

“Fundamentally 9/11:
The Fashioning of Collective Memory in a Christian School”

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Abstract:

This study examines the production of religious collective memory at a fundamentalist Christian school. By depicting in rich detail what happened on September 11, 2001 in one 8th grade classroom and how the events of that day were discussed in the weeks that followed, the article reveals the processes wherein the attacks were subsumed into an over-arching narrative attesting to God’s control over history. After analyzing the implications of the resultant narrative, the article speculates that the categories of theological certainty and humanistic questioning currently define a breach within the American populace that is playing out not only in politics but in education, bearing important consequences for the purposes of schooling writ large and for religious and public schools as institutions.

Author Biography

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American Journal of Education

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0195-6744/2006/11203-0004\$05.00

On September 13, 2001, two days after the airplane attacks of September 11th, Jerry Falwell appeared on the televangelist show ‘The 700 Club,’ hosted by Pat Robertson. In what would become a widely circulated incident, Falwell explained the tragedies of September 11 as follows:

Falwell: What we saw on Tuesday, as terrible as it is, could be miniscule if, in fact, God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve.

Robertson: Jerry, that’s my feeling. I think we’ve just seen the antechamber to terror. We haven’t begun to see what they can do to the major population.

Falwell: The ACLU’s got to take a lot of blame for this, [Robertson: Well, yes.] and I know I’ll hear from them for this, but throwing God—successfully with the help of the federal court system—throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools, the abortionists have got to bear some burden for this, because God will not be mocked and when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad.... I really believe that the Pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say ‘You helped this happen.’

Robertson: Well, I totally concur....

Reactions to the televised exchange were numerous and swift. That same day, Ralph Neas, president of “People for the American Way”, posted an e-mail message to the ‘700 Club’ website. “I am deeply saddened that in the wake of this week’s devastating terrorist attacks,

Religious Right political leaders Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell have chosen the path of division rather than unity,” Neas’ message began. “This is a time for a shared national commitment to bringing those responsible for the terrorist attacks to justice,” it continued. “It is also a time to renew our commitment to protecting the Constitutional liberties and democratic values that sustain our free society,” which Falwell’s remarks “impede,” Neas concluded. A spokesman for President Bush made a statement that was similarly mild if precisely targeted. “The president believes that terrorists are responsible for these acts,” Ken Lisaius remarked, “[and] he does not share those views and believes that those remarks are inappropriate.” Walter Cronkite weighed in, calling the remarks, “the most abominable thing I’ve ever heard,” and adding that, given their rhetorical vitriol and blatant scape-goating, Falwell and Robertson could be “worshipping the same God as the people who bombed the Trade Center and the Pentagon” (TV Guide 9/28/01). While both conservatives and liberals excoriated the remarks,¹ no fundamentalist evangelical Christian organizations criticized them outright.

On September 17th, claiming that he was not responding to pressures from the White House, Falwell apologized to the nation via a reporter from the Associated Press. A written apology appeared the next day on Falwell’s website, in which he “regret[ted] that comments [he] made ... were taken out of their context and reported, and that [his] thoughts—reduced to sound bites—have detracted from the spirit of this time of mourning.” Instead, he explained,

I was sharing my burden for revival in America on a Christian TV program, intending to speak to a Christian audience from a theological perspective about the need for repentance. In retrospect, I should have mentioned the national sins without mentioning the organizations and persons by name.

While Falwell's apology expressed contrition, he did not take back the content of his remarks so much as regret their wording and timing. The title of his apology—"Why I said what I said"—was indicative of this stance. Falwell believed himself to have been simply "stat[ing] the deep concerns of millions of American evangelicals" regarding America's "deep spiritual decline."

Falwell's remarks, in the larger scheme of events, can be rather too easily dismissed as a minor and ill-conceived expression of the shock that gripped the nation in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Yet his positioning of these events within a larger eschatological framework is part of a growing trend within American society today, one that remains underestimated and largely understudied by the liberal establishment of mainstream academia.

The study reported on below examines the responses to 9/11 of one fundamentalist Christian teacher and a group of her 8th grade students. By studying these responses, we can better understand not only the range of ways that religious fundamentalists like Falwell think, but also the range of ways in which collective memory is generated within religious communities generally, how schooling becomes a crucible for collective memory work. For the purposes of the study, I considered "collective remembering" (Wertsch 2002) to be the process by which a people makes sense of themselves as a cohesive group over time through narrative. A nation or group, imagined (Anderson 1991) or inhabited, constructs its sense of itself as a people, endows its communal identity with meaning and purpose, and bounds its citizens' loyalties through

stories of victory and defeat, heroism and victimization, servitude and mastery, diaspora and homecoming, messianic redemption and eternal damnation.

Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist who originally coined the term, ‘collective memory,’ was deeply interested in the sub-category of ‘religious collective memory.’ While a single chapter of his seminal work, *La Memoire Collective*² is devoted to the topic, the chapter is actually a distillation of his entire book, *La Topographie legendaire des evangiles en Terre Sainte* (1941), a study of the way in which Jerusalem was made into the Holy Land within Christian memory. In Halbwach’s conceptualization, religious collective memory, like the larger category of collective memory, “does not preserve the past but reconstructs it with the aid of the material traces, rites, texts and traditions left behind by that past, and with the aid moreover of recent psychological and social data, that is to say, with the present” (1941, 119). Thus, religious collective memory funnels history through the religious needs of the present, integrating ‘new events’ into long-standing narratives. As Patrick Hutton elaborates, for Halbwachs, “not only does memory invent a skewed pattern of the past, it clings tenaciously to its invention in the face of changing realities” (1993, 77).

Falwell’s remarks on “The 700 Club” and my study of fundamentalist responses to 9/11 reveal that ‘the changing realities’ themselves become fodder in the work of stabilizing the narrative of the past. How the ‘pattern of the present’ that is woven from such events becomes ‘skewed,’ and in which directions, is important; how history is formulated to support particular notions of democratic citizenship and particular visions of human agency matters. The study below thus bares implications for the role of private schooling in the generation of collective memory and

for the role of fundamentalism in a pluralistic democracy. I begin by describing the study's methodology, the school setting and teacher, and what happened on 9/11 at the pseudonymous Eternal Grace School.

