterans Affairs, US Aid, Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Special Council's Office, the CIA, NASA, and all branches of the military. The scope of placement is startling when compared to the relatively small student body. The saturation of Regents graduates in the Bush administration was quite deliberate. Kay Coles James ran the Office of Personnel Management for four years in the Bush administration where she was in charge of filling hundreds of positions. A graduate and former dean of the Robertson School of

Government at Regents, James was also Senior Vice President of the FRC (U.S. Office of Personnel Management 2007). Along with John Ashcroft, who changed hiring procedures at the Justice Department to recruit more Christian staff, James is credited with the disproportionate representation of Regents graduates in the Executive Branch.

Jay Sekulow, a former employee in the Bush administration, received his PhD from Regents. His dissertation argued that judges can and should use their personal religious beliefs to decide cases; a view opposed by the American Bar Association and disputed by decades of legal theory (Mauro n.d.). The dissertation earned him a spot in the Bush White House as an advisor on judicial appointments. Since leaving the White House Sekulow has started his own legal group with the mission of rolling back Supreme Court decisions favorable to gay rights (Mauro n.d.).

Regents' most famous graduate, Monica Goodling, worked for the Bush campaign in 2000. After Bush took office she was appointed to the Justice Department where she served under John Ashcroft and his successor Alberto Gonzales. At age 33 she became the Justice Department Liaison to the White House, a powerful position for a person her age. In this position she was given hiring and firing power over 135 appointees. She later became embroiled in a scandal following the firing of eight federal prosecutors for political reasons after Bush was reelected in 2004. One of the replacement federal prosecutors was a friend and fellow Regents graduate and former coworker in the 2000 campaign. After facing pressure for introducing politics to traditionally apolitical appointments she invoked her Fifth Amendment rights against

self-incrimination and promptly resigned. Soon after she was awarded immunity to testify openly before Congress (Blumenthal 2007).

The success of Regents University provides a clear picture of the CR agenda to take over national politics. Discouraged with the norms of traditional universities, Pat Robertson founded his own school based on a fixed and metaphysical epistemology in which students are not trained to discover truth but defend original truth and enforce it in law and politics.

Other Universities, such as the late Jerry Falwell's Liberty University and Oral Roberts University, share comparable missions. Because the developing/naturalistic epistemology used in academia does not support CR authoritarian ambitions, CR leaders establish their own parallel institutions with fixed/metaphysical epistemology. They then commission graduates trained in fixed and metaphysical assumptions to assume positions of power and supplant law with religious "truth."

In *God's Harvard: A Christian College on a Mission to Save America*, Hann Rosin details the founding and mission behind Patrick Henry College, a university that attracts a conservative Christian student body. One potential criticism of Christian homeschooling is that it leaves students ill prepared to go to college. A student's university Biology or History professor is unlikely to mirror the lessons taught by many Christian homeschooled families. Patrick Henry College specifically targets those students so that they can get a degree from an accredited institution while still learning information that contradicts historical and scientific consensus. The most troubling portions of the book explore outright fallacies concerning evolution that are taught at

Patrick Henry College. Using a blend of Young Earth Creationism and legitimate scientific critiques of Darwin's work, Rosin reveals a startling distortion of scientific terms, most notably "theory" (Rosin 2008, 152-155). Rosin's description casts Patrick Henry College as less concerned with training future bureaucrats and activists and more concerned with perpetuating the insulation from secular education.

Objections to developing epistemology are not limited to universities. In fact, much of the CR criticisms of academia are worded in terms of retaining beliefs rather than instilling them. By age 18 if a child is not thoroughly steeped in a CR perspective s/he is unlikely to develop one in early adulthood. For this reason concerns about secondary education eclipse those for higher education both in frequency and in tone. For the CR, public education is ground zero in epistemological warfare. Whereas leaders are hesitant to explicitly condemn attendance at a university, many have called for a mass exodus from public schools. Even private schools who self-identify as Christian may not be Christian enough for most CR organizations. For primary and secondary education, CR messaging is more common, consistent, and intense.

In *Political Agendas for Education: From Change We Can Believe In to Putting America First*, Joel Spring explains the educational goals of a variety of political groups (Spring 2001). While most groups' agendas take the form of curriculum and administrative augmentations, the CR is unique in that they advocate against public education and education training *in toto* as well as radical changes to education overall including, in some cases, the total abolishment of free public education. This is because, like universities, public schools display developing epistemology. According to Spring,

CR concerns over education are based in a belief that, “a liberal elite controls the dissemination of ideas in U.S. society” (Spring 2001, 5).

Like all groups, the CR recognizes that politics in the near future is shaped by the education of young people now. The CR is certainly not alone in wanting to influence public schools. However, Spring emphasizes the unique way in which CR organizations want to reduce or eliminate the role traditional education plays in teaching problem solving and discernment. “According to Evangelicals, secular humanism teaches that individuals can reason their way to moral decision rather than rely on the Word of God. Evangelical Christians do not want children to use reasoning in solving moral dilemmas. Instead, they want strict obedience to the Word of God” (Spring 2001, 6). As in the Creation Museum and higher education, human reason is cast as the villain. Spring may not realize it but he is accurately identifying the competition among epistemologies.

For the CR, reasoning, and critical thinking skills are bad things. Instead of thinking, CR organizations prefer that students base knowledge on the “Word of God.” While this initially sounds like a mere profession of faith it calls attention to the illiberal mindset of the CR. The “Word of God” is presumably the Christian Bible. However, the Bible’s use of examples from society thousands of years ago makes it difficult to apply directly to contemporary issues. Since an audible voice from the heavens clearing up all questions is not available, God’s word is reliant upon human interpreters of scripture to determine how it is applied to current moral dilemmas.

These human interpreters are almost uniformly conservative white males that bring their own prejudices and anima to their interpretations. Relying on the word of

God really means relying on human interpreters of sacred texts. CR leaders prefer their members, and society at large, not to learn how to think or reason but look to them for direction in all things. They bemoan the “liberal elite” that supposedly control education but supplant that elite with their own unquestionable superiors. While the “secularism” of “elite-driven” education allows for free and open discourse, the CR substitute allows for no discussion at all; only submissive obedience to their will which they credit as God’s. The CR view of education, like government, is illiberal. Stated differently, from early childhood through adulthood the CR relies on fixed/metaphysical epistemology to train obedient followers in a Christodemocracy.

**CR ACTIVISM OPPOSES PLURALISM BY DENYING OTHERS AN EQUAL
ROLE IN THE COMPETITION OF IDEAS.**

In the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt describes two tactics a party must utilize to ascend to power. It must first sell the public on an imagined, great past and then blame the loss of that past on an enemy within. The public must be convinced that its society used to be great when the correct people were in charge but it has experienced a period of decay. The decay is then blamed on people that disagree with the rightful leadership and have too much influence. Those enemies must be marginalized and disempowered if greatness is to be reclaimed. The imagined, romanticized past is possible again if good people rise up and overthrow their usurpers (Arendt 2009).

The comparison to CR rhetoric is obvious. They imagine a past America that was greater. They imagine an original intent of the nation that has been lost and blame a period of decay on departing from that original intent. They cite all sorts of statistics, including divorces, murders, abortions, etc., as evidence of the loss of greatness. The decay is then blamed on those that exercise illegitimate power: the secular humanists that control our schools, the gay activists that achieve illegitimate rights through bullying and intimidation. To reclaim America's greatness, Christians are implored to take back their schools, take back the government, and take back culture, all to reinstate the true Christian authority. The messaging is effective and prefaced on a past that never was.

A related strategy involves downplaying the numbers of the *other*. Michelle Goldberg describes this strategy used by American Veterans in Democratic Defense (AVIDD). Its founder, Jim Cabaniss, describes his group's purpose being rooted in protected the true America from influence from small groups.

People who call themselves Jews represent maybe 2 or 3 percent of our people. Christians represent a huge percent, and we don't believe that a small percentage should destroy the values of the larger population. They [Jews] are a driving force behind trying to take everything to do with Christianity out of our system. That's the part that makes us very upset (Goldberg 2007, 35).

