
William John Mann
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**Abbreviations**

- BNP – British National Party.
- CCB – Christian Council of Britain.
- ELC – Ethnic Liaison Committee.
- VOF – Voice of Freedom.
Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to determine how the BNP has utilised Christian themes between 1999 and 2014, and to determine why there has been an increased emphasis in this area. This investigation will be conducted based on primary sources published by the BNP, such as magazines, manifestos, member’s bulletins, BNPtrv and other propaganda tools. These sources will be used by examining various categories of sources, such as those meant for the public and those meant for members, in relation to one another and in relation to the historical context in which they were produced to determine the motivation for the specific themes being emphasised. On this basis, it will be argued that the BNP has utilised Christian themes for various reasons. These include the purpose of legitimising the party, responding to the perceived threats posed to Christianity from militant Islam and an apparent anti-British conspiracy, and thirdly proposing a nationalistic revision of Christianity as means of asserting totalitarian control over the public's moral code. It will be concluded that these three answers in combination determine how the BNP utilizes Christian themes and what motivates them to do so.
The focus of this dissertation will be answering the question: - ‘how and why did the British National Party (BNP) harness Christianity between 1999 and 2014?’ The historiography on Christianity and the BNP is small, with few scholars commenting on it in detail. However, existing arguments and theories do overlap with the subject, and this dissertation will fit into a broad historiographic landscape regarding the BNP and fascism in general. It will be argued that the answer to this question is best conveyed by explaining three separate concepts. The first being that the BNP hoped to acquire a degree of legitimacy by adopting Christian themes as part of the broader process of modernisation, as Woodbridge argued. The second being that the BNP felt compelled to defend Christianity which they regarded as coming under attack from militant Islam, causing the party to adopt Christian themes as a defiant statement against this ‘threat.’ Thirdly, the BNP saw Christianity as a means of exerting totalitarian control, using Christianity to address broader fascist issues such as homophobia, abortion and family values. This was a continuation of their totalitarian characteristics.

One scholar to address this subject in detail is Steven Woodbridge, who remarks that religious themes have continuously appeared in BNP ideology, but became a more central element in their behaviour under Nick Griffin. This occurred during a process of ‘modernisation’ under the leadership of Griffin between 1999 and 2014. Griffin asserted that the only way to attain significant political influence was to distance themselves from fascism and violence, as seen in Griffin’s handling of the Oldham riots in 2001 by distancing the BNP from the violent

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National Front. Woodbridge attributes this rise in Christian themes to part of this attempt to ‘legitimise’ the party. Though Woodbridge is correct that Christian themes played a role in the ‘legitimising mission’, the primary research which his article lacks reveals several other motivations for the BNP emphasising Christian themes. Yet admittedly not comprehensive, Woodbridge’s analysis does not address the extent to which Christian beliefs where genuinely held by members, or its relationship with other characteristics of BNP and fascist ideology. This dissertation will address these themes as well as tying them into the existing body of scholarly thought.

A prominent historian who focuses on the BNP is Nigel Copsey, who has seemingly neglected to address the role of Christianity within the party. However, in Contemporary British Fascism he makes the point that the BNP exploited popular Islamophobia in the wake of major terrorist attacks such as the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. This analysis is valuable as it places changes made within the BNP in a wider context of societal change. But the link between the rise of militant Islam and the increase in Christian themes in BNP ideology is underemphasised by both Copsey and Woodbridge. Copsey addresses the strategic convenience for the BNP of rising Islamophobia, but only explains this in terms of the BNP’s tactics rather than its effect on their ideology. Woodbridge does touch on this in his analysis, but does not come to a distinct conclusion about the relationship between the BNP’s view of Islam and its relation to Christianity, also overstating the BNP’s pragmatic use of Christianity. Therefore, it will be one of the aims of this dissertation to argue that the increased BNP emphasis on Christianity was been to some extent a response to the religious threat posed by militant Islam. But Copsey’s work will prove useful in other aspects, as his exploration of

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4 Ibid, p. 27.
6 Ibid.
totalitarian themes in BNP ideology will be drawn upon to argue that the BNP saw religion as a useful tool to assert moral control over the public. This also ties in with the broader fascist theme of conspiracy theory, as it will be argued that as well as defending Christianity against militant Islam, the BNP saw themselves as responding to the seizure of the church by atheistic cultural-Marxists, who supposedly used it as a propaganda tool. By promoting their own revision of Christianity, the BNP hoped to compete for this ‘philosophical space’ with the mainstream ‘liberal’ church and use this revision as an instrument of moral control.

