

THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY MOVEMENT: ITS HISTORY, IDEOLOGICAL
COMPONENTS AND IMPACT ON CHRISTIAN TERRORISM WITHIN THE UNITED
STATES

Robin Basler

INTRODUCTION

Jessica Stern's *Terror in the Name of God* is an exceptional examination of groups and individuals who commit terrorist acts on the basis of their religious beliefs. Throughout much of my undergraduate education in a post September 11th world, I had always associated the words "terrorist" and "terrorism" with Islamic fundamentalists in foreign countries. When I began reading the book, I assumed it would primarily cover terrorists and organizations from other countries. Much to my surprise, Stern opens chapter one with the story of a "religious fellowship in rural Arkansas" turned armed cult and continues to address terrorist acts committed by Christian groups in America throughout her book. Reading *Terror in the Name of God* reminded me of an aspect of terrorism that had not received much attention after the Oklahoma City bombings: terrorism in the United States committed by American citizens. Since I feel that we, as Americans, have grown to identify the terms "terrorist" and "terrorism" predominantly with foreigners of non-Christian faiths, I was motivated to research the subject of Christian domestic terrorism within the United States.

In *Terror in the Name of God*, Stern interviews a member of The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, a Christian fundamentalist group that had been preparing for a terrorist attack within our own borders. This group adheres to the teachings of Identity Christianity (also known as "Christian Identity" or "Christian Identity Movement") "the dominant religion of the racist right in America" (18). Since groups such as the Aryan Nations and Posse Comitatus and individuals such as Timothy McVeigh are all connected to the teachings of Christian Identity, I wanted to examine the Christian Identity Movement further. I wanted to understand what was so significant about this movement that attracted so many different groups and individuals to it. What common beliefs do the various groups affiliated with this ideology share? I decided that researching the Christian Identity Movement would help me better understand the mindset and belief of Christian Identity adherents. For my research paper, the main questions that I will ask throughout my research project are these: What are the main tenets of Christian Identity? How does Christian Identity ideology impact and shape the beliefs of Christian terrorist organizations and individuals within the United States, and how has this ideology impacted Christian Identity groups and their actions in the present day?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Multiple resources—including books, articles, journals and websites—all offer insight and information on Christian Identity. Scholarly books and articles provide a relatively unbiased and informative perspective on the historical and current-day Christian Identity Movement. Websites maintained by various Christian Identity followers offer a first-hand perspective on the movement and shed light on the mindset and ideology shared among its members. Newspaper articles and websites maintained by terrorist watch groups also provided useful information on the movement. There are many factors to consider, however, when reviewing these sources and their credibility—reliability, corroboration by other scholarly sources, and relevance to the Christian Identity Movement.

One of the foremost books on the Christian Identity Movement, Michael Barkun's *Religion and the Racist Right—The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, has proven to be an invaluable resource, especially for those focused on the history of the Christian Identity Movement. Many scholarly articles and other books used in the research of this topic cite Barkun as a source. Barkun details the historical perspective of the Christian Identity Movement; he focuses on several individuals who have contributed significantly to the growth, development, and evolution of the movement, such as Wesley Swift and William Potter Gale. Barkun's book provides the most in-depth information about the development of Christian Identity Movement from British-Israelism. British-Israelism, a movement in the late nineteenth century, promoted the idea that the Northern Europeans were descendants of the lost tribe of Israel and therefore are the chosen people of God. Many Scholars (Barkun; Telfair Sharpe; Dobratz and Shanks-Miele) agree that the Christian Identity Movement had its roots in the British-Israelism Movement, and that Christian Identity adherents founded most of their beliefs on those originally expressed in British-Israelism ideology. Since much of the information contained in the book is quoted in other scholarly articles and reviewed by other scholars in their written works, it is a highly reliable and valuable source for information on the Christian Identity Movement.