Methodology

Between September, 2001 and June, 2002, I was conducting research on historical understanding in religious school contexts. The study focused on teaching and learning about the Holocaust, exploiting its well-documented plasticity in American culture (Novick 1999; Schweber & Irwin 2003). My previous work (Schweber 2004) had revealed that in public high schools, as in other public spheres (Young 1988; Loshitzky 1997; Novick 1999), the Holocaust is sometimes “Americanized” (Flanzbaum 1999, Rosenfeld, 1995); that is, when actually taught, Holocaust content is molded to fit American cultural paradigms, albeit contentious ones (Rothberg 2000). In this study, I was interested in how religious master narratives and ‘American’ master narratives interacted, if at all. Despite an expanding literature on the nature of collective memory, its multiplicity, dynamism, and eclecticism, (Ricoeur 1965; White 1992; Sturken 1997; Wertsch 2002) and its crystallizations in particular monuments and moments (Zerubavel 1996; Kammen 1991; Nora 1983),³ the role of religious narratives in orchestrating teachers’ and students’ historical understanding is still underdeveloped (though hinted at in writings such as Gourevitch 1995; Mosborg 2002; Peshkin 1986; Schweber & Irwin 2003).⁴

To conduct the research, I first identified a teacher at Eternal Grace who was herself a member of the school’s faith community.⁵ With the help of two project assistants,⁶ I then observed and tape-recorded the entirety of her 3-month long Holocaust unit, interviewing her before and after the

unit and following the reactions of a group of 5 students throughout. The students were selected for their adherence to the school's faith—in Alan Peshkin's (1986) terminology they were “believers” rather than “scorners”—and each was interviewed individually. The data sources included transcribed class sessions, interviews, collected curricular materials, written field notes and copies of all student work. Using techniques from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990), the transcriptions were coded for emergent categories of meaning. From them, we rendered a portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) of the religious master narratives at play and an interpretation of how they contributed to students' understandings of the Holocaust (Schweber & Irwin 2003).

The events of September 11th, 2001, intruded on this study. As such, they became exceedingly useful “cultural tools” (Wertsch 1998) for investigating the teacher's and students' historical thinking and religious worldview. It was as if, in seeing an historical event unfold in a religious school, the process of collective memory work was slowed down, magnifying its mechanics in that particular community at that moment of national trauma.

The School and Teacher

Eternal Grace⁷ is a K-12 school associated with a charismatic evangelical, fundamentalist Christian church.⁸ The school had approximately 475 students enrolled the year I observed, and, as reflective of the growth in the population of fundamentalist Christians nationally, the administrators expected its enrollment to expand by a full third the following year. The building itself was stunning; the 3.1-million-dollar facility housed a daycare center, the elementary,

middle and high school classrooms, music rooms, gymnasias, a cafeteria, a state-of-the-art computer lab and an impressive library.

The educational mission at Eternal Grace was two-fold: to prepare students academically and to prepare them to live “in the way of the Lord.” The school’s promotional materials explain:

...teaching both the Truth of God as found in His Word, the Bible, but also truth as it exists in God’s world. We recognize that God is the author and source of all truth, and that true education is gaining this perspective and integrating it into all teaching. This perspective is theistic (God-centered), not humanistic (man-centered) and, as such, is opposed to atheism, evolution, permissiveness (an ‘open attitude’ in matters of morals and ethics), and existentialism (experience of ‘phenomena-orientation’ as the only reality). It stands in direct opposition to any thinking that is anti-Biblical or extra-Biblical.

All teaching at Eternal Grace serves the ultimate aim of creating strong Christians. As their literature explains, “we recognize our task as being one of teaching that man is incomplete and inadequate without a proper relationship to God.”

To foster this relationship, the teachers in the school typically stand at the front of their rooms, and from a very young age, their students are taught to learn by listening. In almost every grade in the school, the children’s desks sit in neat rows facing the blackboards. Reference to the Bible occurs during every subject, not only in religion classes, and it is typical for prayers to begin class sessions. Moreover, a strict dress code is enforced; the students wear khaki pants or skirts and solid colored jerseys every day except Wednesdays, when the students dress more formally

for weekly chapel sessions. Wide banners adorned the main school hallways, proclaiming, “God, protect us” and, “Expand our providence.” Eternal Grace aims to foster the characteristics of good fundamentalist Christian children: they are to be strong in their faith, obedient to their religious authorities, humble in their human relationships and dedicated to Christian salvation. Like the school-wide policies, the teaching of all school subjects at Eternal Grace serves the same purpose—that of elucidating for students what a “proper relationship to God” entails.

Emilia Barrett had been teaching 8th–12th grade at Eternal Grace for three years at the start of the study. Somewhere in her late forties, Mrs. Barrett has a warm smile and an easy laugh. A mother of four, she began teaching only after her youngest left home for college. Mrs. Barrett identifies herself as simply “Christian,” the designation preferred by fundamentalists. Though she is a non-charismatic evangelical—the distinction being that she doesn’t believe that faith ought to be based on emotion or primarily emotional in expression—she has felt very much at home teaching at EG. The spiritual mission of the school lies close to her heart.

When asked, for example, why she begins the year with a quarter-long unit on the Holocaust, Mrs. Barrett’s response centers on the inculcation of faith in her 8th grade students. She teaches about the Holocaust by having her students read *The Hiding Place*, the personal memoir of Corrie ten Boom (1984), a Christian concentration camp survivor. The book describes the extensive rescue work of its author and her family, her resultant incarceration and loss, and the vicissitudes and triumph of her Christian faith throughout these ordeals. One of Mrs. Barrett’s primary goals for teaching *The Hiding Place* is to infuse her students with a faith similar to ten Boom’s. Just as ten Boom’s faith grew stronger during her imprisonment, allowing her to thrive

upon liberation, so Mrs. Barrett wants her students to turn to Jesus in their times of distress. As she explained:

I teach *The Hiding Place* [because] I believe it's a story which not only has historical significance but teaches us many lessons about the persecution of others and about persecution that we, as Christians, may someday face. To be truthful, I fully expect as a Christian, whether in my lifetime or my children's life times...that there will be, that we will have to deal with some type of persecution.

In Mrs. Barrett's vision, then, suffering during the Holocaust prefigures the future persecution of Christians; hence, this history is instructive, its teaching, instrumental. The memoir doesn't teach only vague lessons about ethics or values but rather specific strategies for handling persecution and thriving spiritually. Not surprisingly, Mrs. Barrett used the events of 9/11 to teach her students these same kinds of lessons.⁹

9/11 at Eternal Grace

On the morning of September 11th, 2001, a television sat boldly perched on top of a high cart outside the main administrative office suite at Eternal Grace, broadcasting the attack. A small group of school personnel, parents and students were huddled at its base, gazing awestruck as the first World Trade Tower building collapsed.