The rhetoric shows that the “real” Americans, the products of true American history, far outnumber the not-us among us. At the same time, there is a corresponding theme of persecution, discussed in Assumption 4. Christian conservatives both depict themselves as the true majority and the oppressed. It is difficult to understand the claim of oppression. Every U.S. president and most members of Congress have always been Christian. Demographically most Americans claim a Christian identity. However, many Christian conservatives feel like the loss of compulsory prayer in schools or advancements in the rights of non-Christians amount to persecution.

The CADC, described in Assumption 4, defends against Christian defamation in America. Its website describes Christians as the “persecuted majority in America” and lists the seven worst incidents of “Christian bashing.” A careful look at their materials, however, reveals an opposition to pluralism that is equated with Christian bashing. It depict a zero-sum competition in which another faith's religious liberty automatically negates Christians'. Among the incidents it cites is the criticism of Jerry Falwell by

atheist author Christopher Hitchens. To criticize Jerry Falwell is to bash Christians. Other items on the list include a CNN documentary that looked at religious extremism in Jews, Christians and Muslims and the movie the Golden Compass. The former highlighted fringe elements of faith that used violence to force compliance. The latter was a story about a girl that resists a mind controlling central authority that figuratively alludes to church dominated culture (Farah 2007).

The theme of “take back America” is particularly anti-pluralistic because it suggests some illegitimate populace is currently controlling America and that America once “belonged” to conservative Christians. The theme of the annual National Reclaiming America for Christ Conference (NRACC) in 2001 was “Return America to its Biblical Judeo-Christian Roots” (“Reclaiming America for Christ | Reclaiming America For Christ” n.d.). Descriptions of the annual gathering of Evangelical Christians describe “dazzling photo presentations of biblical American history” (“Reclaiming America for Christ | Reclaiming America For Christ” n.d.). The newsletter sent to conference attendees reads,

Dr. G. Thomas Sharp brought his dinosaur [sic] exhibit which made a stunning stage for the event. Two huge dinosaurs [sic] framed the platform on each side with a teradactyl [sic] flying above, a huge Tyranasaurus [sic] Rex head in the back and several other exhibits. Paul Blair, guest speaker, quoted from the Founding Fathers with all the conviction and spirit as if he had actually sat in those meetings, and with hammer and chisel they pounded out the foundation of a Great Christian Nation. (“Reclaiming America for Christ | Reclaiming America For Christ” n.d.)

A similar conference, the Eagle Forum’s *How To Take Back America Conference* boasted a who’s-who list of CR leaders. Unlike the NRACC, this conference is specifically geared toward activists in the movement and is designed to strategize.

Breakaway sessions described in the conference's program include instruction on working in the federal bureaucracy and reviewing what's on the shelves at your children's school library (Eagle 2009).

Joseph Farah's *Reclaiming America for Christ*, is a similar strategy guide that lays out a step-by-step plan to get America back. It includes abolishing the income tax and the IRS, withdrawing from all international treaties and institutions, repealing all gun laws and ending federal funding for schools, the arts, conservation, housing and agriculture. Not surprisingly, *Reclaiming America for Christ* also makes the bold claim that American pluralism was never intended to be extended to non-Christians (Farah 2005).

A similar work, C. Peter Wagner's *Dominion: How Kingdom Action can Change the World* (Wagner 2008) expresses the same view of pluralism. The book is pure Augustinian logic and understands the original purpose of America to be steering its citizens toward Christ. A long list of perpetrators have kept America from that goal including homosexuals, various categories of immigrants, Catholics, Jews, secularists, and education unions.

Another popular CR book that was on the NY Times Bestseller List is James McNaughton's *One Nation Under God*. In it, he prescribes, "The church to assume a broader role in molding the national character, including actively censoring the entertainment industry and having a direct role in education and family life" (McNaughton 2008). Note the use of the definite article. There is only one church, and that church's authority should assume dominion.

During the 2012 GOP primary in Louisiana, Greenwell Springs Baptist Church pastor Dennis Terry hosted a rally with FRC President Tony Perkins and candidate Rick Santorum as special guests. Before introducing Santorum, Terry fired up the crowd with a rousing speech, in which he said,

I don't care what the liberals say. I don't care what the naysayers say. This nation was founded as a Christian nation. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, there is only one God. There is only one God and his name is Jesus. If you don't love America, you don't like the way we do things, I've got one thing to say, Get Out! We don't worship Buddha, we don't worship Mohammad, we don't worship Allah! Get out! We worship God. We worship God's son Jesus (*Dennis Terry Introduces Rick Santorum 2012*).

Each phrase increased in volume till the final “get out” was shouted to thunderous applause. With each group mentioned, Santorum mouthed “Amen.” Tony Perkins smiled and then thanked the Lord for men like Pastor Terry when he began his speech. Perkins is a frequent guest on shows like Hardball with Chris Matthews and Sean Hannity on Fox News. During these programs, he is always measured in his speech, appearing ecumenical and claiming to want to include faith in politics. This is why word choice must be examined when the leaders of the CR are among friendly audiences. Perkins would never say, “Get out!” to other Americans when appearing on cable news. And, in all fairness, he didn't say it here. But he also didn't distance himself from it.

Tony Perkins and Ralph Reed do not throw bombs in their rhetoric as much as say, Bryan Fischer, who seems to say something inflammatory every day. But they follow a lot of bomb throwers. They have a lot of bomb throwers on their payroll. They appear at events with bomb throwers. Bryan Fischer's show airs directly before Perkins' on *American Family Radio*. Fischer delivered his speech just before Perkins at the Value

Voters Summit in 2011. Tony Perkins may not personally feel that non-Christians should leave. The people who actually say those things probably do not even really believe it. It fires up a crowd. But it's there. Perkins and others stand among it; they use the animosity and venom to make their solutions sound more reasonable.

Regardless of whether they believe it or not, the rhetoric is effective. It is out there and it is alienating. It invalidates other groups in the discourse because it says they should not even be here, much less organize and speak up. It is a phenomenon that really is unique to the CR. Every group and every cause resorts to overheated rhetoric sometimes. But environmentalists do not claim SUV drivers should get out or that the U.S. was founded as a green nation. Even fiscal conservatives desiring lower taxes and controlled government spending do not claim progressives should not live here. But it is regularly asserted on conservative Christian radio. On Election Day, 2012, Joni Lamb hosted Daystar's coverage of the election with guests Kelly Shakelford of the Liberty Institute and David Barton of Wallbuilders. When the topic of religion in public schools under a reelected President Obama came up, Lamb commented, "If you don't like that America is a Christian Nation, then you shouldn't live here" (Gibson 2012). Her guests enthusiastically agreed. It may seem like an off-the-cuff quip or evidence of sour grapes over an electoral loss, but similar statements are common on conservative Christian radio.

In 1993, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) released a book called *Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America*. At the time, it was a surprising account that has been emulated many times since. The ADL argued that the rhetoric of the CR in wanting to bring God back to America and instill God in public

schools was not a generic God but a very specific, politically motivated version of God. The book lays out how the reasoning is anti-Semitic because it treats Jewish Americans as outsiders. Looking at the same type of materials from the ACDC, it appears that language has only intensified.

In *Take Back America*, Matt Staver summarizes the agenda of the CR perfectly by saying, “God is the foundation of government and national prosperity. America is broken... something must be done” (Staver 2011). The question when reading assertions like this is then, “Who kicked him out?” Repeated calls to reclaim and take back America beg the question, “from whom?” It is tempting to succumb to the claim that only numbers matter. One need only list identify traits with conditions, compare the relative relationship among these traits and declare significance or insignificance. But narratives and identity construction are equally important. Who a group of people thinks they are has a lot do with whom they oppress.

Sometimes the rhetoric appears more than rhetorical. The Southern Poverty Law Center posted two audio clips from Christian Radio Broadcasting prior to Election Day to draw attention to the temperature of the discourse.

This is the thing that revolutions literally are made of. This would be more devastating to our freedom, to our religious freedom, to the rights of pastors and their duty to be able to speak and to Christians around the country, then anything that the revolutionaries during the American Revolution even dreamed of facing. This would be the thing that revolutions are made of. This could split the country right in two. This could cause another civil war. I’m not talking about just people protesting in the streets, this could be that level because what would ultimately happen is a direct collision would immediately happen with pastors, with churches, with Christians, with Christian ministries, with other businesses, it would be an avalanche that would go across the country. – Matt Staver, speaking on Christian radio (Nelson 2012).