Barkun's book is unique in that he identifies three major components that he believes are shared among Christian Identity adherents. The first component that he identifies is the belief that "white Aryans are descendants of the biblical tribes of Israel and thus are on earth to do God's work" (Barkun ix). The second component shared among Identity believers is that "Jews are not only wholly unconnected to the Israelites, but are the very children of the Devil, the literal biological offspring of a sexual dalliance between Satan and Eve in the garden of Eden" (Barkun ix). Thirdly, Identity adherents believe that "the world is on the verge of a final apocalyptic struggle between good and evil in which the Aryans must do battle with the Jewish conspiracy and its allies so that the world can be redeemed" (Barkun ix). Dobratz and Shanks-Miele have used this criterion of the three tenets of Christian Identity identified by Barkun when writing about the Christian Identity Movement.

Identifying characteristics of the Christian Identity Movement have been addressed by other scholars. In her article “The Christian Identity Movement: an Ideology of Domestic Terrorism,” Tanya Telfair Sharpe identifies components and beliefs that comprise the Christian Identity Movement. While Sharpe’s components of Christian Identity mirror Barkun’s, Sharpe believes there is an aspect of Christian Identity that involves an “anti-government, paramilitary/ survivalist/conspiracy mentality” (608). Since Barkun’s book was written in 1994, and Sharpe’s article was published in March of 2000, this aspect of Christian Identity may have evolved because of the belief held by Christian Identity adherents that the millennial change would bring about the final judgment. Several other articles and publications dealing with Christian Identity published in recent years primarily focus on the militant aspect of Christian Identity. I will address Barkun’s three tenets, as well as addressing Sharpe’s additional component, when discussing the beliefs and ideology of the Christian Identity movement.

Another important source that will be used throughout my paper is the book *White Power, White Pride—The White Separatist Movement in the United States*, co-authored by Betty Dobratz and Stephanie Shanks-Miele. *White Power, White Pride* is unique among the many sources on the movement, as Dobratz and Shanks Miele conducted “field work” in their study, thus combining scholarly research with the personal testimony of belief adherents. *White Power, White Pride* does not focus on the Christian Identity. Dobratz and Shanks-Miele are both sociologists, and they conducted their research for this book using a “field study” approach. They conducted interviews with several white supremacist individuals at rallies, gatherings, and meetings, and sent out surveys to members of supremacist groups, trying to glean the many different perspectives on the movement from the followers themselves. They also gathered information from publications and illustrations produced by white supremacists groups and individuals. While this book does not deal solely with the Christian Identity Movement, its sociological perspective and firsthand information from white supremacists themselves—some linked with the Christian Identity Movement—proves to be a very useful source in examining the viewpoints of the membership of Christian Identity groups.

Along with the Dobratz and Shanks-Miele’s book, websites and publications maintained by Christian Identity adherents have also been very useful. While these websites are patently biased and unreliable in terms of scholarship, they are especially important because they offer a firsthand perspective on Christian Identity from followers themselves. Websites such as the ones maintained by the Aryan Brotherhood, Kingdom Identity, and individuals who adhere to Christian Identity beliefs offer a valuable perspective on the movement. Both Aryan Nations and Kingdom Identity have a doctrinal ideology section on their website that defines their beliefs and roles as members of the Christian Identity Movement, and contains biblical excerpts used to substantiate them. While this material can be disturbing to read and view, it is important in the research of the

movement because it allows for a deeper understanding of Christian Identity adherents from their own perspective. Without these resources, the perception of Christian Identity could become very skewed and biased; these sources also enable the voices of the Christian Identity adherents to be heard in their own forum for an audience directed at people who share their ideological beliefs.