The class I was observing began at 9 am, and Mrs. Barrett had been teaching since 7:45. She had thus heard only rumors of the news when class began. She had not seen the video images that I had passed on the way to her classroom. As she did every session, Mrs. Barrett started that class by soliciting concerns on which the students could focus their prayers. One student volunteered

that they should pray that none of the information stored in the Pentagon “get out” into the wrong hands. Another volunteered that they should pray for those who were hurt in the attack. Mrs. Barrett agreed and restated the request, but subtly reworded it: We should pray for “the safety of *any* people who are involved or who have been hurt,” she remarked. Mrs. Barrett asked the students to pray with her, bowing her head, closing her eyes, and clasping her hands together. The students followed suit.

Father God... We know that our country, we know that our universe is in your hands. Lord, you have created everything. You have given us life. Nothing could happen without your allowing it to happen. We first acknowledge your authority over everything that happens in our world. We thank you that we can trust in you in that you have this situation under control, even though it seems to us that things are not under control.

...We trust you to work this situation out for you are good. We ask that people will come to look to you and to realize that nothing in this world is secure except you...

We pray along with all those people who know you and are involved in this situation that you would be close to them, that you would reveal yourself to them and that you would give them your presence so that they would know that you promised that you would be with them through anything, even to the end of the world. We ask for any people who don't know you, Lord, that you would allow this situation to help them to seek you and to find you, Lord. We promise that anyone who seeks you will find you and we know that sometimes in the most frightening of situations, we will turn to you....

And Lord, we just ask that... you would take care of this situation for our president and all of our other people in positions of authority in our country.

In Jesus' name, Amen.¹⁰

Mrs. Barrett looked up at the end of the prayer, initiating a brief emotional inventory of her students. "How are you all doing?" she queried, continuing, "Is any one really, really worried?" "I don't know," one student raised her hand to say, seeming to express real nervousness about the situation. Mrs. Barrett, gracefully and forcefully, foreclosed the possibility of a fuller discussion, as though the student's admission of emotional uncertainty were akin to theological doubt. "It's a pretty scary situation," Mrs. Barrett conceded, "but we know that God is in control," she asserted. "that he's going to work this all out."

Mrs. Barrett skillfully wove the rupturing events of 9/11 into the every-day fabric of fundamentalist Christian schooling. While the ritual act of praying itself tamed the events through its routinizing aspects, the content of Mrs. Barrett's prayer subsumed the attacks into the reassuring narrative of fundamentalist belief. The meta-narrative governing all of history within a fundamentalist worldview adheres to two principles: (1) that all events are under God's control, and (2) that because God is good, all events occur for a greater good that the human mind may not be able to fathom initially. 'True Christians,' therefore, accept all events as part of God's plan. Indeed, that is the meaning of faith. The events of the day were in God's hands, Mrs. Barrett professed, and both the attackers and the attacked were to be prayed for.

When interviewed a few days later, one of the students in the class, echoed Mrs. Barrett's inclusive attitude. Not only should the attackers be prayed for, Reba explained, but they should be forgiven. Reba was in the process of describing what moral lessons ought to be drawn from catastrophes when she explained, "Just 'cause some Arab or Palestinian did this, it doesn't mean we should hate all Arabians." Reba seemed to think that the point of the lesson was to teach kids not to stereotype. Illuminating the message "how you shouldn't hate," she enlarged her point: "My mom's 100% German, so I don't hate the Germans even though what they did to the Jews. I think you have to forgive them just like you need to forgive the people who bombed the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon." It's not clear to me from the interview with Reba whether she considered Holocaust atrocities to be similar to the attacks on September 11th; it could well be simply the timing involved—the coincidence of studying the Holocaust on September 11th—that provoked Reba's comparison. Regardless, the New Testament's injunction to 'love enemies' provided the conceptualizing framework for this student's and teacher's initial response to the attacks on 9/11.

Dying with Meaning

In class the next day, Mrs. Barrett explained to her students that both the lives lost and the lives that hung in the balance as the World Trade Center rubble was being excavated could be rendered meaningful through a Christian lens. Just as she knew that those wounded and murdered were serving God's purposes, so Mrs. Barrett prayed for her students to commit themselves whole-heartedly to God's work. She clarified:

All the people in New York who are trying to survive, in a way, I know that we experience these things in our lives, but we let God use them and that's an

important thing. Since we are human beings, we can give these experiences to God and let God use them.... There is no greater failure, students, in life, than feeling like you haven't allowed God to use you.... Everyone is alive for a special purpose, and that's why God created you, to live out ...your life through God [which] will bring you great joy....

Were those hurt, killed and dying as a result of the attacks on September 11th able to 'give' their experiences, their pain over to God, letting 'God use them,' Mrs. Barrett implied, their suffering would, if not be healed, then at least be lessened, for they would accept their Godly purpose, whether that purpose entailed life or death. Like Jesus on the cross, those murdered in this attack were dying as part of a divine purpose. For Mrs. Barrett, then, all historical suffering, whether distant or unfolding, becomes meaningful in relation to God's intentions, however mysterious. As with Corrie ten Boom's memoir, Mrs. Barrett's reading of events—The Holocaust or 9/11—compresses them in the vice meant to bring God and her students into ever-closer contact. What matters is not the event for its own sake, but the event for the sake of her students;¹¹ similarly, what matters is not the event's human dimensions, no matter how immediate, but its divine purposes, which are fixed and predetermined.

Prayer Accounting

President George W. Bush officially proclaimed the next day, September 14th, to be the "National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the Victims of the Terrorist Attacks on September 11, 2001." In Mrs. Barrett's classroom, Bush's proclamation meant the day would be devoted to Christian prayer. She began the class by reading three verses from the Bible aloud,

one about trusting God,¹² one about giving thanks to God,¹³ and the third about mourning.¹⁴ The class session would be orchestrated around these three categories which she listed on the board: ‘thanks/ rejoicing,’ ‘mourning,’ and things to ‘pray for.’ The students first wrote in their answers and then took turns reading what they had posted, prayers that included thanks “that they didn’t bomb our town,” thanks “for 5 police officers” who had been found in the rubble of the World Trade Towers, thanks that “the Pennsylvania plane didn’t hit.” Mrs. Barrett summarized the prayers, smoothly transitioning to the next column by saying that despite all they were thankful for,

We still mourn with those who are experiencing terrible sadness today and a terrible sense of loss. Many people who don’t know you are feeling hopeless and helpless and are feeling angry. They are in great pain, Lord. We mourn with those who mourn.