If [Obama is] re-elected, it's gonna be war. We will be at war. We will be hunted down like dogs, Alex Jones, just keep that in mind. That's what the stakes are. – Joseph Farah (Nelson 2012).

If pluralism and the division between public and private are essential enlightenment values learned from the lessons of religious holy wars and church state marriage then they are essential to defend and teach. But, if instead they are seen as threatening to true America and true Americans, then the *not-us* must be marginalized. Integral to CR success is convincing something should-be based now on a false notion of what it was. It matters correlate certain political opinions can be correlated with frequency of church attendance. But, it doesn't show the whole picture. The Orwellian perfection seen in changing the stories of the past to win present and future political victories carries more salience. Governments are the products of ideas. Who or what we think our common heritage is matters.

The claim that each of the founders was Christian is not just inaccurate; it is immaterial. The religious affiliation of the founders does not justify Christian privilege anymore than their national origin and gender justify white male privilege. While correcting historical inaccuracies is important, it is decidedly more important to examine why history is being shaped a certain way and by whom. The inclusion/exclusion thinking and quest for superior status is the purpose of such examination. CR activists in the United States do not envision an undemocratic America as much as a democracy in which they are special. The idea that history needs to be reclaimed from usurpers is merely a tactic. The enemy is not secularists or gays or academics. It is equal treatment under the law; it's pluralism. If other identities are given equal consideration in laws and

the discourse that produces them, then Christians, particularly Christian male leaders, forfeit a considerable degree of privilege. As such, they must work to construe history differently as truly the story of them. Not getting a privilege must be rebranded as abjection. History, the culture, the country is taken from them but their claim of ownership is intentionally invented.

Within a social contract, for there to be an “us” there must be a “not us”. States are formal but nations are conceptual and wrought with in-group vs. out-group thinking. Those seeking to control others, regardless of affiliation, must establish their identity as truer than their opposition’s. Many policies endorsed by the CR are only justifiable if one assumes other segments of the population are second-class citizens. If a higher social value is placed on moral pluralism, tolerance for difference, and liberty of conscience as a negative right, then certain laws cannot be justified. Conversely, if an ontological understanding of America as a Christian nation founded on Christian theology is the higher social value, then the same laws become absolutely necessary to preserve heritage and a national identity. The idea that the United States is in the process of or already has “lost its way” and needs to be restored back to its true Christian heritage carries with it a host of in-group out-group thinking that disadvantages significant portions of the population. It matters, in culture and in political discourse, what we tell ourselves about we are.

CR RHETORIC OPPOSES INDIVIDUALISM BY CLAIMING GOD PUNISHES GROUPS OF PEOPLE FOR TOLERATING “EVIL” IN OTHERS.

If the role of the state is to instill Christian morality (Assumption 1) and Christians are currently persecuted (Assumption 4) and the CR fails to “take back America” (Assumption 7), then the end is certainly near. Each of the previous assumptions point to the idea that the U.S. has been contractually obligated to God since its inception. The country as a whole is accountable to the terms of that contract, which God can enforce with punishments on seemingly innocent people. Before explaining the common rhetorical device of God’s judgment, it is first necessary to summarize what leaders of the CR believe the United States is.

God raised up the United States for a specific purpose, a primary purpose, and that is to show what a nation that follows the Scriptures and the God of the Scriptures can be, to show how strong it can be, how prosperous it could be, how secure or how stable it could be, how content it can be, how happy its families are, to provide a model for the rest of the world of what a culture looks like when it is steeped in the spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ, the gospel of Christ and secondly to take that good news to the entire world (*Bryan Fischer Explains Why America Exists* 2012).

Along with the assumptions that Christian is the legitimate American identity and the Christian God played an active role in America’s founding, there is the idea that God judges nations as a whole. There are times in the Bible when God pours judgment out on ancient Israel or its enemies. Although not as ubiquitous as other messaging, some in the CR describe the United States as in a covenant relationship with God, much like ancient Israel. Even among those that do not ascribe a covenant to America there is a common

warning of God bringing judgment on its citizens. Frequently, natural disasters or tragedies, such as school shootings or the discovery of MRSA, are described as punishments from God. In the Old Testament, those in a covenant relationship with God are punished collectively for tolerating others' sins. It is not enough for an individual to keep the law, he must also assure there are not others in the tribe violating God's law. Witchcraft, spreading false gods and working on the Sabbath are each punishable by death. It is not hard to see the connection to contemporary politics. Only, if one assumes her democracy is liberal, she must permit others to sin.

The warnings that God will bring judgment down on America or remove his protection and turn his back accompany calls to reclaim America and turn it back to God. Again, there is the idea that the nation once was Christian and that allegiance has been violated. But, what provokes God's judgment is often core liberal democratic values, such as equal treatment under the law and no state endorsement of religion. So, what is being described is actually a completely different type of government, not just issues of gay rights or religious pluralism.

Timothy Ballard's *The Covenant: America's Sacred and Immutable Connection to Ancient Israel*, is heavily promoted on WND, Pastor John Hagee's website, and other CR sites. The book explains why the U.S. is in a covenant relationship with God that it cannot back out of without being destroyed. Chapters, such as *Blessings of the American Covenant* and *Obligations of the American Covenant* detail the terms of the contract. In some ways, this is just a strain of theology (Ballard 2012). These are the things God expects of the people that believe in him. It escapes theology and becomes political when

God's law and warnings of his judgment are applied to legislation and elections. One chapter, *Why God Sent the Constitution*, explains in great detail all sorts of moral disclaimers not found in the text of the Constitution (Ballard 2012).

Most religions contain prescriptions for followers as a whole. The difference here is that the rules of Christianity (a particular interpretation of Christianity) must be applied to believers and non-believers alike. God's commandments are not just for members of the faith but also for all citizens living within those believers' country. Works like Ballard's describe a country remarkably different from what most historians and democratic theorists understand the U.S. to be. The liberalism found in the American Constitution, particularly in the Bill of Rights, is interpreted as God's leeway within the Christian faith. Tolerating sin, even if it is Constitutionally protected expression, angers the "author" of the Constitution.

Not all leaders of the CR speak of the U.S. as in a covenant relationship like ancient Israel. But, it is universal that they use judgment motifs in their rhetoric. Alternative historical narratives, including FRC's book about the U.S. being based on the Ten Commandments, have already been described. In this section though, the messaging intensifies. The degree to which each spokesperson for the CR agrees with others' freedom of expression is unknowable. However, there is a constant theme of invoking God's judgment used to argue in favor of political outcomes.

Frequently, calls of imminent judgment follow a political loss. Prior to Election Day 2012, Bryan Fischer wrote in *I Want a President Who Knows the Difference Between Good and Evil* that,

The Democrats have now taken the list of sins found in Romans 1 and turned it into their party platform. These sins - abortion, homosexuality, rejection of God - which the Democrats now grotesquely argue are virtues, will bring God's judgement on any nation which honors them. Whether we choose a president like that on November 6 will determine whether America has a future under God's blessing or under God's judgment. May the American people choose well (Fischer 2012).

After President Obama was reelected, many commentators on conservative Christian news websites and radio programs assumed a crouching position, warning others of immediate calamity. In, *Inauguration Day or Judgment Day? The Harbinger' appears just as Obama's party begins*, Drew Zahn writes “on the very day President Obama is to be inaugurated the second time, Cahn joins with pastors, clergy, lay leaders, congressmen, senators, ambassadors and diplomats to pray, in part, that America will not continue its path of defiance unto judgment” (Zahn 2013). He is referring to *The Harbinger* by Jonathan Cahn, which argues that the “U.S. is receiving the same divine warnings ancient Israel once did” and will be similarly punished (Cahn 2012).

On the day after President Obama's reelection, Franklin Graham, who took over from his father, evangelist Billy Graham, warned, “Unless we're willing to repent for our sins, we will stand in His judgment. I want to warn America: God is coming around. He will judge sin, and it won't be pretty” (Gordon 2012). Graham previously explained the reelection in *This Could Be America's Last Call* saying that, “This could be America's last call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who is coming again one day very soon to save His own and to judge those who don't know and worship Him” (Graham 2012).