In order to further our understanding of the Christian Identity Movement, websites and articles maintained by interest groups and terrorist watch groups also offer much information on Christian Identity's recent terrorist activities. While many of these sites present only a vague history of the movement, the information they offer in terms of recent group information is very valuable. Most websites on the Christian Identity Movement, such as those maintained by the Anti-Defamation League and the Christian Identity page of Wikipedia, offer similar information about the group and its history. The information they do provide can be easily corroborated by other scholarly works and articles, such as those published by Barkun, Dobratz, and Telfair Sharpe. One particular website that has offered valuable information about Christian Identity is the one maintained by the Rick Ross Institute. This interest group focuses on domestic Christian terrorism and provides several links to newspaper articles—many a few years old—dealing with the recent activities of Christian Identity groups. Many of these newspaper articles draw from the regions of the United States where Christian Identity followers and groups are most populous, particularly the West Coast and Missouri, where a Christian Identity convention was held in 2000. The newspaper articles offer a great perspective on Christian Identity from local communities impacted by Christian Identity around the nation. These sources provide excellent information on the smaller-scale Christian Identity groups and their gatherings. Also, since these articles are not opinion-editorials and offer a relatively unbiased perspective on Christian Identity, they are useful in providing unbiased and concise information on the Identity Movement.

Since many of my sources were either books or websites, I decided that scholarly articles would be another valuable information source in researching the Christian Identity movement. Searches on databases such as JSTOR and InfoTrac returned several articles related to the Christian Identity Movement. These articles, primarily written in the late 1990's to the turn of the century, all offer critical information on the movement. The search term "Christian Identity Movement" produced articles from scholars who had also published books on the subject, for example Betty Dobratz. Her article "The Role of Religion in the Collective Identity in the White Racialist Movement" discusses the unifying and dividing aspects of religion within the Christian Identity movement and other white racialist movements. This article includes quotations from adherents of Christian Identity, who offer their own take on what effect religion has had on their movements. This article is important in the research because it focuses on the religious aspect of the white racialist movement, rather on the more violent aspects of the movement.

Most articles returned in JSTOR and InfoTrac search dealt primarily with the militant and millennial aspects of the Christian Identity Movement. These articles were published in the years around the turn of the millennium, and dealt with the aspect of terror and violence within the movement—something that Stern addresses in *Terror in the Name of God*. Popular subjects discussed in the articles include the millennial violence among Christian Identity adherents, the networking among Christian Identity followers, and Christian Identity compound and communities that have come under government surveillance for terrorist planning. All of these articles are essential to any in-depth discussion of the militant violent aspect of Christian Identity.

DISCUSSION

A History of the Christian Identity Movement—Evolution from British-Israelism to Christian Identity

In order to understand the motivation and beliefs of many modern-day Christian Identity followers, it is important to examine and understand the Christian Identity Movement's history and evolution. Since there is no one particular leader or founder of the Christian Identity Movement, the most effective way to understand the historical evolution of the Christian Identity Movement is to examine the individuals who had the most significant impact on British-Israelism and its evolution into Christian Identity. John Wilson and Edward Hine had a significant role in the development and spread of British-Israelism in America. Individuals such as Wesley Swift and William Potter Gale wielded great influence on Christian Identity Movement and made it into a more racial and violent movement. Understanding the evolution from British-Israelism to the Christian Identity Movement demonstrates how an innocent movement can be refined into fuel for religious fanatics.

Christian Identity Movement emerged from the theories of the British-Israelism movement (Sharpe 606). British-Israelism as a movement can be traced back to John Wilson, whose *Lectures on Our Israelitish Orgins* are considered the first writings of the movement (Dobratz 74; Barkun 7). Wilson's lectures, which first emerged in 1840, "depended less on the interpretation of biblical prophecy than on Wilson's attempt to empirically prove that the lost tribes had in fact migrated from the Near East to Europe" (Barkun 7). Therefore, the lost tribe of Israel—and the stories of the Bible—would be the story of the Anglo-Saxons. This belief is the foundation for identity followers (Telfair Sharpe 606). Wilson's stance on Jewish people was not as extreme as the one some identity followers would adopt in later years. Wilson believed that the Jewish people needed to be shown the path to salvation by the British, the true descendants of Israel (Barkun 8). Edward Hine, who became a follower of Wilson after hearing him speak, was one of the first leaders of British-Israelism in America and published several pamphlets on

British-Israelism that brought the movement to a wider population of the public (Berkum 10).