Implied in Mrs. Barrett’s wording, of course, was the notion that those who knew God, who had accepted Jesus as their lord, were not ‘feeling hopeless and helpless’ or ‘feeling angry,’ despite the events of the preceding days; the saved, she implied, were not ‘in great pain.’ Only non-believers were in truly desperate emotional straits. Mrs. Barrett seemed to suggest that genuine mourning and Christian belief are incompatible, since Christians would have accepted God’s purpose in allowing 9/11 to occur.

Mrs. Barrett then had the students read from the third column, those things for which they need, “intervention, ...help, ...assistance, ...[or] provision.” The first student to volunteer in this category prayed for help finding a new John Deere engine for his father’s lawn mower. Speaking sincerely, he asked from God that “it would be cheap.” A few students

near this boy obviously disapproved, glaring at him or rolling their eyes about the mundane nature of his request, and those who spoke afterwards pointedly offered prayers for people rather than things, for: “the people of New York,” “for the dead,” “for the president,” for “a cousin with diabetes” and “for the price gougers, that they would realize that the deed that they have done was cruel and let the prices go back down on gas, and...we could just go on normally.” Mrs. Barrett closed the ritual prayer by affirming God’s constancy:

Lord, we thank you to know that you are the same God today as you were even before this tragedy happened in New York. You are the God of strength, and you are the God that we can trust. ...We ask that there would be more and more people who would want to live their lives for you, that they believe in you and trust you, Lord, so this [9/11] is something that you can use for your glory....

Mrs. Barrett’s prayer on 9/11 was not dissimilar from the prayers she had said earlier that month; while the referent may have been different, the overall message was the same.

Mrs. Barrett professed faith in her God, faith in his control, faith in the promised salvation of Christians. While on the one hand, Mrs. Barrett’s prayer here—“that you are the same God today as you were even before this tragedy happened”—crystallizes the need to attest to continuity, on the other hand, the prayer simply affirms the continuities experienced in her world. From her perspective, in other words, there was no discontinuity experienced on the day of 9/11. For her, all events testify to God’s presence; it is not that God’s presence needs to be written into events.

Having ended the formal prayer, the class continued with a kind of prayer accounting. Mrs. Barrett reviewed prayers students had mentioned in previous weeks' classes, asking whether they had been answered. Had Raina's mother found a job yet? Had Robert's father found a new car? Had Dean's injury healed? The students answered Mrs. Barrett's queries, politely explaining which prayers needed to be continued and which could be ceased. Dean's injury, for example, had mostly disappeared, such that when Mrs. Barrett asked if the class should still pray for him, he stipulated the caveat, "just a little bit, though."

As these prayers attest, for Mrs. Barrett and her believing students, God is a living, active presence in the world and in their lives. He hears individual prayers from the mundane to the profound and answers them all, sooner or later. Because of that assurance, his work can be accounted for and monitored closely. And, there is a Godly purpose for all suffering—allowing the pain of those who are saved to be mitigated, and potentially drawing God closer to the unsaved. God's import in the world is utterly plain. Less obvious to the members of Mrs. Barrett's class was exactly how God acts in the world, which events reflect his will and which reflect humans'.

Interpreting God's Will

A discussion of death almost one month later illustrated precisely this confusion. Mrs. Barrett wanted to convey that when God takes life, death is peaceful, whereas when humans take life, death is not. Obliquely, Mrs. Barrett was making a point about abortion, homicide and genocide. In the chapter of *The Hiding Place* the students had just read, Corrie ten Boom's sister had died a

brutal death in Ravensbruck concentration camp. After confessing to the crime of hiding Jews, her sister, Betsy, had been interred, and had died of illness and starvation. Corrie identified the body, and noted the beauty of her sister's face. Discussing the passage, Mrs. Barrett and her students interpret beauty literally rather than metaphorically. Though it begins on track, the discussion about Betsy's face derails in the shadow of 9/11 as the students and Mrs. Barrett herself struggle to distinguish whether those killed on 9/11 provide an example of God's or humans' timing in taking life. The confusion results, in part, from the conviction expressed in Mrs. Barrett's prayers. If God controls all events on earth and if God's acts further the good, then whose agency is ultimately reflected in Betsy's death?

Judging by Betsy's peaceful face, Mrs. Barrett claims that Betsy had died in God's hands, having sacrificed her own life to save others. Mrs. Barrett follows up by asking students if they've ever seen a "person who has died, how the face turns peaceful." A number of students volunteer, explaining their relationships to the deceased. In each case, Mrs. Barrett asks if the face of the dead looked peaceful, and each student replies in the affirmative. Having garnered her students' reactions, however, Mrs. Barrett pushes on to her main point:

...If it's the right time to die, God can give us peace about it, but not if it's not our right time.... Suicide: Students your age have been in high schools where there was suicide. That's not a peaceful thing for a student to die like that. That's not God's will. That's not God's timing. That's human timing. That's a human being's decision. That's never right, that's never good, and that never brings peace. [Jean's hand shoots up, and Mrs. Barrett calls on her.]

Jean: What of like religious suicide bombing?... Then do you have like... to sacrifice yourself, like a kamikaze?

Mrs. Barrett: Any kind of suicide... is *you* making the decision about when to die, and that's *God's* choice. ...Now there's a time for putting yourself in front of danger so someone else doesn't suffer; that's a very loving thing to do. But killing and taking your life as the terrorists did because they thought their cause was right... They seized the power that should have been given to God and didn't allow God to work through the situation. They [should] have worked through the situation, tried to work through it, and walk away. Yes, they might not have gotten what they wanted, but by killing like they did, they're murderers. And what does God say murder is?

Students: Evil/Sin

Mrs. Barrett: Right, sin. God wants us to love other people, not murder other people.

On the one hand, then, Betsy ten Boom gained beauty in death for dying according to God's timing. She was following God's plan, doing God's work, hiding Jews, God's "chosen people," (Schweber & Irwin 2003). Thus, in death, her face was beautiful. On the other hand, those who died in the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, or any terrorist hijacking for that matter, were not beautiful in death, for their murders were an example of human hubris, the taking of God's prerogatives into human hands. Those murdered by humans, Mrs. Barrett implies, cannot be beautiful.