Mathew Goodwin also neglected Christian themes in the BNP, but addressed in detail the exploitation of the ‘Islamic issue’. In New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party, he identifies three ways the BNP hoped to acquire a populist appeal, two of which are relevant to this topic. One of these was to assert a greater emphasis on culture and identity, and another was embedding its campaigns in nativist themes and domestic traditions. This detracted from the electorally unpalatable themes of race as well as emphasising their own nostalgic and traditionalist credentials to voters. This draws upon the work of Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou who track the BNP’s attempted transition from ethnic to civic nationalism, but also neglect the role of Christianity in this. This dissertation will argue that Christianity was an outlet of this cultural British identity which the BNP emphasised rather than racial themes. This led to the BNP hijacking Christian traditions by immersing themselves in events such as Christmas to frame their criticism of Islam, cultural-Marxism and multiculturalism as well as appealing to what they perceived as a silent Christian majority in Britain. However, the BNP’s failure to fully abandon race in favour of religion, led to the inception of a ‘duel British identity’ comprised of both race and religion.

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7 Ibid, p. 161.
Woodbridge calls for more primary research into this rise of Christian themes. Accordingly, this analysis will be driven by primary sources, including the BNP website and other related websites, such as the Christian Council of Britain’s (CCB) now closed website accessed via http://archive.org/web/ which provides pages from closed websites. BNPtv will also be used, as will internal member’s bulletins, manifestos and public party publications. These sources have been selected for the purpose of cross examining them with other sources, often with different target audiences. This will help establish an all-encompassing understanding of what the BNP tried to emphasise to its members and the public as well as helping to determine the underlying motivation for these themes by situating each source in its historical context. Therefore, sources will be broadly categorised into sources aimed at non-party members, sources aimed at members and sources aimed at activists. These will advance the argument made in this dissertation by analysing the way these categories interact with each other and the wider historical context to determine the motivation for the themes emphasised, hence why it’s important that the sources are categorised in this way.

This argument will be structured by each chapter addressing one of the three themes which need to be investigated. Chapter one will address how the BNP used Christianity as a legitimising tool and part of the modernisation process, attaching itself to the liberal image of Christianity which it used to mask the party’s intolerance, leading to the inception of a ‘dual British identity’ which was both racial and religious. Chapter two will address how the BNP used Christianity as an expression of defiance against militant Islamism and an alleged Left wing conspiracy. Chapter three will address how the party hoped to use Christianity as a means of asserting totalitarian control over the public, giving them control over the moral code of a perceived Christian majority by replacing mainstream Christianity with its own revision of Christianity. Structuring the argument this way is necessary

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as it allows for the implication that various elements of the party where motivated to adopt Christian themes for different reasons, such as political pragmatism and genuine religious conviction. Therefore, a singular answer would not address the broad variety of beliefs which were at work within the BNP. These three answers to the research question will then be used to develop an overall picture of how faith is politicised and exploited by the BNP.