Howard Rand and William Cameron are other significant figures in the evolution from British-Israelism to Christian Identity. Rand was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, in 1889, and had a profound impact on the spread of the British-Israelism movement in America (Berkum 30). Rand “began organizing in the United States as the American Representative of the London-based British Israel World Federation”(Berkum 30). His extensive travels and recruitment, preaching the British-Israelism ideology, eventually led to the development of several branches of the movement (Dobratz and Shanks-Miele 74). Rand formed the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America in Detroit. It would be at the meetings of the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America that he would eventually meet William J. Cameron.

Cameron was the former editor of the anti-Semitic *Dearborn Independent* and was also a close friend of Henry Ford (Dobratz and Shanks- Miele 74). The *Dearborn Independent* published several anti-Semitic articles under Cameron’s tenure as editor. Therefore, when Cameron joined the Anglo-Saxon federation in 1930 and eventually sat on the executive committee, the association of Cameron with the group created a comfortable environment for anti-Semites and racists (Dobratz and Shanks-Miele 74-75; Berkun 31). This association of anti-Semitism and the British-Israelism movement would soon prove to be a dividing faction between the British-Israelism movement and create the emergence of the Christian Identity Movement.

With the connection already formulating between anti-Semitism and the Christian Identity Movement, it is natural that anti-Semites with strong convictions would become the most influential people in Christian Identity. Wesley Swift and William Potter Gale would be viewed as individuals with a significant influence on the Christian Identity Movement. “Wesley Smith was responsible for popularizing Christian Identity in right-wing circles by combining British-Israelism, a demonic anti- Semitism, and political extremism” (Barkun 60). Swift, who was born a Methodist, became an identity adherent in the early 1930’s (Levitas 27). He also was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Perhaps what Swift is best known for, however, is introducing Christian Identity to extreme right-wing political groups. Swift was the head of the California Anti-Communist League and politically active (Berkum 65). Swift also viewed Communism and Judaism as synonymous; he believed that both were threats to the Christian lifestyle (Levitas 28). His preachings soon gained a small gathering, and among his followers was William Potter Gale, who would become one of the most vocal and popular Christian Identity Ministers.

William Potter Gale was one of the most influential leaders of the Christian Identity Movement. Ordained by Swift in 1956 as a minister of Christian Identity, he became actively involved in preaching Christian Identity, especially the belief that Jewish people were descendants of the devil and the belief of white supremacy—even though he himself

was Jewish (Levitas 24, 2, 10). Gale often railed against the “Zionist government” in his speeches, and he strongly advocated the separation of races. However, he did not limit his actions to just preaching Christian Identity. He was also the founder of the Posse Comitatus, a Christian Identity paramilitary group that was “devoted to promoting armed insurrection” (Levitas 2). Gale became one of the most vocal leaders of the movement and his group, Posse Comitatus, would become one of the most influential and violent groups of the Christian Identity Movement in later years (Levitas 2).

The Christian Identity Movement’s history reveals several factors contributing to its evolution. Its roots in British Israelism and its early ministers had a profound impact on the movement’s evolution. Individuals such as William Cameron and Wesley Swift took the ideology perpetuated by British Israelism and morphed it into Christian Identity Movement, and made it more appealing to anti-Semites and racists. Later in its evolution, William Gale would increase Identity’s following among a new group of individuals with the creation of the Posse Comitatus. It is clear that Christian Identity—and its ideological beliefs—have evolved with the leaders over time.