Seemingly plain on the surface, this distinction was confusing at best. Mrs. Barrett wanted to discourage her students from ever considering suicide, but in doing so, she construed Betsy's murder at the hands of the German SS and their Dutch collaborators, as falling within "God's timing," while the murders of those killed on 9/11, carried out by Al Qaeda's suicide hijackers, were not reflective of "God's timing." While Mrs. Barrett seemed to want to endow Godly acts (the saving of Jews) with human agency (Betsy's) and hence, divine rewards (beauty in death), she simultaneously wanted to distance ungodly acts (the murders on 9/11) from God's realm (or timing) by denying divine rewards (beauty in death) to those murdered. From my perspective, it was impossible to determine which of the acts (the Holocaust or 9/11) deserved designation as God's timing and indeed how God's timing related to God's purpose or God's agency. When is it humans are supposed to 'seize the power' that they have vs. 'giving it to God'? I suspect that Mrs. Barrett was bothered by the implications of this discussion, too, which is why in subsequent weeks she returned to its central concepts.

Excavating God's Logic

Because the meta-narrative of God's ultimate control over events articulates a supreme logic to history for Christian fundamentalists, Mrs. Barrett did attempt to excavate a godly rationale for the events of 9/11. A few weeks after the attacks, she commented in class that perhaps God had orchestrated the terrorist attacks to unleash the religious sentiment that seemed to be flourishing among Americans in their wake.¹⁵ The students were summarizing a chapter in which Corrie ten Boom is asked by a fellow resistance worker to arrange the murder of a Nazi informant. Corrie refuses since murder, to her, is a sin regardless of the context in which it is perpetrated.

Reviewing the plot, Mrs. Barrett asks her students what Corrie does after rejecting the resistance worker's request, and a student answers:

She asked if he was a praying man, and he said, 'Aren't we all right now?'...

Mrs. Barrett: ...Does that remind you of anything that's going on?

Trace: Everybody's praying right now.

Mrs. Barrett: Why Trace?

Trace: Because of the stuff that happened.

Mrs. Barrett: What evidence are you seeing then?

Trace: The national prayer service.

Mrs. Barrett: The national prayer service. Amy?

Amy: The media is mentioning prayer and praying and stuff....

Mrs. Barrett: More than I ever heard before. Dean?

Dean: During shows, like they'll have a McDonald's sign and a Subway sign and then they'll say some words and then it'll say 'We're all praying for the people.'

Mrs. Barrett: How about the signs that say that 'God loves America?' This is something that would have never been talked about before [9/11], putting anything about God on their sign saying God bless America.

A major point of 9/11, Mrs. Barrett implied, was to catalyze the acceptability of invoking God in the public sphere and to promote the relationships that publicity might foster between people and God. In short, the events of 9/11 must serve a Godly purpose since all of history does. And though that purpose may be initially veiled, it is intelligible to humans over time.

During an interview, one of Mrs. Barrett's students reiterated this view, explaining that God works purposefully and that his logic is always, eventually transparent:

We can do things, and choose to do things, but God knows what we are going to choose before we do. It's not like, 'Oh my gosh I can't believe I just did that.' It's kind of mind boggling, but He knows what's going to happen, but we have free will, but He knows what is going to happen. So, we can make a choice, but ...He knows everything, millions and billions of years ahead of time, or ...just a thousand years ahead of time, a hundred years... He usually has a purpose for things—He always has a purpose for things, but you just can't see the purpose until later on.

Diminished Agency

At the end of the month of September, Mrs. Barrett asked her students to pray for missionaries in Afghanistan who had been put on trial for preaching and who were potentially going to be executed. When she asked if any of the students in her class would consider putting themselves in danger to preach God's words, none volunteered. This led her to ask if any of the students, had they been living "in Corrie's time," would have hidden Jews, or gotten "involved in standing up against the Gestapo." 'No's' and soft laughter filled the room. The students who spoke said they'd conform to Nazi expectations of behavior rather than hiding Jews:

Quincy: I'd be a good citizen.

Trace: I'd follow the law.

Mrs. Barrett: Would you follow God's law or the Gestapo law?

Paul: I'd try to do both.

Rick: Is there any way to follow both?

Mrs. Barrett: Do you think there is a way to follow both?

Paul: If you were schizophrenic.

While giggles erupted from all corners of the room, I couldn't help wondering if the constant assertion of God's control over events didn't in some way diminish these students' sense of moral obligation to act in the world. After all, if all events follow God's plan, regardless of what one chooses to do, why then act in ways that risk one's safety?¹⁶ Why 'follow God's law' if you can experience God's history, and live and die within God's embrace, feeling less pain than those who are not saved? If you're saved through belief, then what propels ethical action? Mrs. Barrett herself had said that the Al Qaeda attackers had "seized the power that should have been given to God and didn't allow God to work through the situation." Was the Holocaust a situation that God "ought to work through" or one where people ought to intervene? Only one student, Kira, eventually volunteered that she would hide Jews, that she would choose God's laws over the Gestapo's, regardless of the risks to herself and her family.

Mrs. Barrett was bothered when none of the other students followed Kira's example, or at least wouldn't profess to in class. In the ensuing discussion, Mrs. Barrett tried to adjust the students' moral compasses by harnessing their reactions to 9/11, equating saving Jews during the Holocaust with waging a retaliatory war on Afghanistan. Repeatedly, she asked if the students could see the similarities between the actions, both compelled by the argument that, "You can't just stand by and close your eyes to someone who is harming so many people." The students remained unconvinced, however; they remained much more willing to pursue retaliatory measures than to consider rescue activities. Whether this was because they were aware of the

relatively small consequences to them personally of launching a military attack against Afghanistan vs. the necessarily much larger ones of rescuing Jews during the Holocaust, or whether the students were simply more invested in ‘lived history’ than in ‘learned history’ (Wineburg 2001) was unclear.

Either way, the micro-level interactions in Mrs. Barrett’s classroom revealed the processes of collective memory formation that in turn paved the way for the students’ position. The prayers Mrs. Barrett had uttered on 9/11 and in the weeks following, her disciplining of students’ fears, and her interpretations of texts, whether ten Boom’s memoir or the suburban landscape, all buttressed belief in a world where God’s control reigns supreme and where, therefore, human agency is diminished. As important as the processes by which collective memory were produced in this school, then, were the analytic dimensions of the memory itself, the highly problematic messages about agency, citizenship, democracy and history embedded in its narrative.