This argument also draws upon several wider theories of fascism. Roger Griffin observes fascism’s mythic core and national mythology.\textsuperscript{12} This is relevant due to the BNP’s attempt to incorporate Christianity into its mythology which altered the party’s mythic core to include more religious themes, symbolism and language. This incorporates George Mosse’s theory of fascism as a scavenger ideology\textsuperscript{13} and Stanley Payne’s ‘retroductive theory of fascism’ which observes fascism’s identification with the mystical due to its romantic world view.\textsuperscript{14} Payne also highlights fascism perception of a moral crisis.\textsuperscript{15} This is relevant due to the BNP’s perception of societal decline due in some part to the failure of the clergy to impose traditional moral values, which the BNP believed could be restored by their own revision of Christianity. This sense of the mythical, as well as the existence of a ‘duel British identity’ is based upon the notion of fascism being propelled by feeling rather than thoughts, as proposed by Robert Paxton.\textsuperscript{16} This irrational tendency allowed the BNP to fuse race and religion into a single identity, which they struggled to justify rationally on the few occasions when such an attempt was made.

This argument also incorporates the work of Emilio Gentile regarding totalitarianism and political religion. He argued that the irrationality identified by Paxton was not the result of blind instinct, but

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p. 489.
was a calculated and deliberate rejection of rationality.\textsuperscript{17} This dissertation disagrees however, as the inception of the ‘duel British Identity’ will be presented as the result of blind instinct. However, Gentile’s observation may be correct in other cases. An element of Gentile’s theory which will be useful is the notion of fascism’s failure to draw upon traditional religion,\textsuperscript{18} causing it to invent its own which it placed alongside traditional religion.\textsuperscript{19} This links with the BNP’s attempt to create its own revision of Christianity to compete with mainstream Christianity. Another useful element of Gentile’s work is his identification of fascism’s totalitarian impulse to ‘conquer society’.\textsuperscript{20} This relates to the BNP’s attempt to lay claim to the moral codes of the perceived ‘Christian majority’ by revising Christianity, which Gentile views as typical of fascism which attempts to control values relating to the private sphere, such as religion, culture and morals.\textsuperscript{21} However, the most important contribution to the historiography for this dissertation is the ‘culturalist’ approach fostered by the ‘new consensuses’, despite being heavily challenged.\textsuperscript{22} This culturalist approach provides the basis for this argument, which is based upon material gathered from the culture and literature of the BNP to ascertain an informed understanding of their world view.

The conclusion will stress that the BNP used Christianity as a legitimising tool in their modernisation process, a defiant statement against radical Islam and leftist conspiracy causing the inception of a ‘duel British identity’ and as a totalitarian tool to conquer society.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}, p 345.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid}, p 346.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid}, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid}, p. 338.
\end{flushright}
Chapter 1: Duel identity and the changing nature of ‘us’ and ‘them’

This chapter argues that one reason for the BNP’s adoption of Christian themes was a defiant statement against two perceived threats to the British Christian identity. These were militant Islam and what they considered militant secularism. Militant secularism was considered largely in alliance with militant Islam and cultural Marxism, a supposed secretive branch of Marxism which imposes factors such as Political Correctness and multi-culturalism to destroy Western civilization. This ‘reactive’ element of the BNP’s behaviour was common, and observable in campaigns such as ‘Operation White Vote’ responding to ‘Operation Black Vote’\(^\text{23}\) and ‘White History Month’ responding to ‘Black History Month.’\(^\text{24}\) However, the adoption of Christian themes had a deeper ideological leaning than these parodies of rival organisations, demonstrating the BNP’s attachment to Christianity as a part of British identity. This will be illustrated by presenting evidence that the rise in Christian themes by the BNP was a defiant statement against militant Islam. This will be demonstrated by presenting evidence of a rise in anti-Islamic and pro-Christian sentiments following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, drawing on the work of Copsey and Woodbridge. Then, it will be argued that the BNP adopted Christian themes in retaliation to a supposed anti-Christian and anti-British conspiracy. This point will be demonstrated by quoting various BNP ‘exposures’ of this conspiracy and criticisms of it. Lastly, it will be argued that this rise in Christian themes led to the inception of a ‘duel British identity’ which was based on both religious and ethnic factors, due to BNP members being unwilling or unable to break with racial ideology. This will be argued by presenting various instances of BNP sources using religious and racial language interchangeably, drawing

\(^\text{23}\) ‘Claim your right to vote BNP – Operation White Vote’ British National Party (02/05/2014) <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/claim-your-right-vote-bnp-operation-white-vote-4> [last accessed 30/12/2015].

