

THE MOSCOW TALIBAN: CHILLING PARALLELS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALISTS

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There are some chilling parallels between Christian and Islamic fundamentalists. Both divide the world between believers and unbelievers, and by deciding for themselves who is saved and who is damned, they think that they can play God with our lives.

Both have also declared war on the secular culture of liberal democracy, the most peaceful and prosperous means of social organization ever devised by humankind. They both reject the separation of church and state and would set up governments based on their own views of divine laws.

Of greatest concern, however, is the fundamentalist view of the violent end of the world. A common scenario is a great war in the Middle East in which the armies of God destroy the armies of Satan. Radical Muslims of course identify Israel and the US as the forces of evil, but Christian fundamentalists see Islam as the ultimate enemy. The horrifying implication is that the Jews, Muslims, and Christians of the Middle East will be the primary victims of this holocaust.

Some conservative Christians make yet another division: an ethnic one that declares that one culture is superior to all others. Michael Hill, founder of the League of the South, proposes that an independent neo-Confederacy of fifteen states would have the duty to protect the values of Anglo-Celtic culture from black Americans, who are "a compliant and deadly underclass." A key word for the League is "hierarchy," the God-given right for superiors (read "white males") to rule over inferiors.

Since 1998, the League of the South has had close ties with the Sons of Confederate Veterans, who in 2000 elected Kirk Lyons to its national executive board. An outspoken racist, Lyons was married by neo-Nazi Richard Butler in 1990, when

Butler still had his compound in Hayden Lake. Lyons has led an amazingly unsuccessful legal campaign to have Southern whites defined as a “protected class.”

The League and the Sons of Confederate Veterans organize public protests with the Council of Conservative Citizens whose website decries "negroes, queers and other retrograde species of humanity." (Try replacing the “Cs” in their acronym with “Ks”!) One League leader said that we “need a new type of Klan.”

Moscow pastor [Doug Wilson](#) and Steve Wilkins of Monroe, Louisiana wrote a booklet entitled *Southern Slavery as It Was* in which they describe the antebellum south as the most harmonious multiracial society in history. Two University of Idaho history professors took time from their busy schedules to refute this piece paragraph by paragraph. It was later discovered that 20 percent of the essay was lifted from Robert Fogel’s and Stanley Engerman’s *Time on the Cross*.

Wilson still stands by the booklet’s thesis, but he has withdrawn it from circulation. The problem, however, is that there is remaining stock in neo-Confederate book stores and at Wilson’s 154 Christian schools across the nation. In December the principal of one of those schools in Carey, North Carolina was forced to remove the booklet because of local protests.

Both Wilson and Wilkins deny that they are racists or neo-Confederates, but Wilkins is a founding director of the League of the South. The League’s website uses small Confederate flags as hot buttons for information about the board members. Even though a visitor said that he saw a Confederate flag displayed in Wilson’s office, he now claims that neo-Confederates should “burn the flag and wear the ashes.” I would love to see Wilkins and Wilson do this when they meet for a conference on the American Revolution in Moscow on August 8-10, 2005.

If Wilson has no sympathies with neo-Confederates, why is he associating with Wilkins, displaying the Confederate flag at his Moscow school's functions, celebrating Robert E. Lee's birthday at this school, speaking at the Southern Heritage Conference, and writing for *Chronicles*, a journal whose editors boast that they are all members of the League of the South?

Christian nationalist George Grant, who believes in the death penalty for gays and lesbians, has joined Wilson and Wilkins at earlier Moscow conferences. Grant and Wilkins are promoting a novel entitled *Heiland*, whose hero leads a violent overthrow of a "godless" federal government. *Heiland* has been compared to the *Turner Diaries*, which inspired the bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building.

Grant's evangelism has as specific political goal: "Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land--of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts, and governments for the Kingdom of Christ. It is to reinstitute the authority of God's Word as supreme over all judgments, over all legislation, over all declarations, constitutions, and confederations. True Christian political action seeks to rein the passions of men and curb the pattern of digression under God's rule" (*The Changing of the Guard* [Dominion Press, 1987], pp. 50-51).

Another parallel between Christian and Islamic fundamentalism is a desire to make religious laws the laws of the land. In his regular column in Wilson's *Credenda Agenda* (vol. 3: nos. 9, 11), Greg Dickison, member of Wilson's Christ Church and a Moscow public defender, states that "if we could have it our way," then there would be capital punishment for "kidnapping, sorcery, bestiality, adultery, homosexuality, and cursing one's parents." Dickison also quotes biblical passages (without qualification) that support slavery as "ordained and regulated by God," death for apostasy (Deut. 13.6-9), and cutting off a woman's hand for touching a strange man's genitals (Deut. 25.11,12). Behold, the Moscow Taliban!

I have obtained my information about the neo-Confederate movement from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which has declared the League of the South as a hate group. Wilson and his associates belittle the SPLC's achievements, one of which was supporting the suit that led to the dismantling of Butler's Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake. We are now faced with yet another national embarrassment in Northern Idaho, and many Moscowans are already planning protests for the August conference.

I have fought religious fundamentalism all of my adult life, primarily because I believe that it is one of the most destructive forces in the world. These views do not deserve our respect nor tolerance, but call for our strongest condemnation. Come join us in Moscow in August to demonstrate once again that "Idaho is too great for hate."

Nick Gier taught philosophy and religion at the University of Idaho for 31 years. The quotations from neo-Confederates were taken from *Intelligence Report* (Summer, 2000), pp. 29, 14. The title "Moscow Taliban" was inspired by Mark Potok's article "Taliban on the Palouse?" in *Intelligence Report* (Summer, 2004).

Visit this [website](#) for all that has happened in Moscow since the discovery of the slavery booklet in October, 2003. Also check Gier's book [God, Reason, and the Evangelicals](#) for praise for evangelical Christians who do not take the fundamentalist line.