Following the Sandyhook school shooting, many CR websites interpreted it as God's punishment for removing compulsory Christian prayer from public schools. AFA's

Matt Sharp claimed, “God is being left out as a solution in the debates about what to do to protect children in schools. We look back over the years of where our schools have come, from the days when we used to have more open prayer and Bible reading and things like that, and even more parental involvement and I think it’s times like this that it ought to be a rally cry” (Kellogg 2012). Similar declarations came from eminent figures in the CR such as James Dobson, Janet Mefferd, Mike Huckabee, Peter LaBarbera, Matt Barber, Sandy Rios and Joseph Farah.

In an interview with Peter LaBarbera on the Americans For Truth About Homosexuality Radio Hour, Pastor Ken Hutcherson explained God’s marital disputes saying,

God does not have the same consequence for the same sin, bro. We’ve got to understand that as Christians and we better wake up soon because I think that one of the things God is showing us is that He’s getting a little sick and tired of America, he’s definitely having a holy throw up fest with his bride, we need to really stand back up and get this unity going or God is going to really turn loose judgment on us (LaBarbera 2012).

The following exchange occurred between Bryan Fischer and Pastor Bill Elliff on Fischer’s American Family Radio show:

Elliff: I’ve often thought about 9/11 and what happened there. God doesn’t cause evil, he didn’t cause the shooting the other day. But when we say, ‘Lord we can live life without you,’ then he says, ‘okay, I’ll let you feel that.’

Wilson: Let you get a taste of it (Tashman 1012).

Elliff: I thought at 9/11 what happened was God’s protective hand was removed and we felt what pure evil is like. We felt that this last week. That was pure evil, it’s the devil who has come to steal, kill and destroy. He’d just as soon kill a baby or a child in the womb as anything else. God allows that moment, we’re pressing the issue by turning from him, but he allows that moment to bring us to our senses and say, ‘God we desperately need you.’ So really it’s gracious. The pain that comes, the judgment that has really come by our turning away from the Lord is a merciful

thing that God does to bring us to our senses and bring us back to him (Tashman 1012).

It is “gracious” that God permits kindergartners to be shot because it helps us turn back to him. Here, perhaps more than any other place, it is clear that the messaging concerning God’s judgment has deeper purposes than just political victories. There are political implications; pundits have used a return to God as the correct solution over increased gun control. However, the idea that horrible things happen not to individuals *per se* but to a nation to make it be more Christian is astounding. It is hard to reconcile this worldview with any concept of liberal democracy. And while many political actors in the U.S. embrace illiberality to see their values enacted, the idea that God judges the country in this way stands apart as particularly extreme.

Without some sort of encyclopedia of quotes it is difficult to convey how commonplace the idea of God’s judgment on the nation is, especially on Christian radio programs. It is used to explain everything from flu outbreaks to eating disorders. The point of calling attention to it is to show should how different the normative framework is within the CR. It is democratic in the sense that citizens are called to vote correctly for the right leader. Every faction, religious and irreligious, encourages its vision of who to support in elections. But there is no notion of the right to be wrong, no allowance for value pluralism. America must vote and behave the way CR leaders tell them too or reap the consequences for their sin.

**THE CR REJECTS POLITICAL OUTCOMES IF THEY ARE THOUGHT TO BE
THE PRODUCT OF AN ILLEGITIMATE AMERICAN IDENTITY.**

If one accepts the premise that the U.S. is rightfully a Christian nation in need of “reclaiming,” it is logical to question political outcomes resulting from illegitimate identities. In recent years, calls for nullification and civil disobedience have intensified among CR activists. Much of this is accredited to the passage of the Affordable Care Act and state efforts to resist its implementation. The Christian Coalition has covered efforts to nullify “Obamacare” but has not outright endorsed them (Christian Coalition 2013). But, enthusiasm for ignoring decisions by judges and acts passed by Congress is not limited to healthcare.

Chuck Baldwin, pastor of Crossroad Baptist Church, one-time presidential candidate and host Chuck Baldwin Live on Christian Radio, wrote an enthusiastic piece for *Christian Faith in America* about nullification efforts in 2011.

Look through the list of the other freedom bills presently before the Montana State legislature and one will instantly recognize the potential for this State to stand at the “tip of the spear” in the reclamation and restoration of State sovereignty, freedom, and independence.

For example, there is a bill to nullify federal health care laws; a bill to eliminate the misapplication of the 14th amendment to the US Constitution; a bill to nullify the Endangered Species Act; a bill to authorize permit-less Concealed Carry; a bill to transfer management of certain federal lands; a bill to provide the State eminent domain authority for federal lands; and, of course, the Sheriffs First act, which would have required the Sheriff’s authorization for federal law enforcement agencies to conduct arrests, searches, and seizures.

I would dare say: if you are a freedom-minded individual, goose bumps ran up your spine just from reading the above summary. I got goose bumps simply writing about it. Can one imagine the kind of freedom that would be unleashed in this great State should even a handful of these bills actually become law? And think of the numbers of other State legislatures that would quickly follow suit (especially here in the West) should any State legislature pass and a State governor sign these kinds of freedom protections into law (Baldwin 2011)!

AFA's Matthew Sharp expressed similar support in a piece for *Christian and State*.

Nullification is not an act of going to federal politicians or federal judges to repeal an unconstitutional law. It's not about getting 'permission' to exercise our rights...it's about exercising them whether the federal government wants us to or not. It's taking action to make an unconstitutional act null and void right within your own state boundaries (Sharp 2013).

The excitement over nullification's potential comes from a shared viewpoint in the CR that political outcomes that do not comport with Christianity can and sometimes *should* be ignored. Elected leaders are sometimes illegitimate or win their elections as a result of deception. Laws and court opinions that come down on the wrong side of CR activism are seen as violations of conscience that need to be resisted.

This belief corresponds to the maxim that conservative Christians should elect Christians.⁶ Elected officials that are in office because of the 'not us among us' are only

⁶ The Biblical passages most commonly cited to support the obligation to elect exclusively Christian leaders are: **Exodus 18:21** Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

Deuteronomy 1:15 So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. (19) You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. (20) You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of an overseer, he desires a good work. (2) An overseer then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; (3) not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; (4) one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with

there because the real Christians did not do their job. This preference for a Christian candidate was put to the test in 2012. The CR split in several different directions because no candidate for the Republican nomination seemed sufficiently socially conservative, Christian, and viable.

At the 2012 Values Voter Summit, Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, endorsed Rick Perry. Jeffress told CNN “I think Mitt Romney's a good, moral man, but I think those of us who are born-again followers of Christ should always prefer a competent Christian to a competent - to a competent non-Christian like Mitt Romney” (Grant 2011). Chuck Hurley instead chose Rick Santorum while Chuck Colson criticized considering the religion of any candidate saying, “there may be no other group of people I appreciate more as cobelligerents than the Mormons” Colson also said, “They [Mormons] are stalwarts on life, traditional marriage, and religious liberty issues” (Flax 2012). Tony Perkins was uncharacteristically noncommittal.

Governor Romney was recognized as the most likely to win the nomination and defeat President Obama, but he is also a Mormon. Conservative Christians have had a difficult relationship with Mormons, calling them a cult, until recent years when

all reverence (5) (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); (6) not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. (7) Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you; (6) if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. (7) For an overseer must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, (8) but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, (9) holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Mormons collaborated on critical CR battles like Proposition 8 in California. The gradual acceptance of Mormonism quickened once Romney synched the nomination. Billy Graham's evangelism website listed Mormonism as a "cult" and labeled its leaders "false prophets" until Romney met with Billy and Franklin Graham during the general campaign and secured their endorsement (Graham 2012).

Allegiance to CR pet issues and likelihood of winning helped Romney build tepid support among Christian conservatives even if he was never their first pick. Failure to support Romney would encourage an Obama victory, something unthinkable to many in the CR. Beyond that, holding Romney's Mormonism against him had the potential of turning off supporters who valued any faith over the seeming lack of faith on the left. After Pat Robertson released *New World Order* in 1992 and gave a strident, exclusionary speech at the 1992 Republican Convention, the CR suffered some defections based on an impression of anti-Semitism and divisiveness. Many in the media latched on to Robertson saying in *New World Order*,

When I said during my presidential bid that I would only bring Christians and Jews into the government, I hit a firestorm. 'What do you mean?' the media challenged me. 'You're not going to bring atheists into the government? How dare you maintain that those who believe in the Judeo Christian values are better qualified to govern America than Hindus and Muslims?' My simple answer is, 'Yes, they are'" (Robertson 1992, 218).