Retaliation:

Though racial themes remained prominent in the BNP’s ideology, radical Islam partially shifted the perceived threat to British identity from being racial to religious, as the Islamic faith does not consist of a unified racial group. This change in emphasis was the intention of a number of reformers within the BNP during the ‘modernising’ Griffin era. They wished to present themselves as preserving civic institutions and social structures rather than racial purity. This was demonstrated by a cartoon published in a 2002 issue of ‘Voice of Freedom’ which shows the Church of England personified by a young girl crossing the road, who, amongst a cluster of non-racial personifications of British identity, is about to be run over by a lorry labelled ‘Asylum seekers, more immigration, economic migrants’, driven by Tony Blair and David Blunkett.

This legitimising mission was one of the cornerstones of Griffin’s leadership campaign, stating to BNP members that ‘when it comes to influencing the public, forget about racial differences, genetics, Zionism, historical revisionism and so on.’ Despite this, it is notable in the language used by party spokesmen that race and religion were merged into a ‘duel British identity’, with members often using racial and religious terms interchangeably. This is evident in April 2002’s Identity, a BNP magazine aimed at members, which reads ‘the presence of a large number of Muslims in our midst is totally incompatible with white survival.’ During their 2001 ‘equal rights for Oldham whites’ campaign after a large scale race riot, the BNP’s

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28 Nick Griffin, Patriot, Spring, 1999, Issue No. 4, p. 7
campaigners blamed Muslim’s for the violence, not Asians, which was conducted in the context of racial tension. This shows that the rise in Christian themes was not a clean break from the racism which dominated the BNP’s ideology.

One instance of anti-Islamic retaliatory behaviour was the BNP’s reaction to the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, which Copsey correctly describes as ‘coming at an opportune time’ for the BNP by inducing a popular anti-Muslim backlash. Woodbridge takes this further by stating that these attacks encouraged the BNP to emphasis its existing pro-Christian and anti-Islamic attributes. This was clear in the October 2001 issue of Identity, which announced the beginning of its ‘campaign against Islam’ which contained an image of a BNP leaflet which read ‘Within hours of the September 11th attacks, the BNP launched the first stage of a national campaign against Islam.’

The deliberate nature of this exploitation of the attacks was illustrated by the internal member’s bulletin British Nationalist released the same month, where it stated ‘And with Islamic terrorism at the forefront of everybody’s minds, it’s an issue which guarantees phenomenal support and rapid growth’. This shows that there was a deliberate effort by the BNP to exploit this issue, as they did with the issue of asylum seekers in the 1990s, or the 2001 ‘equal rights for Oldham whites’ during the rise is Asian on White violence. This also shows how the rise in Christian themes was not a sudden strategy change, but was the result of gradual triggers occurring throughout the Griffin era.

However, the BNP’s response to the attacks was not purely tactical, as many expressed an emotional pro-Christian response, which had

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36 Ibid, p. 126.
not been emphasised as strongly before the attacks. This is notable in the language used by Paul Golding, now the leader of the nationalist group Britain First, whose image is steeped in Christian symbolism, but was Director of Publicity for the BNP in 2001. Writing in Identity under the heading ‘No to Islam!’, he remarked that ‘We will not be silenced by Blunkett’s medieval Heresy Laws, but obviously they will make it harder for us to explain to the British people the full extent of the danger posed by Islam to our traditions, freedoms and values’.37 This shows that Golding regarded Islam as being fundamentally opposed to British values and culture. He goes on to say ‘This is where you get to play your part in the new Crusade to protect the values and freedoms of Western civilisation against Islamic fundamentalism!’38 This language of ‘crusade’ is evocative not only of a British challenge to Islam, but a Christian retaliation to a faith supposedly at odds with British culture.