In sum, the various Christian frameworks for understanding 9/11 that circulated in Mrs. Barrett’s classroom raised a host of troubling implications. The events of 9/11 were perpetrated by human hands, such that the deaths experienced were brutal, and the bodies of those lost, ugly. Those who were ‘saved,’ however, suffered less and died more beautifully, by allowing God to ‘use’ them towards his greater good. God allowed these events to occur in order to widen his presence in the public (secular) sphere and to encourage Americans to embrace Christianity. While God directs history and answers individuals’ prayers, then, God nonetheless enables atrocities like the Holocaust and the attacks on 9/11 to happen. And since all events in history, including 9/11, follow God’s logic and imply God’s approval, whether to act in this world to further the good is

an open question rather than an obvious choice for most of the students in Mrs. Barrett's classroom.

Analysis

Maurice Halbwach's notions of collective memory can help to conceptualize the processing of history that went on in Mrs. Barrett's room. To do so, however, it's worth contextualizing Halbwach's own work as his most famous writing, *La memoire collective*, was published in 1950, five years after Halbwachs' death at Buchenwald concentration camp. He had been working on the volume when the Nazis invaded the French city of Strasbourg where he lived. Patrick Hutton suggests that, in light of these circumstances, "one senses...that [Halbwachs'] thoughts on the subject were still provisional" (1993, 74). Specifically, Hutton critiques Halbwachs' positivistic notions of history, his passionate loyalty to the claim that history exists outside of collective memory, inaccessible though it may be. Hutton explains:

To Halbwachs's way of thinking, history considers a past from which living memory has been distilled, one that may be reconstructed from its evidentiary leavings but whose mentality or subjective state of mind cannot be resurrected. As he remarked in a telling simile: 'History is like a crowded graveyard to which new tombstones are continually being added.' (76)

In short, history's chambers are inaccessible to the living, opposed intrinsically and forever to the needs and dictates of the present.

For Halbwachs, the lived experience of history, forms social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*) or resonances that enliven religious collective memory, forming the threads between past and

present, however frayed. Thus, in his example, the sites central to Jewish history before the birth of Jesus became the very sites onto which the Christian collective memory of Jesus' life was overlaid. In a move to proclaim both the eternity of the Church and the dominance of its doctrine, early Christians transplanted the likely locales of Jesus' path, grafting them onto significant sites of Jewish history. The religious collective memory reified in Mrs. Barrett's room was less selective about the locales subsumed into its overarching narrative; by virtue of being fundamentalist religious collective memory, its colonizing impulse extended to all events in history, not only to ones with particular historical significance.

Though Halbwachs' sociological theories about religious collective memory were driven by the primacy of place, then, they apply equally well when the site is imagined—when Mrs. Barrett's Midwestern students are praying for the people of New York under siege. And while the theoretical exemplar of Halbwachs' *cadre sociaux* may be as distant in memory as the Jewish sites of historical import were to the New Christians, Halbwach's theory holds up when the events are immediate in time, lived in the present and technologically replicated, as were the collapsing World Trade Towers on September 11th. Only Halbwachs' certainty in the "ultimate opposition of history and memory" (1950, 78) is challenged by the case of Mrs. Barrett's class, or at least called into question. For indeed, in the world of Eternal Grace, no history—no event or class of events—stands outside of religious collective memory. History and religion are one and the same, as are instruction in history and instruction in religion. In terms of teaching history or understanding unfolding events, the ramifications of this kind of conviction are profound. This religious collective memory, after all, frames how students conceive of themselves as agents in history, citizens in a democracy, and actors in the world.

According to James Lowenthal, “sacralizing some chosen time in the past . . . impedes historical understanding,” (2000, 67) because the sacred defies explanation. For religious fundamentalists, all time—past, present, and future—is sacralized, as God’s plan constitutes the meta-narrative of all history. Thus, history becomes imbued with inevitability, the richness of historical dilemmas is flattened out, the potential appreciation for multiple causalities is quashed and all of history leads to a renewed avowal of faith or the condemnation for lack thereof. Moreover, the tantalizing sense of strangeness that all deep historical inquiry ought to engender (Wineburg 2001) becomes an impossibility, for in a world where all events are simultaneously foretold and foretelling, “astonishment” as a “delight of learning history” (Lowenthal 2000) is unlikely at best. Astonishment, after all, remains the domain of unbelievers.

In Mrs. Barrett’s classroom, astonishment isn’t the only casualty of religious collective memory, though; learning history as a discipline is as well. In Mrs. Barrett’s classroom, history and memory cannot be opposed as Halbwachs maintains they must be, for history—of the past and as it unfolds in the present—is necessarily and always a reflection of God’s will, an instantiation of religious collective memory.¹⁷ Put differently, teaching history is always a matter of teaching heritage (Lowenthal 2000) at Eternal Grace.

The situation is hardly particular to fundamentalist Christian religious private schools. As Keith Barton and Linda Levstik (2004) point out, history education in U.S. public schools typically knits events into a narrative framework, and “not . . . just any old narrative,” but into the “dominant narrative of U.S. history—the story of freedom and progress” (166–167). As Bruce

VanSledright (1988) has argued, “much of what passes for history in the [public] schools is actually rooted in heritage’s attempt to turn selective memories into articles of truth” (244). Numerous studies evince the potency of this master narrative, of American exceptionalism, (among them: Kammen 1991; Loewen 1995; Epstein 1998; Foner 1998; Wertsch 2002; Barton & Levstik 2004). My own previous work on Holocaust education bears this out as well (Schweber 2004). Though knowledgeable about history in general and Holocaust history in particular, a public high school teacher I called Mr. Zee taught about the Holocaust as a story of triumph and progress rather than as one of tragedy or moral collapse.¹⁸ It is clear, therefore, that whether teaching towards religious collective memory or national collective memory, history teachers in both religious and public schools fit historical events into over-arching narratives, consciously or not. And while the contents of the overarching narratives may differ greatly, the processes of directing students’ thinking do not necessarily diverge.