More and more, the CR sees its opponents not as gays or feminists but as a more general "secular humanist." Any faith is better than no faith. Tim LaHaye and David Noebel's book *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* calls on Christians to "enlist in the battle against secular humanism (Noebel and LaHaye 2001). It

makes two large claims, humanism is a religion (Noebel and LaHaye 2001, 155) and humanism controls America (Noebel and LaHaye 2001, 173). For that reason, Romney's faith and the faith of others previously not thought to be part of the CR coalition are being welcomed as, like Chuck Colson say, cobelligerents. But, while the idea that only Christians are fellow travelers has dissipated, calls to resist the government have intensified.

In North Carolina, there is a battle in the state legislature to "nullify" the Establishment Clause and 14th Amendment, meaning those provisions in the Federal Constitution would have no bearing on North Carolina law. A bill introduced in the state house claims the Federal Government has no jurisdiction over matters of religion in state political offices. The bill was introduced after the County Commissioners refused to allow prayer by non-Christians at the opening of their meetings. Prayers before the body made specific references to Jesus and the virgin birth. The Establishment Clause forbids favoritism toward one religion and the 14th Amendment promises equal protection under the law. It also clarifies that the Federal Government trumps state governments. The Civil War and ratification of the 14th Amendment clarified states' subservience to the Federal Government. But, some lawmakers in North Carolina see that as an unconstitutional imposition of federal authority (J. Bloom 2013). The bill reads:

SECTION 1. The North Carolina General Assembly asserts that the Constitution of the United States of America does not prohibit states or their subsidiaries from making laws respecting an establishment of religion.

SECTION 2. The North Carolina General Assembly does not recognize federal court rulings which prohibit and otherwise regulate the State of North Carolina, its

public schools or any political subdivisions of the State from making laws respecting an establishment of religion (J. Bloom 2013).

Not surprisingly, the nullification effort has garnered mentions from Janet Mefferd, Cal Thomas, Sandy Rios and the Fox News morning program, Fox and Friends. Support for such efforts is based on the CR assumption that only political outcomes that are sufficiently Christian count. It was for this reason that the civil disobedience clauses in the Manhattan Declaration were controversial when it was first released. The Declaration closes with,

Because we honor justice and the common good, we will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family. We will fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's ("Manhattan Declaration" n.d.).

To some, that sounds like a subversive call to ignore laws they do not like. To others, it mirrors the story of Paul in the New Testament, who went to jail rather than discontinue preaching. The calls for Christians to resist laws that seemingly violate conscience are covered in Assumption 2. And, some companies appear willing to pay a high price for refusing to offer health insurance coverage that includes contraceptives. The Manhattan Declaration, however, sounds rather mild compared to calls for revolution should the Supreme Court rule in favor of marriage equality. Steve Crompton, General Vice President at Liberty Counsel, told Matt Barber on his radio program "it's high time that the American people rise up against the tyranny as well. If the judges try to foist [same-sex marriage] upon us, we need to resist" (*Barber & Crompton: Christians Must*

“Rise Up” And “Resist” If SCOTUS Strikes Down DOMA 2013). Or Perkins’ warning that “revolution” if the “Court strikes down the will of the people” (*Perkins: If SCOTUS Legalizes Gay Marriage, It Could Lead To Revolution* 2012). Or Staver’s warning of,

This would be more devastating to our freedom, to our religious freedom, to the rights of pastors and their duty to be able to speak and to Christians around the country, then anything that the revolutionaries during the American Revolution even dreamed of facing. This would be the thing that revolutions are made of. This could split the country right in two. This could cause another civil war. I’m not talking about just people protesting in the streets (Nelson 2012).

The rhetoric of the CR to “nullify” or reject unchristian outcomes is overheated, but unlikely to result in actual uprisings. It does show a contempt for the democratic process and judicial review, but only when those things are connected to an illegitimate American identity. Laws, leaders and court decisions can be ignored or resisted only if they are the products of secular humanism or liberals. The line between noble civil disobedience and subversive commitment to unlawful discrimination is blurry and yet another shade of illiberality the CR endorses.

THE CR ARGUES THAT THEOLOGY IS A NECESSARY BASIS FOR LAW.

Sarah Palin joined Fox News's Bill O'Reilly recently to condemn the critics of the National Day of Prayer, saying that the Judeo-Christian belief was the basis for American law and should continue to be used as a guiding force for creating future legislation. According to Palin, the recent backlash against the National Day of Prayer is proof that some people are trying to enact a "fundamental transformation of America" and to "revisit and rewrite history" in order to shift the Christian nation away from its spiritual roots. Palins's advice: "Go back to what our founders and our founding documents meant -- they're quite clear - - that we would create law based on the God of the Bible and the Ten Commandments. (Huff Post Politics 2011)

The ideas Palin expresses are widely accepted but lack an accurate understanding of the role of law in the U.S. As stated repeatedly, liberal democracies are neutral toward religion and afford the freedom to reject others' faith. But, she is not just wrong in terms of democratic theory. She is errant regarding theology.

In an FRC issue analysis titled, *Leviticus, Jesus, and Homosexuality: Some Thoughts on Honest Interpretation*, Rob Schwarzwalders clarifies when and how Christian scripture should be used in law. Quoting Pastor Richard D. Phillips, Schwarzwalders explains moral law, ceremonial law and criminal code. Moral law is "that which represents God's own moral character, is summarized in the Ten Commandments. These are forever binding, in both old and new covenants" (Schwarzwalders 2013, 4). Moral law is not just the Ten Commandments, but includes all biblical teaching, including the

regulation of sex. It applies to all people at all times. “God's moral law obligates every person and the company of persons--the society--in which we live” (Schwarzwalder 2013, 4).

Ceremonial law included the directions for atonement rituals.

The whole ceremonial code was rooted in a system of present and future sacrifice. The Jewish people were commanded to slaughter animals at their temple not because God delighted in the death of lambs and small birds. Rather, it was because the death of the animals symbolized the gravity of sin (Schwarzwalder 2013, 5).

Since Jesus died on the cross to atone for all sin, after the resurrection, animal sacrifice was no longer necessary. These laws no longer apply.

The criminal code detailed Israel’s criminal justice system and regulated behavior unrelated to atonement.

Ancient Israel's criminal code applied only to its own unique nation-state. These strict laws were to govern the theocracy of Israel--an extraordinary historical circumstance in which pious Jews lived under God as King and were to obey God's word as Law, not an elected democratic system (Schwarzwalder 2013, 6).

What is interesting about this explanation is the acknowledgement of democracy, not theocracy. “These laws were for regulating the nation of Israel, which was then but no longer is the particular people of God. While there is an undisputed wisdom contained in this civil law it cannot be made applicable to any nation today, since there are no biblically sanctioned theocracies now” (Schwarzwalder 2013, 7).

Although these categorizations may seem like internal church matters, they explain well the political agenda of the FRC and likeminded CR groups. A common criticism of the CR is that it pursues the regulation of biblical teachings arbitrarily, encouraging prohibitions on homosexuality but ignoring commandments not to eat

shellfish. This issues analysis explains in the CR's own words how scripture is interpreted and applied to law. It is not perfectly translated into activism but there is thought behind which verses are ignored. Another common criticism of the CR is that it seeks a theocracy, that it is only concerned with making biblical law the law for everyone. That has some truth to it, but it is interesting how Schwarzwalders explains that there are no sanctioned theocracies now and so the ancient Israeli criminal code cannot be applied to a democracy.

The CR respects democracy. However, as explained above, its leaders believe that moral law should be enforceable by civil authority for all people, Christian and non-Christian alike. It is from this nuance that the term Christodemocracy is inspired. There is a bedrock appreciation for democracy but an illiberal application of *some* biblical teachings. When it comes to morals and human sexuality, Schwarzwalders explains,

God does not ask us for input; He does demand obedience. He has a creative and loving master plan for how human sexuality works. He has a deep desire for purity in our lives, a purity which faithfully represents His own character. Such purity means abstention from sexual intimacy of any kind outside of heterosexual, traditional marriage (Schwarzwalders 2013, 8).