This Manichean world view was emphasised by the BNP’s multiple comparisons of the two religions. In Griffin’s ‘Christmas Message’ of 2004 aimed at the public, he compared quotes from the Bible and Koran. These quotes were ‘Fight those unbelievers who live near you, and show them how harsh you can be’ from the Koran which he contrasted with the Bible’s quote ‘love thy neighbours as you love yourself’.39 This shows how Griffin regarded Islamic morality to be inferior to that of Christianity. He presented Christianity as indicative of a more civilized British society by referring to British whites and Muslims as two distinct groups, further muddying the distinction between race and religion.

This point is reiterated in Identity which remarked ‘But neither do we accept the liberal lie that all cultures and religions are of equal status and value. – [sic] but we hold that our culture is superior to that of other peoples and religions, including Islam.’ Later in the article, the scientific attributes of the West and Islam are compared, stating that

37 Paul Golding, ‘No to Islam!’ Identity, October 2001, p. 3.
38 Ibid.
39 Nick Griffin ‘Christmas Message 2004 (2/2)’ YouTube (25/12/2004) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWqy0m-m70g> [last accessed 02/01/2016].
'Islam taught that those twinkling lights we see at night were placed on the surface of the upturned bowl of the night by Allah; our West has landed probes on Mars.'

This is a clear example of how the BNP viewed the West as being fundamentally at odds with, and superior to, Islam, and must therefore remain separate if Western civilization was to survive. The BNP hoped to do this by increasing its emphasis on they considers to be the Western polar opposite of Islam, which they considered to be Christianity.

**Anti-Christian conspiracy:**

The BNP also saw threats to Christianity coming from a conspiracy of Leftists, Zionists, Liberals, atheistic cultural-Marxists and secularists who wished to destroy Christianity as part of their broader attack on British identity. This conspiracy was often regarded as being in alliance with Islam, or at least exploiting them to achieve this goal. It was often considered that this resulted in Islam acquiring a privileged legal status with regards to freedom of speech, as illustrated by a poster published on the BNP’s website in 2014, which read ‘Reverend Robert West on trial for daring to criticise Islam’ after he was accused of teaching Islamophobic content to A-level students.

Evidence of this belief in an anti-Christian conspiracy is notable in the mission statement of the ‘Christian Council of Britain’ (CCB), an ostensibly Christian pressure group formed by Robert West in 2006, which unconvincingly claimed not to be a front organisation for the BNP, but maintained public ties with the party. This mission statement was published in *Identity*, stating that they planned to ‘educate and mobilise them (Christians and BNP activists) to fight against threats to that Christian heritage, particularly from aggressive

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41 ‘Now their attacking our Reverend!’ British National Party (2014) :
<http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/now-they%E2%80%99re-attacking-our-reverend> [last assessed 31/03/2016].
neo-Marxist secularism and Islamic imperialism." 43 This shows that the CCB identified these forces as threats, but it’s observable that the BNP, independently of the CCB, also regarded Christianity as being targeted by these groups. This is evident in a Christmas issue of *British Nationalist*, arguing that festivals such as Christmas were threatened. It remarks that ‘It is precisely because the majority of Britons remain silent in the face of such attacks, that the neo-Marxist liberals can engineer the destruction of our way of life so effectively’. 44 This shows that the opinions of the CCB were reflective of those of the BNP, as both see elements of the Left and the establishment as attacking Christianity.

In another issue of *British Nationalist* the following Christmas, the conspiratorial nature of this ‘home grown’ attack on Christianity was illustrated. It reads,

> The real reason for Labour’s attack on Christianity is rooted in their desire to destroy British culture and tradition and replace it with a multi-cultural mish-mash of voters whose loyalty is to a Labour Party who let them in and not to any religion, culture or tradition. 45

This shows how some members saw this attack on Christianity as being motivated by the self-interest of the conspirators who would acquire electoral gains if culturally homogenising forces like Christianity were removed. However, some also saw this alliance as being far more complex than a symbiotic relationship. This is evident in the writings of BNP writer Jean de Valette, who wrote,