That said, one can make a strong argument that the way that fundamentalist narratives operate is different than the ways their religious but not fundamentalist, or nationalistic and not religious, counterparts do. When I shared with Mr. Zee the results from my study in his classroom, he immediately recognized the ideological rut he had strayed into, and he took steps to shift the patterns of his pedagogy the following year. In other words, Mr. Zee acknowledged that the governing narrative of ‘progress and freedom’ cannot fully account for all of history, much less all of American history, and that there are episodes and events—like the Holocaust and 9/11, like slavery and genocide—that demand plotlines that are neither triumphalist nor endowed with happy endings (Schweber 2004).¹⁹ Moreover and more importantly perhaps, at least for Mr. Zee, the context of public schooling allowed for the possibility of debates over *which* narrative the

community's collective memories should be constructed to support. By contrast, at Eternal Grace, there is no event that could escape the overarching narrative that asserts God's ultimate control and promises true Christians' salvation, and certainly no need to debate the legitimacy of that framework. No event could challenge or disrupt Mrs. Barrett's beliefs.²⁰ And that, in short, epitomizes the nature of fundamentalism. Mr. Zee believes that history, integrally, contains multiple narrative possibilities; Mrs. Barrett's historical sensibility trumpeted a single, unitary truth.

The large percentage of Americans²¹ who identify as fundamentalist or evangelical Christians and who worship at churches like the one associated with Eternal Grace carry with them a kind of theological certainty that both endows them with humility in the face of God's greatness but also promotes a kind of hubris in the presumption of knowing God's plan. This certainty also engenders complacency, a troubling aspect of this religious collective memory.²² What, after all, does it mean when a large percentage of the American populace adheres to a worldview that negates the importance of intervening in history? As Barbara Rossing writes in her (2004) book, *The Rapture Exposed*, this kind of faith "leads to 'appalling ethics'... because the faithful are relieved of concern for the environment, violence, and everything else except their personal salvation" (as quoted in Moyers 2005). Most of the students in Mrs. Barrett's classroom certainly seemed caught in this theological pitfall, being unwilling as they were to even consider saving Jews when asked to imagine living during the Holocaust.

By contrast, those who on the day of September 11th and in the weeks and months thereafter, sought explanations for the attacks amidst human affairs, in the role the U.S. has played in the

Middle East, in international affairs, the oil business or global geopolitics, as examples, might be characterized as humanistically driven.²³ While they may well be religious, they tend not to be fundamentalist in their outlooks. Such questioners, while no less certain of their dominant narratives, are nonetheless able, as was Mr. Zee, to revisit them when faced with overwhelming evidence to the contrary. While the left has no dearth of ideologues, in other words, their ideology is not bound inexorably to theology,²⁴ which allows for the possibility that history can move according to the ideals of ‘freedom and progress’ or in discord with them. No path is preordained. Furthermore, by virtue of believing in human agency, regardless of how compromised by institutional structures, adherents of this worldview at least preach the importance of acting in the world to promote its salvation rather than relying on belief in Jesus to guarantee their own. The two groups, thus, are opposed, and the conflict between their systems of logic are intractable, bearing heavy consequences for public schooling and for democracy writ large.²⁵

The questions this case calls forth sit at the nub of that conflict, and as such, are both crucially timely and almost endless. What does it mean, for example, to teach theologically certain students disciplines in which questioning is not only normative but necessary, an integral dimension of the discipline itself? Relatedly, what happens when humanistically questioning teachers teach theologically certain students or vice versa?²⁶ What happens, in other words, when students raised in Eternal Grace families attend public schools? If Mrs. Barrett’s believing students would rather not oppose unjust governmental decrees, given that they are saved regardless of the perils of our democracy, what kinds of citizens might they become? Are the

trade-offs of obedience to governmental authority worth the price of supporting potential dictatorships? Is the erosion of a pluralistic democracy worth the affordance of theological comfort, and if not, should our government support private religious education at all? While a few scholars have begun to explore these issues in earnest, (notably, Rose 1988; Peshkin 1986; Berliner 1997; Apple 2001; Zimmerman 2002; Boyer 2005), much work remains to be done on the central questions of how the competing collective memories associated with theological certainty and humanistic questioning should, can and do enter into the arena of public schooling. The case of Mrs. Barrett's classroom represents only an initial inroad investigating what is fast becoming the minefield of the American public sphere. To say that more educational research needs to be done in this area is a dreadful understatement.

An Ending

In a famous article written in the aftermath of 9/11, David Brooks (2001) claimed that reactions to that day in both 'Red' and 'Blue' America attested to the cohesiveness of our national fabric. 9/11 and its immediate aftermath, in his opinion, had triggered a "national Sabbath" of sorts, a time when the divisions between the two sides dissolved, when both were reminded of "what is really important." It was, in a sense, the catalyst to remember that we all inhabit the same 'cafeteria-nation' regardless of the cliques at our metaphorical tables and actual communities. "If the September 11 attacks rallied people in both Red and Blue America, they also neutralized the political and cultural leaders who tend to exploit the differences between the two," Brooks wrote, which helps explain the scolding Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson received for their remarks. That Sabbath lingered long enough for Brooks to pronounce that "there may be cracks [between the two Americas,] but there is no chasm."

This research suggests that that uniting was temporary at best and illusory in all likelihood. Brooks' proclamation of unity was based on his presumption that the two Americas experienced a shared national event on 9/11. Mrs. Barrett's case implies, however, that even on the day of September 11th, 2001, at least two Americas—not Red and Blue Americas, but theologically certain and humanistically questioning Americans—were making radically different meanings and constructing competing collective memories of that day alone, memories that were and continue to be entirely incommensurate.²⁷ While Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson's initial understandings of 9/11 may have been extreme, they were not so outlandish as to be unrecognizable to the students and teachers at Eternal Grace school.²⁸ For them and the millions of Americans like them, like all other events in history, 9/11 is fundamentally religious.

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Notes

¹ Among those on the political right who admonished Falwell and Robertson for their callousness were Cal Thomas (an ultra-conservative writer), Bill O'Reilly (the television commentator), and Andrea Lafferty (of the Traditional Values Coalition).

² Though an imperfect translation, the English title of the work is *On Collective Memory*.

³ A vast and growing literature analyzes such crystallizations of memorial culture. See, for example: Edward Linenthal's (2001) book, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*, Sarah Farmer's (1999) book, *Martyred Village*, Charles Maier's (1988) book, *The Unmasterable Past*, and Marita Sturken's (1997) book, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, & the Politics of Remembering*.