No input. No debate. No descant or dialectic. The choice is to obey or disobey. This issue analysis is a concise theology lesson, but it is more than that. It demonstrates the blend of biblical and civil morality that informs CR activism.

Sarah Palin summarizes much of the rhetoric of the CR. But, she does it a disservice by oversimplifying its mission. It is not so basic as making everything in the Bible the law of the land. The CR is not trying to establish a theocracy. But, it does advocate that universal moral principles articulated by its scriptures are ample

justification for law. CR leaders believe that there are parameters that apply to all people that are non-negotiable. It is illiberal to try to enforce them by law, they recognize that, but they also feel it is their duty to their God. CR leaders understand that they live in a democracy. But, like a lot of citizens in democracy, they have trouble accepting the limits of liberalism.

CONCLUSION

Jon A. Shields' *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*'s central thesis is that the CR is a force for good in democracy because it trains ordinary citizens in the norms of democratic participation. Shields looks at the cultivation of dialogue and the use of secular argumentation in the Pro Life Movement. He examines CR rhetorical materials, specifically training materials for the faithful. However correct he is in his assertion that the CR contributes to democracy, he sidesteps the theoretical question of what type of democracy.

On page 131 of *Democratic Virtues*, Shields shows a bar graph comparing the voter guide distribution rate among the CR, The League of Women Voters, The NAACP and Common Cause. Overlooking that the CR is a coalition of interest groups compared to individual groups in the graph, the CR clearly dwarfs the other organizations in how many voter guides it distributes. Shields argues that the CR teaches civility because it wants to "persuade, not alienate" (Shields 2009, 20). He uses James Dobson's *Focus on the Family Radio Program* as an example of civility (Shields 2009, 23). But, he misses a crucial point. Although the CR educates supporters on participation in democracy, the version of democracy it envisions is quite illiberal.

The CR does not forward democratic values via a large volume of political materials if those materials describe segments of the population as “enslaved” to a “deceptive perversion” (Family Research Council 2013, 3) as the FRC bulletin insert and suggested sermon claimed on *Stand For Marriage Sunday*.⁷ The sermon also warns, “homosexual activists won’t stop at recognition, their aim is domination. They will not stop until they win over our children and our convicting voice is silenced” (Family Research Council 2013, 6) It called for, “God’s mercy on a nation that is speeding toward Sodom, and hurtling toward Gomorrah” (Family Research Council 2013, 7). Rhetoric like this does not support core democratic values, such as liberty of conscience, equality, pluralism or the division between public and private. It delegitimizes certain identities as others, not limited to LGBT people but broadly anyone who disagrees with the CR’s interpretation of scripture and American history. The CR envisions a different type of democracy, a Christodemocracy that embodies the assumptions described throughout this project.

A rigorous discourse analysis of a wide breadth of CR materials reveals the movement’s agenda is not a theocracy, but a democracy with an alternative normative framework. The assumptions associated with that framework differ from those typically associated with the U.S. Although there are limits to the utility of democratic typologies, the assumptions that inform value judgments can be compared to reveal an alternative democratic theory. Often, varying and even contradictory assumptions can be active within a single democratic state. The analysis of the CR does not presuppose a correct

⁷ The full sermon and bullet insert can be found in Appendix B

label of the U.S. but, rather, a deeper understanding of influential political forces within the U.S.

The CR does more than advocate for political outcomes. All interest group coalitions do that. It advocates a different kind of democracy, one in which Christians and Christian teachings are privileged, pluralism is limited and biblical morality is a rational basis for law. These assumptions contrast those of liberal democracy, which are the product of cultural changes in the West that divorced prince and papal authority. To fully understand the activism of the CR, one must consider the democratic assumptions that inform their value judgments. Through this lens, the CR is seen more clearly as a coalition of activists working within the confines of liberal democratic assumptions to subvert liberal democracy in favor of their alternative framework.

APPENDIX A

Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom Thomas Jefferson, 1777

Whereas, Almighty God hath created the mind free;

That all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and therefore are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord, both of body and mind yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do,

That the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavouring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world and through all time;

That to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical;

That even the forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor, whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness, and is withdrawing from the Ministry those temporary rewards, which, proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labours for the instruction of mankind;

That our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry,

That therefore the proscribing any citizen as unworthy the public confidence, by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages, to which, in common with his fellow citizens, he has a natural right,

That it tends only to corrupt the principles of that very Religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing with a monopoly of worldly honours and emoluments those who will externally profess and conform to it;

That though indeed, these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way;

That to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy which at once destroys all religious liberty because he being of course judge of that tendency will make his opinions the rule of judgment and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own;

That it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government, for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order;

And finally, that Truth is great, and will prevail if left to herself, that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons free argument and debate, errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them:

Be it enacted by General Assembly that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities. And though we well know that this Assembly elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of Legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare that the rights hereby asserted, are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.

APPENDIX B

Stand For Marriage Sunday Sermon and Selected Power Point Slides from the Family Research Council as They Appeared to Participating Churches

Stand for Marriage



II. THE DECEPTIVE PERVERSION

**“You are not to sleep with a man as with a woman; it is detestable.”
Leviticus 18:22**



StandforMarriage.com

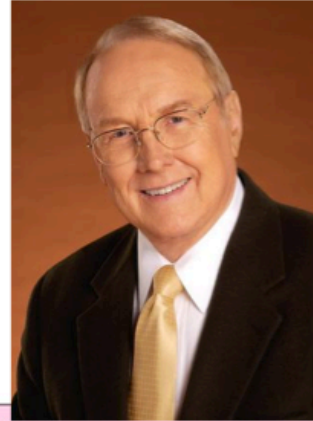
Stand for Marriage



III. THE DEFINITIVE PROBLEM

“I am certain that homosexuality does not result from irresistible genetic influences, as some would have us believe.”

Dr. James Dobson



StandforMarriage.com

Stand for Marriage



III. THE DESTRUCTIVE PROGRAM

Goals of the Radical Homosexual Agenda:

- Special privileges and rights in the laws (e.g., Federal Hate Crimes; ENDA; Military; etc.).
- “Sensitivity training” of our children through public education.
- Silencing critics in the clergy and Christian media.
- Securing the legal benefits of marriage and parenting for any two people of the same gender.

StandforMarriage.com

Stand for Marriage



III. THE DESTRUCTIVE PROGRAM

B. Educational Arena



StandforMarriage.com

Stand for Marriage



IV. THE DETERMINED PLAN

Action Step 3: Participate

On March 26, consider joining thousands of Marriage Supporters in Washington, DC as the Supreme Court begins hearings. Visit MarriageMarch.org for details.

StandforMarriage.com

“Stand for Marriage”
Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24
March 2013

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Contrast that celebration of biblical marriage with the redefinition of marriage here in America. In a May 9, 2012 interview with Robin Roberts on ABC, President Obama stated: “At a certain point, I’ve just concluded that-- for me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that-- I think same-sex couples should be able to get married.”¹ So President Obama, who has promoted open homosexuality in the military² and opposed the Defense of Marriage Act,³ overwhelmingly approved by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton, has taken the final plunge of supporting a redefinition of marriage. Now the Supreme Court is poised to hear oral arguments on March 26-27 regarding the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act and California’s Marriage Amendment, known as Proposition 8. What the Court decides in June could have profound implications.

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How should Bible-believing Christians respond? Well let’s consult the Scriptures because they are our guide for everything in life. The Bible establishes a fixed standard of righteousness, a fixed standard of moral absolutes, of right and wrong. As we think about the subject of marriage, the first thing we need to do is to re-establish the divine pattern for marriage from the word of God.

I. THE DIVINE PATTERN

What is the divine pattern, God’s original intention for marriage and the home? Go back to Genesis, the book of beginnings. For example, Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Aren’t you glad God created Adam and Eve, and not just Adam and Steve? Thank God for the difference between men and women. In fact, the two genders were meant to complete each other physically, emotionally, and in every other way. Also, both genders are needed for a healthy home. As Dr.