An Examination of the Main Components of Christian Identity

As the evolution of the Christian Identity Movement has shown, Christian Identity beliefs evolve with the influences and ideals of influential members of the Christian Identity Movement. Michael Barkun has identified three major beliefs that encompass much of Christian Identity: the belief that “white Aryans are descendants of the biblical tribes of Israel and thus are on earth to do God’s work” (ix), that “Jews are not only wholly unconnected to the Israelites, but are the very children of the devil, the literal biological offspring of a sexual dalliance between Satan and Eve in the garden of Eden” (ix), and that “the world is on the verge of a final apocalyptic struggle between good and evil in which the Aryans must do battle with the Jewish Conspiracy and its allies so that the world can be redeemed”(ix). Tanya Telfair Sharpe in her article also identifies other components of the Christian Identity Movement, including an “anti-government, paramilitary/survivalist/conspiracy mentality” (608). By examining the importance of these tenets in various identity groups a better picture of the impact Christian Identity has on these groups can be drawn.

The belief held by Christian Identity adherents that White Aryans are descendants of the “lost tribe” of Israel is important to many groups associated with the Christian Identity Movement. Kingdom Identity Ministries, located in Arkansas and affiliated with Christian Identity, offers one of the clearest and most concise doctrinal statements among Christian Identity groups. Among the twenty-three components and beliefs of the Kingdom Identity Doctrinal Statement, three explicitly mention the superiority of the Aryan Race or the direct link between Aryans and the chosen tribes of Israel. Excerpts of these passages include “We believe...the White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and kindred

people to be God's true, literal Children of Israel” and “the Man Adam (a Hebrew word meaning: ruddy, to show blood, flush, turn rosy) is father of the White Race only” (Kingdom Identity). This component of the Christian Identity belief system is held by members of other Identity groups, such as the Aryan Nations. Mark Thomas, a prominent member of the Aryan Nations, states that “the spirit of God can only inhabit an Aryan body” (Lieblich). As a result of this component, many Christian Identity groups have elements of white supremacy at the core of their beliefs. One example of this element in a Christian Identity group is the belief held by the Aryan Nations that actively promotes the idea of white- Aryan homeland in North America.

The second component of Christian Identity identified by Barkun states that Jewish people are not the chosen people of Israel, but rather they are the result of an affair between Eve and Satan. This component is an excellent example of the evolution of Christian Identity from British-Israelism. Barkun notes that British-Israelism never adopted the viewpoint that Jewish people were non-human. Christian Identity, on the other hand, “seeks to demonstrate that the Jews were not human beings,” a position that is distinctly different from the beliefs of British-Israelism (149). An illustration of this belief in modern Christian Identity is found on the Kingdom Identity Doctrinal Statement, which states:

WE BELIEVE in an existing being known as the Devil or Satan and called the Serpent (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9), who has a literal "seed" or posterity in the earth (Gen. 3:15) commonly called Jews today (Rev. 2:9; 3:9; Isa. 65:15). These children of Satan (John 8:44-47; Matt. 13:38; John 8:23) through Cain (I John 2:22, 4:3) who have throughout history always been a curse to true Israel, the Children of God, because of a natural enmity between the two races (Gen. 3:15), because they do the works of their father the Devil (John 8:38-44). (Kingdom Identity)

This passage from the website is an example of how Christian Identity adherents perceive the Jewish people. Cain, a biblical character frequently associated with evil or criminality, is portrayed in this interpretation as the son of the devil and thus the father of the Jewish race (Barkun 151). Christian Identity’s belief that the Jewish people are descended from the devil is certainly a core element of their ideology that is manifested in other elements of the movement.