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45 ‘Be a revolutionary...celebrate Christmas!’ *British Nationalist* (December 2005) p. 1.
In an earlier article, I explained that Left Liberalism had allied itself with Islam because it sees the latter as an oppressed minority and as a useful tool for destroying Western Civilisation which both of them hate. Islam on the other hand sees Left/Liberals as useful idiots who are in the long term, handing once-Christian Europe to them.46

This illustrates how some in the BNP did not regard their relationship as mutually beneficial. It also demonstrates that some did not necessarily see the destruction of Christianity as a deliberate objective of this conspiracy, but rather a by-product of their electoral strategy.

Duel British Identity:–

This clash of religions had a curious effect when incorporated into the irrational and ethnocentric mixture which formed BNP ideology. The result was religion and race being merged into a nebulous ‘duel British identity’ consisting of race and religion. This ‘duel British identity’ can be defined as member’s tendency to self-identify as both Christian and British, considering the two to be intrinsically linked or interchangeable. This illustrates the ‘mobilizing passions’ which Paxton sees as motivating fascism, resulting in an irrational ideology which appeals more to emotion than coherent ideology.47 This was illustrated on the BNP website, regarding the desecration of Christian monuments in Turkish Cyprus. Interestingly, this is not described as a campaign of religious intolerance by Islamic activists, but an ‘ethnic cleansing’, despite the writer stating that these where targeted for their Christian


significance, not their ethnic significance.\textsuperscript{48} This mind set necessitates the existence of a ‘duel British Identity’ which is both ethnic and religious as a result of the perceived need to retaliate against militant Islam coexisting with the need to preserve their racial identity.

The nebulous parameters of the BNP’s ‘duel British identity’ where illustrated by Griffin, who in an interview for BNPtrv remarked,

\begin{quote}
Whether its young men being targeted for violence or murder, or young girls targeted for sexual abuse, it’s based on the fact that we don’t share their religion. But, overwhelmingly with the English and the British, that’s because we are of a different race.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

This shows not only how BNP leaders saw race and religion as being interchangeable, but also thought that this understanding was shared by Islamic extremists, who apparently targeted ethnic British people due to religious and racial hatred. This is supported in \textit{British Nationalist}, where it was written that ‘It was announced that murder charges against the gang of Islamic thugs arrested for the brutal racist murder of 19-year-old Gavin Hopley were to be dropped.’\textsuperscript{50} This shows how the BNP believed that militant Islamists also regard themselves as an ethnic group, supposedly targeting non-Muslims for being a different race as well as non-believers. Stories and language such as this were common in BNP publications, and is significant not only because the murderers were described as Muslims rather than Asians, but that the attack was also described as racist, despite identifying the attackers by their religion rather than their race. This shows how some in the BNP came to see race and religion as being interchangeable due

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} ‘The Smashing of the Cross – Islam’s war Against Christians’, \textit{British National Party} <https://bnp.org.uk/news/smashing-cross-%E2%80%93-islam%E2%80%99s-war-against-christians> [last accessed 02/01/2016].
\item \textsuperscript{49} Nick Griffin ‘Islamic Extremism’ \textit{YouTube} (27/03/2013) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCLFiYXc-i0> [last accessed 03/01/2016].
\item \textsuperscript{50} ‘New Labour = Police State!’, \textit{British Nationalist} (August 2002) p. 1.
\end{itemize}
to their ‘dual British identity’, which concealed the internal racial themes members perceive by outwardly emphasising religion. These themes were submerged into the BNP’s Manichean worldview, presenting Christianity as ‘white’, civilized and pure, whereas Islam is presented as foreign, barbaric and corrupted, demonstrating how the BNP used religion to legitimize and demonise.