James Dobson notes, "More than ten thousand studies have concluded that kids do best when they are raised by mothers and fathers."⁴

In Genesis 2:24, God further declares: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." When you come to the teaching of Jesus in the NT, you find that Jesus endorsed this divine pattern. Quoting Genesis, Jesus asked Pharisees in Matt. 19:4: "Have you not read that at the beginning, the Creator made them male and female, and said: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate." In both OT and NT, one man and one woman in a marriage covenant relationship for life is the divine pattern.

When a marriage follows God's design, it is good for everyone — men, women, children, the community, the country, and the world. Let's look at some of the statistics:

Benefits for the Individual:

- Happiness: 50% more likely to be happy in a general sense.
- Performance: More than a third more likely to take pride in their work (34%).
- Health: Nearly a third more likely to rate their health excellent or very good (30%).
(From the *Case for Marriage*)

Benefits for the Couple:

- Marital Satisfaction: 25% happier in their relationship.
- Divorce or Separation: 50% less likely.
- Adultery: More than 4 times less likely (7.7% vs. 33.8%).
- Earned Income: As much as 5 times more annually (\$54K vs. \$9.4K).

Benefits for their Children:

- Average High School GPA (English and Math): Almost half a grade point higher (2.94 vs. 2.48).
- Expulsion or Suspension from School: Nearly 3 times less likely.
- Repeating a Grade: Nearly 6 times less likely (6% vs. 34%).
- Hard Drug Use: Nearly 2.5 less likely (8.5% vs. 20.1%).
- Drunkenness: Nearly 2 times less likely (22.4% vs. 41.2%).
- Homosexual Activity: 3 times less likely (2.5% vs. 7.5%).
- Running Away from Home: Over 2.5 times less likely.
- Average Number of Sex Partners (Females): Over 3 times less (0.47 vs. 1.55).⁵

God's way works! Think about it. Every civilization in history is built upon the institution of marriage. It is the foundation. The happiness of couples, the welfare of children, the propagation of the faith, the wellbeing of society, and the orderliness of civilization are all dependent upon the stability of marriage according to the divine pattern. When this God-given pattern is

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our children's children. Let's stand for God's plan for marriage because our future depends on it. And all of God's people said: Amen!

-END

A pastor for 20 years and a pioneer leader in the values voter movement, Dr. Kenyn Cureton, former Vice President for Convention Relations for the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, currently serves as Vice President for Church Ministries with the Family Research Council in Washington, DC.

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/transcript-robin-roberts-abc-news-interview-president-obama/story?id=16316043>

² First State of the Union

³ http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110223/ap_on_re_us/us_gay_marriage_obama#

⁴ James Dobson, *Marriage Under Fire: Why We Must Win This Battle*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 54 and endnote 49 on page 120.

⁵ See <http://www.marri.us> for these and other statistics on the benefits of the intact married family that worships weekly.

⁶ The media often cites the highly touted and yet fatally flawed and biased studies of Simon LeVay, *The Sexual Brain* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) and Dean Hamer, *The Science of Desire* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), which were proven to be bogus by independent studies done by researchers at Yale, MIT, Columbia, Washington University School of Medicine, et al.

⁷ See the admission of this tactic by homosexual activists Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* (New York: Plume/Doubleday, 1989/90), 161 et passim.

⁸ James Dobson, *Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2000), 402. See also

<http://www.troubledwith.com/LoveandSex/A000001001.cfm?topic=love%20and%20sex%3A%20homosexuality>.

⁹ According to a May 2008 Hunter College report, funded by the pro-homosexual Human Rights Campaign, only 2.9% of those polled identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bi-sexual. See the full report at the following web address: http://www.hrc.org/documents/Hunter_College_Report.pdf.

¹⁰ Alissa J. Rubin, "Public More Accepting of Gays, Poll Finds," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 2000.

¹¹ Michael Chiusano and Isabel Lyman, "Parents' Rights: Educators have been waging a covert war on parents - who are starting to fight back." *National Review*, September 30, 1996.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael Foust, "Massachusetts 2nd-grade teacher reads class 'gay marriage' book; administrator backs her," *Baptist Press* April 20, 2006. See the article online at <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=23077>.

¹⁵ <http://www.davidparkerfund.org/html/background.html>

¹⁶ Patricia Nell Warren, "Future Shock", *The Advocate*, October 3, 1995, 80, as quoted by Paul E. Rondeau, "Selling Homosexuality to America", *Regent University Law Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Spring 2002, at p. 470.

¹⁷ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/118378/Majority-Americans-Continue-Oppose-Gay-Marriage.aspx>

¹⁸ http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/02/04/gay_marriage/index.html

¹⁹ <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/05/15/same.sex.marriage/index.html>

²⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/11/nyregion/11marriage.html>

²¹ <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/04/03/iowa-supreme-court-sex-marriage-ban-unconstitutional>

²² <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/07/same.sex.marriage/index.html>

²³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/04marriage.html>

²⁴ Stanley Kurtz, "Death of Marriage in Scandinavia," *Boston Globe*, March 10, 2004, A23.

²⁵ Mark Regnerus, "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study," *Social Science Research* Vol 41, Issue 4 (July 2012), pp. 752-770; online at:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X12000610>

²⁶ <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/191kgwgh.asp?page=4>

APPENDIX C

Photos from two visits to the Creation Museum, 4/13/2007 and 8/5/2010

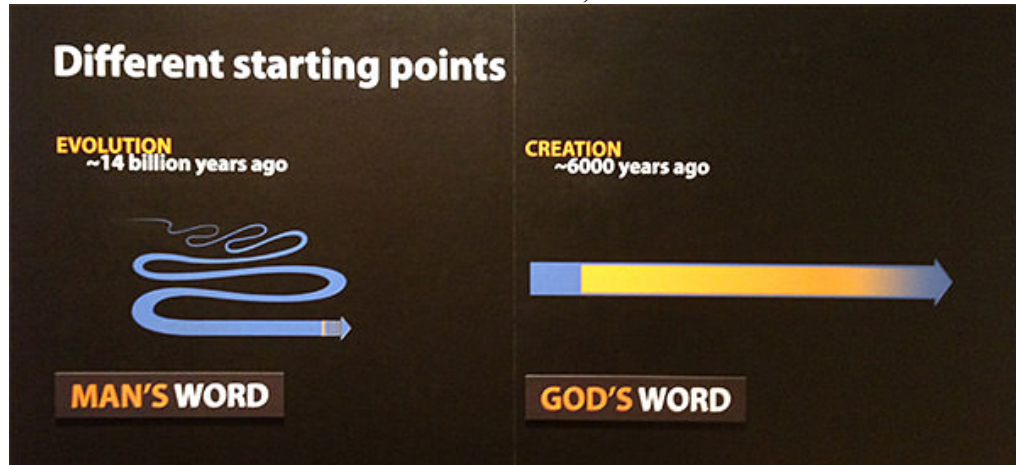


Image 1 – This picture shows the difference in epistemologies through a very simple graphic. A revealed epistemology prefers what God has said first and then makes observations. A discovered epistemology makes discovery from evaluation.

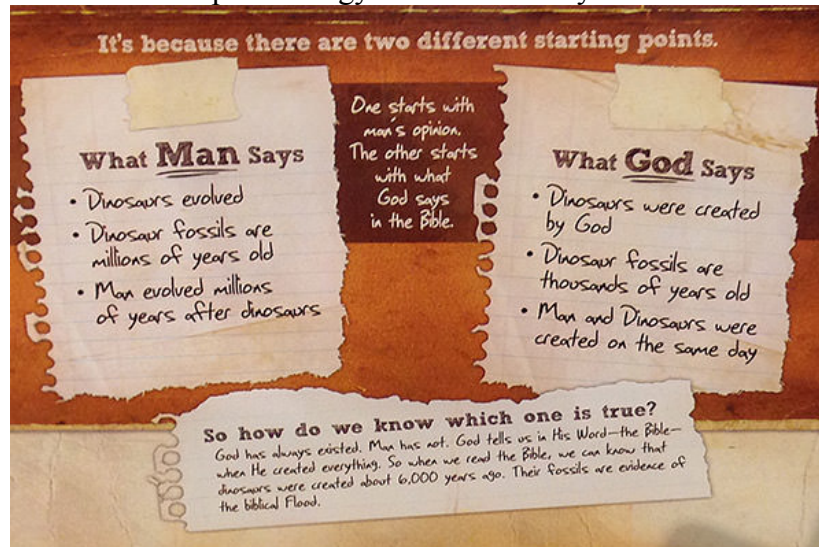


Image 2 – This picture again shows the two different epistemologies, comparing the conclusions of man vs. the conclusions of God.