An example of this component within a modern day Identity setting can be found on the Aryan Nations “About Us” page, which contains many postings and articles with anti-Semitic themes. These posts differ in content and in style, but all are extremely anti-Semitic in nature. Among the postings, there are republished anti-Semitic letters written by Adolf Hitler, and an article that disputes the number of people killed in the Holocaust, stating that the actual number of people killed by the Holocaust as 143,000—much smaller

than the actual scholarly estimate of six million. Also on the site is a post by James J. David, a former Brigadier General in the United States Army, who expounds on the political flaws of Israel through a series of “Questions and Answers” on the website—with the answer to a question always being “Israel.” The website does not convey anti-Semitism through writings alone; there are also illustrations and cartoons playing on Jewish physical or social stereotypes, and various other posts of a similar anti-Semitic nature (*Aryan Nations*).

The web postings on major Identity sites are only one way that Identity adherents express their anti-Semitic beliefs. Some Identity followers promote their beliefs in their own communities. In one instance the Christian Identity leader Gordon Winrod from Missouri distributed pamphlets in his neighborhood stating that the Jewish people were the “children of the Devil” and were out to drink the blood of the Aryans (Tuft and Hollemann). Publications and literature available on the Aryan Nations and Kingdom Identity websites include several works from famous anti-Semites, such as Adolf Hitler, as well as other books of anti-Semitic nature. At a conference held by Identity adherents in 2000, minister Ted Wieland presented anti-Semitic sermons, describing Jewish people as “not the true Israel” (Tuft and Holleman). This “seedline theory” that manifested in the evolution of Christian Identity and that is promoted by many adherents of Christian Identity provides the foundation for anti-Semitic practices within the movement.

The third component held by Christian Identity adherents is the belief that an apocalyptic end is near, which will consist of the Aryan race fighting the “Jewish conspiracy” in a battle of good and evil. While the element of a “Jewish conspiracy” is already addressed in the second component, the subject of an apocalyptic end is an aspect unique in nature from the other components. Whereas the previous components have stressed the superiority of the Aryan race and created the foundation for white supremacist ideals held by Christian Identity, the apocalyptic aspect of Christian Identity appeals to a whole new segment of Identity adherents. Individuals and groups who may not stress the anti-Semitic angle or white supremacy as a draw for new members use the Biblical stories of the Revelation to substantiate the claim of this final apocalyptic battle. An example of this component in Identity Ideology can be found in *The Aryan Nations’ n.d.a. Tenets*, as quoted in Dobratz and Shanks-Miele, which states in part, “[W]e know there is a day of judgment and a day when Christ’s Kingdom... will be established on Earth”(77). In large part these tenets stem from the Revelation stories of the Bible, which tell of a monumental battle between good and evil, with good ultimately prevailing.

In the case of Christian Identity, adherents believe that the only way to prepare the earth for the second coming of Christ is to prepare the chosen land (North America) for the chosen (Aryan) race. According to Christian Identity adherents, the way to prepare for the Apocalypse would be to eliminate the so-called Jewish conspiracy in America. The term “Zionist-Occupied Government” (ZOG) is used by many identity adherents to describe the

American government (Stern). They believe that the Jewish people execute control of the media, government, and financial banking systems (Levitas). This belief that there will be a final apocalyptic battle between good and evil—as well as the belief that there is a Zionist occupied government—provides an excellent foundation to the final component of the Christian Identity Movement.

The component of Christian Identity that is identified by Tanya Telfair Sharpe encompasses the belief that an “anti-government, paramilitary/survivalist/ conspiracy mentality” is evident throughout modern-day groups and individuals associated with Christian Identity. This component is certainly more evident in more radical, anti-government groups and individuals that have emerged as Christian Identity groups founded not only on the basis of Aryan supremacy, but also on the anti-governmental beliefs held by the movement. This anti-governmental mentality has led to many Christian Identity followers founding their own military compounds and living communities.