Conclusion:

Though multiple voices in the BNP emphasised Christian themes in different ways and for different reasons, such as Griffin, West or de Valette, there was a collective need to retaliate against the supposed threat to Christianity as a part of British identity by emphasising and defending Christian values. This threat was allegedly posed by militant Islamists and a conspiracy with a vested interest in the destruction of Christianity. But racial identity had not been abandoned by the BNP, as they regarded the defence of Christianity as an extension of the defence of their racial identity. This led to the creation of a ‘dual British identity’ which was both racial and religious, a symptom of fascism irrational tendencies identified by Paxton. Therefore, the emphasis in Christian themes was not entirely tactical, as there existed a deeper attachment to Christianity. This means that the emphasis on Christianity was inherently linked to the escalation of the Islamist threat, which fed into the party’s tendency to create conspiracy theories. Therefore, it’s apparent that to some in the BNP, adoption of Christianity was a defiant gesture.

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Chapter 2: From ‘political thugs’ to ‘turning the other cheek’

Mosse formed the theory of fascism as a ‘scavenger ideology, which attempted to annex all that had appealed to the people’. With this synthesis utilized in the context of the nationalist myth, fascism attempted to appeal to as broad a demographic as possible. This links to the ‘legitimising mission’ which is a reoccurring subject in studies of the BNP, appearing as a key theme in Copsey’s book *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the quest for legitimacy*. The BNP ‘scavenged’ various popular concepts to frame within the nationalist struggle to appear populist and legitimate. Robert Ford demonstrates how this occurred in a historical context favourable to the BNP, fuelling their desire for legitimacy. This context includes the rise of Islamophobia, David Cameron’s centrist reformation of the Conservative party, leaving the BNP as a leading outlet for radical right wing voters and white working class dissolution with the Labour government’s ability to counter the Islamist threat, who were the BNP’s traditional demographic.

Woodbridge argues that the rise in Christian themes in BNP discourse was another element of this broader ‘legitimising mission’. This is true due to the fact that the BNP repeatedly refer to what they perceive as the ‘Christian majority’. The BNP hoped to appear legitimate to this majority and also hoped to Christianize far-right issues to mobilize Christian voters under nationalism. Christianity also had a legitimising effect on the BNP by appearing as a symptom of a

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53 Ibid, p. 25.
move from ethnic to civic nationalism, which was successfully identified as a BNP legitimising tactic by Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou. Rallying the public to join a struggle between two religions was more palatable to voters than a racial struggle. These points will be argued first by demonstrating the attempt to rebrand the party as a civic rather than ethnic nationalist party. It will then be shown that these Christian themes were expected to appeal to a ‘Christian majority’. Finally, it will be shown that ‘traditional Christian family values’ were used to mask other forms of bigotry.

**Ethnic to civic nationalism:**

To modernise the party’s image, the BNP deliberately addressed civic themes such as religion and national heritage rather than race. The deliberate nature of this is exposed in *British Nationalist*, which asked members specifically to ‘use religious extremist rather than ‘Muslims’. Use ‘Ethnic’ or ‘the usual suspects’ rather than specific racial groupings. Avoid specifying ethnic group origin of asylum seekers (sic).’ This was elaborated on in an advert for a new audio CD named *Islam – The Shocking Truth*. The CD contains a Sikh who apparently expressed similar fears regarding Islam. The motivations for his inclusion where explained:

Such coverage will kill three birds with one stone: 1) Keep us in the public eye and thus keep new recruits pouring in; 2) Establish our anti-Islamic credentials before the new ‘law’ restricts what we can say on the subject; and, 3) Help to weaken the credibility of the politically damaging ‘racist’ tag used against us by the mass media.

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This source shows that the BNP were aware of the politically damaging effect of racial themes, but the fact that this source was aimed at party members shows they were taking deliberate steps to counter this. This was also the motivation for the formation of the ‘Ethnic Liaison Committee’ (ELC) in 2001 for the purpose of ‘organising publicity activity with non-whites who have expressed favourable sentiment towards the BNP – all designed to break down the media image of the BNP as “racist”.’ However, the sincerity of this was instantly contradicted, when it’s stated that ‘we have no plan whatsoever to change the section of the party constitution under which membership is open only persons wholly of British or kindred European descent.’\(^{61}\) This supports Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou’s argument that under Griffin’s leadership, the party made a deliberate effort to censor their own discourse to emphasise civic themes,\(^ {62}\) but this evidence also suggests that this choice was politically pragmatic and was not a genuine separation from racism. Now that the nature of this shift has been explained, it will now be demonstrated how Christianity played a role in this change.