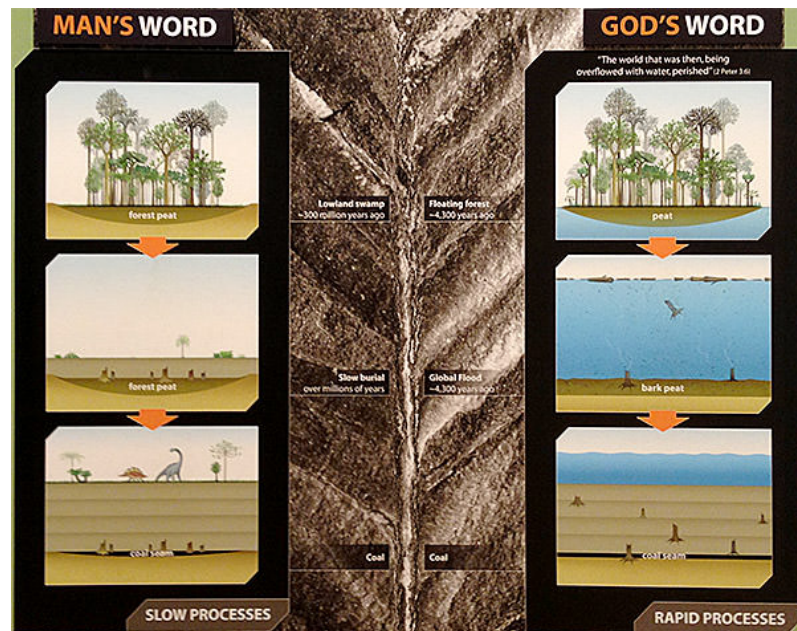


Image 3 – This image also compares the two types of epistemologies.



Image 4 – This image and the placard beside it both reiterate the assertion that “belief” in evolution has lead to human atrocities like The Holocaust.



Image 5 – The dinosaurs with saddles are popular for visitors to take pictures on. Throughout the museum, dinosaurs are depicted as interacting with humans.

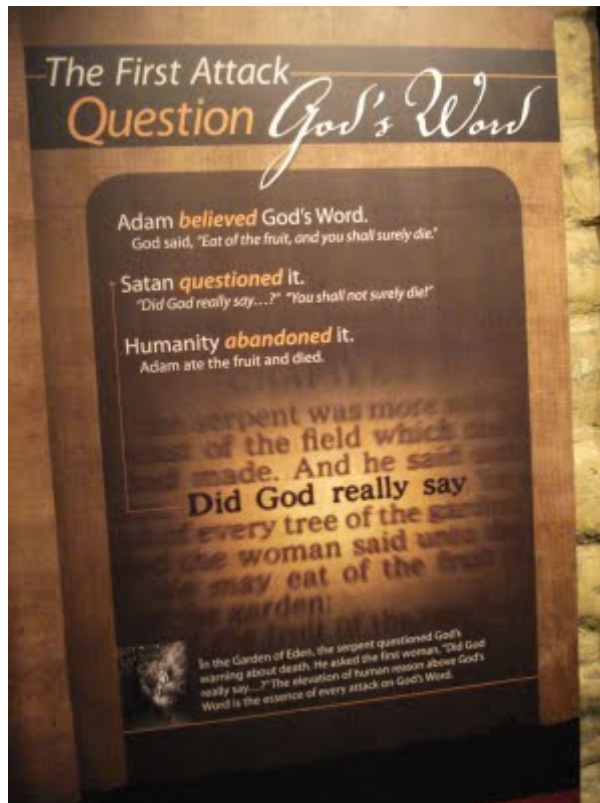


Image 6 – This image describes the questioning of scripture as an “attack” and discourages visitors to ignore challenges to creationism.



Image 7 – This image again depicts the two epistemologies. One comes from books and reason, the other from reading and understanding God’s word.

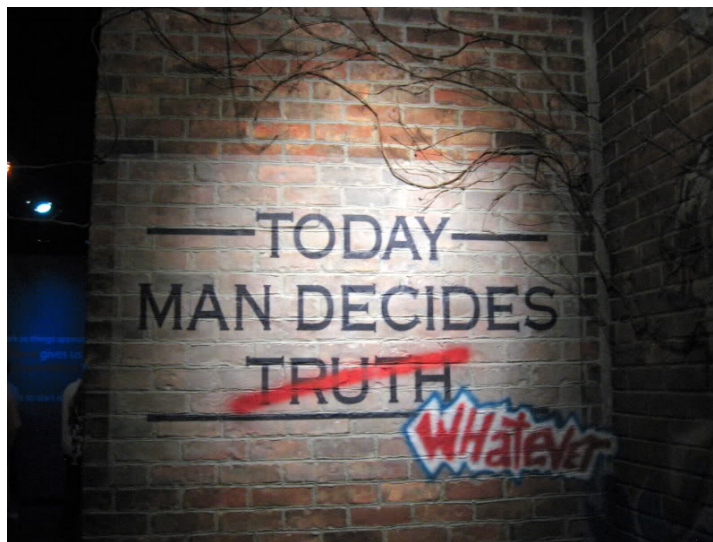


Image 8 – Absent a source for “The Good” (described in Assumption 1), graphics in the museum depict the consequences of abandoning God’s word for human reason.



Image 9 – This image misrepresents evolution claiming it leads to the belief that some humans are related to apes, which contributes to racism.

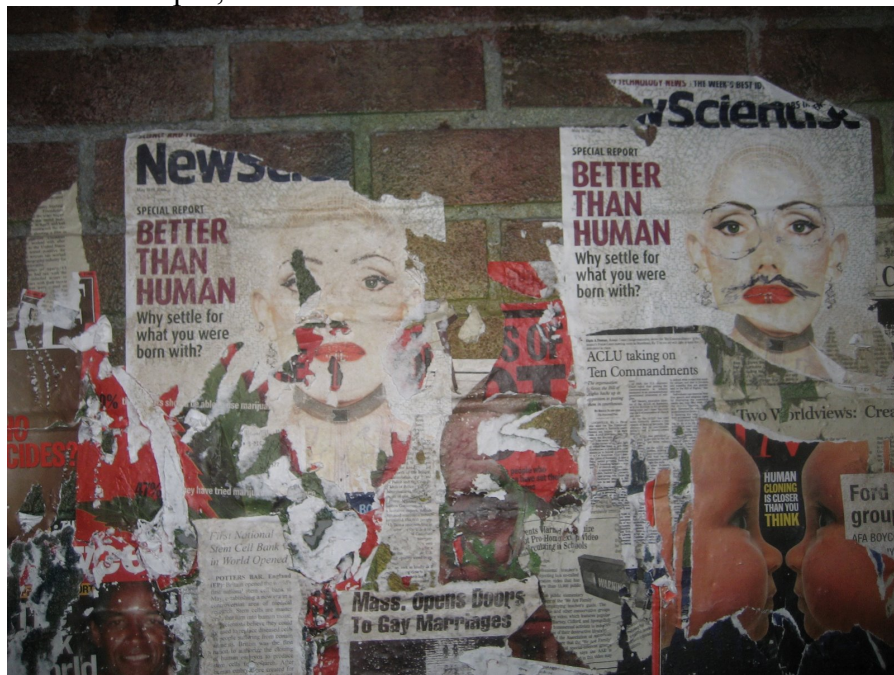


Image 10 – This leads into a “room of horrors” where the “belief” in science and abandonment of God’s word contributes to evil.



Image 11 – Perhaps the most frightening part of the Creation Museum, this picture comes from the “room of horrors.” It has read lighting and magazine clippings glued to the walls in a collage. The clippings depict human evils, such as “gay teens”, videos of the Columbine school shooting, and concerns about how “belief” in evolution contributes to legal recognition for same-sex couples.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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