Identity compounds are common among followers that maintain a belief system that emphasizes this paramilitary, anti-government ideology. The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, discussed in *Terror in the Name of God*, is one example of a Christian Identity group living on a compound. The late Christian Identity leader Richard Butler had a compound in Idaho in the 1980’s that was affiliated with plots to blow up banks and a National Guard armory (Ostling). Elohim City in Oklahoma was another heavily guarded Christian Identity compound that was a haven for Identity adherents who plotted attacks on the American government. Timothy McVeigh called Robert Millar, the pastor of Elohim, during the two weeks before he bombed the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City. Richard Snell, who originally plotted to blow up the Murrah building in 1983, is buried on the grounds of Elohim City (Graff). Many of these groups have been under government surveillance for stockpiling weapons and making other preparations for the final apocalyptic battle against the government, and highlight the example of paramilitary actions within Christian Identity.

Not all Christian Identity groups founded on anti-governmental, paramilitary basis live together on compounds. Posse Comitatus is a Christian Identity group that stresses the anti-governmental aspect of the movement and has members in several states. Founded by William Gale, Posse Comitatus (Latin for “power of the country”) is one of the most highly visible and violent groups of the Identity Movement (Dobratz and Shanks-Miele 79). The Posse Comitatus is against taxes and government, and has committed violent acts throughout the country in recent years. One of the most visible Posse Comitatus acts of violence was the death of Gordon Kahl in 1983, who died in a shootout with governmental official and whose passing was seen as an example of a government conspiracy against the Posse by its followers (Levitas). This vigilante mentality and violence inspired by anti-governmental beliefs are key components of Posse Comitatus, and illustrate the militant possibilities of a Christian Identity group.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the Christian Identity Movement has had a significant impact on domestic Christian terrorism in the United States. Its adherents belong to several different terrorist groups within the United States, all with different practices and beliefs. Its major components act as a unifying umbrella for domestic Christian terrorists. By examining the shared elements within the Christian Identity Movement, we are able to gain a better understanding of the ideological basis for some of America's most popular and dangerous terror groups.

What is particularly fascinating about Christian Identity is that it is a perfect example of religious teaching and doctrine, skewed and interpreted in such a way that it can drive people to commit destruction and soon murderous acts based on their particular belief system. While millions of Christians read the Bible on a regular basis, a miniscule percentage- around 50,000- have adapted its teachings to the form of Christian Identity. As a Christian, looking at the same Bible passages that these adherents use as the justifications for their actions, there is no way I could have drawn the same interpretation. It provided the perfect illustration to a subject that I had found so hazy and confusing before- How could a group of individuals interpret a religious work in such a skewed, hateful, and violent way? By examining the religious tenets of Christian Identity, a clearer picture of terrorism worldwide in other religions and belief systems became evident to me.

One area that I sincerely hope will be researched in future Dean's Book Course classes is terrorist groups of a non-Christian affiliation using religious foundations and ideology as justification to commit violence. So little is commonly known about the ideological or belief systems that terrorists associated with Judaism or Islam have in common. While there may not be a common "religion" such as Christian Identity that unites these groups, common doctrinal interpretations- or their viewpoints on religion in the world- would help illustrate the similarities between terrorist groups.

Researching and reviewing important individuals in the Christian Identity Movement also illustrated the impact individuals and cultural settings can have on the evolution of a religious movement. While it is hard to classify British-Israelism as a concrete religion- since there is no central leader or concrete governing body- adherents to the movement such as Edward Hine were referred to as "converts" to British-Israelism. Since Christian Identity emerged out of British-Israelism at a time when racial tensions and segregations still plagued the nation, examining how religious- based terror groups emerged in periods of social unrest would prove to be very rewarding and informative in the study of terrorism.

Overall, the study of Christian Identity and its impact on domestic Christian based terrorism illuminates many aspects of how a movement as diverse and segmented as the many groups affiliated with Identity, still share common factors and elements that unite them. The influence of the early leaders of the British-Israelism on the movement and its

present day evolution into Christian Identity makes a prime example of how terror organizations and ideologies can evolve from social context and leadership change. By examining these crucial components of Christian Identity, a better understanding of Christian-based domestic terrorism can be achieved.

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