⁴ While researchers have examined historical thinking and religious schooling, few focus on the nature of historical thinking as a religiously infused or religiously mediated activity.

⁵ For more on the complexities of conducting research at an evangelical, fundamentalist Christian school as a Jewish researcher, please see my article, entitled, "Donning wigs, divining feelings, and other dilemmas of doing research in devoutly religious contexts" forthcoming in *Qualitative Inquiry*.

⁶ I was aided immeasurably in this research by two assistants: Susan Gevelber and Rebekah Irwin. I am also exceedingly indebted to Kristen Buras for her invaluable editing.

⁷ Like *Eternal Grace*, all the names in this study are pseudonyms.

⁸ For those unfamiliar with this faith orientation who are interested in learning more, I recommend the following works. For a general introduction to fundamentalism, especially vis a vis politics and science, see George Marsden's (1991) book, *Understanding Fundamentalism And Evangelicalism*. For a history of American

fundamentalism, see Paul Boyer's (1992) work, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. For case studies of fundamentalist Christian schooling, see Alan Peshkin's famous (1986) ethnography, *God's Choice*, Parson's (1987) book, *Inside America's Christian Schools*, and Susan Rose's (1988) book, *Keeping Them Out of The Hands of Satan: Evangelical Schooling in America*. For an informative contextualization of fundamentalist Christian schooling vis a vis policy-making, see Michael Apple's (2001) *Educating the Right Way*, and for other critiques of religious extremism more generally, see: Gaddy, Hall & arzano 1996; Dwyer 1998; Miner 1998; and Detwiler 1999.

⁹ For more about the meaning of the Holocaust in the same classroom, see Simone Schweber and Rebekah Irwin's (2003) article, "Especially special': Learning about Jews in a Fundamentalist Christian School."

¹⁰ This is a short excerpt of the prayer, which in toto, occupies 9 full pages.

¹¹ Elsewhere, I have called this tendency of using subject matter to focus solely on students' identities, "reflexive affirmation."

¹² Isaiah 26: 3-4, "Trust in the Lord for ever and ever, for in the Lord you have an everlasting rock."

¹³ Philippians 4: 6-7: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

¹⁴ Matthew 5: 4, 44: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted; But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

¹⁵ Interestingly, a survey released December 6, 2001, by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that indeed, in the wake of 9/11, Americans from across a broad spectrum of religions, ethnicities, ages and regions agreed that religion played a more important role in American life than it had previously. The same poll revealed that this attitudinal shift didn't translate into changed patterns of personal religious observance, though Mrs. Barrett hoped it would.

¹⁶ Rousseau makes the same point at the end of his classic essay, "On Social Contract"; Christianity is incompatible with civil society, he argues, since Christians are ultimately not invested in this world.

¹⁷ In fact, this claim can also be read as supporting Halbwachs' overarching framework rather than opposing it since Halbwachs was arguing that "collective memory was not about the past at all, but was entirely a reflection of contemporary social needs and the contemporary social condition" (Wineburg, 2001, 249).

¹⁸ For a fuller treatment of Mr. Zee, see, "Facing history but not ourselves," in *Making Sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from Classroom Practice* (Teachers College Press, 2004).

¹⁹ James Wertsch's (2002) descriptions of post-Soviet textbook narratives of World War II fit the pattern I am describing here as well. Wertsch writes that these historical accounts "include several new events and characters that create challenges to writers wishing to use the same basic narrative template" (112); that is, there are events that force the textbook writers to reconceptualize the overarching nationalistic narrative that characterizes the text as a whole.

²⁰ The all-encompassing nature of a fundamentalist meta-narrative is akin to fundamentalist beliefs in Biblical inerrancy, though the relationship between them is multi-faceted. For a fuller discussion of fundamentalist beliefs in Biblical inerrancy, its origins and uses, see Nancy

Ammerman's (1991) entry in *The Fundamentalist Project*, entitled, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism."

²¹ As a recent *New York Times* (Luo, 2005) article put it, "Precisely tabulating how many evangelical Christians there are in the city—and what exactly constitutes such a Christian—is notoriously difficult" (6/21/05, p. A20). The same could be said of the numbers in the U.S. at large, but estimates range from 30 to 42% of Americans. Nonetheless, it is clear that the percentage of fundamentalist Christians in the U.S. has been expanding rapidly over the last decade, as has the number of fundamentalist Christians worldwide. For more information about these rates and their corresponding geographical domains, see, Philip Jenkins' (2002) book, *The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity*.

²² It is worth noting that President George W. Bush subscribes to a fundamentalist Christian worldview. For more on the implications of that vision for his leadership, see Joan Didion's, "Mr. Bush & the Divine," *New York Review of Books*, Volume 50, Number 17, dated November 6, 2003.

²³ The two categories I've identified can be inserted neatly into James Davison Hunter's (1991) paradigm which counterposes 'orthodox' and 'progressives' as the main denominations 'struggling to define America' in his now famous formulation of the 'culture wars.' For the purposes of this article, however, I use 'theologically certain' and 'humanistic questioning' as the categorical labels because I want to highlight the centrality of religion in determining the categories themselves.

²⁴ As Bill Moyers (2005) elucidated, "Theology asserts propositions that need not be proven true, while ideologues hold stoutly to a worldview despite being contradicted by what is generally

accepted as reality. The combination can make it impossible for a democracy to fashion real-world solutions to otherwise intractable challenges.”

²⁵ Stanley Fish (1996) has written about the philosophical dimensions of this conflict, implying that there is no common ground that could form the basis for either agreement or even shared discussion about that disagreement. “To put the matter baldly,” he writes, “a person of religious conviction should not want to enter the marketplace of ideas but to shut it down, at least insofar as it presumes to determine matters that he believes have been determined by God and faith. The religious person should not seek an accommodation with liberalism,” he continues, “he should seek to rout it from the field, to extirpate it, root and branch” (21).

²⁶ In his article for *The New Yorker*, “Jesus in the Classroom,” Peter Boyer (2005) describes the controversies that erupted in Cupertino, California, when a newly saved teacher infused his classes with religious content.

²⁷ As the religious polarizations marking the 2004 U.S. presidential elections revealed—as documented in the *Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics*, sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life—the two groups “don’t just disagree on what America should be doing; we disagree on what America is” (Friedman 2004).

²⁸ Brooks reported, for example, that a Pentecostal minister in Franklin County, the location symbolizing Red America in his article, “regards such culture warriors as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as loose cannons.”