Christian Majority:--

Perhaps the most obvious legitimising effect the adaptation of Christian themes had on the BNP was the softer connotations of Christianity as opposed to their more violent image under Tyndall. The BNP also hoped to Christianize nationalist issues such as white birth rates and gay marriage to give the Christian majority an incentive to support the BNP, after being convinced that Christian and nationalist concerns were analogous. This is evident in the repeated calls for Christians to stand up to who the BNP regarded as the societal ‘other’, including Muslims, secularists, homosexuals and the leftist conspiracy. This was

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a means of the BNP attacking their traditional enemies in a more
legitimate context as well as incorporating Christians into their support
base. This is evident in the words of Reverend Robinson, formerly vicar
of Wymeswold, in *Voice of Freedom* (VOF), the BNP’s monthly paper
designed to present non-members with the supposedly moderate face
of the BNP. 63 He states that ‘like the BNP, I am worried by the prospect
of Britain becoming a Muslim state’. Not only do the words of a man
styled as a vicar carry more weight than lower level Christian
sentiment, the words ‘like the BNP’ directly linked the BNP to the
salvation of Christian Britain. He continues ‘I believe that Christians
will get more and more discriminated against’ before being quoted by
the article as calling upon the silent majority to make their voices
heard’. 64 Regardless of whether or not the Reverend was misquoted
here, this quote shows a clear desire by the BNP to mobilize Christians.

This tactic was repeated in the *VOF* a year later when an article
described how the Bishop of Blackburn, ‘refused to be bullied by
Labour politicians and the Far-Left into condemning the British National
Party’. It then explained how ‘the Bishop also upset Blackburn’s
powerful ‘Gay lobby’ with his traditional views on the role of
homosexuals within the Church.’ 65 This reveals not only how the
alleged leftist conspiracy was presented as attacking the BNP and the
Church, but also presented homophobia as being a traditional Christian
view. This is an example of how existing BNP concerns were presented
as also being the concerns of the ‘Christian majority’, who the BNP
hoped to rally by legitimising themselves in this way.

The adaptation of Christianity also served an aesthetic legitimising
purpose, adhering to the nativist, nostalgic and traditionalist image of
‘motherhood and apple pie’ which Geraint Edwards argues was a
strategy borrowed from Le Pen’s Front National. 66 This strive for a

softer public face was the motivation behind the ‘Red White and Blue’ (RWB) festival which was publicised as a family fun day interwoven with nationalist elements. These family themes where emphasised to members in British Nationalist which stated ‘showing that the party is serious about its family orientation and as a further step towards our medium term goal of building an internal personal/family support base.’\textsuperscript{67} The link between this strategy and the RWB festival was made clear in Identity were it stated ‘if anyone is in doubt as to the BNP’S commitment to family values, just flip over the pages of this issue of Identity and examine the various pictures of this year’s RWB.’\textsuperscript{68} This shows how the desire to gain a Christian and family orientated support base were both motivated by the same legitimising agenda, and that by attaching itself to less radical themes such as family values and Christianity, the BNP could tap into this large demographic, challenging its pre-existing image. However, it will now be demonstrated that these aesthetic changes masked a more sinister agenda.

\textit{Christianisation of Hatred}:

The theology of Christian fundamentalism was exploited as well as the image. The BNP hoped this would mask their fascist undertones, including homophobia, white birth rates and sexism. Many of these themes appeared in the rhetoric of Christian fundamentalists, but also, as the BNP realised, serve a fascist objective. Before Christianity had taken root in the BNP, homosexuality was attacked for its supposed feminine connotations and erroneous potential for spreading diseases, but also linked it to paedophilia as part of the ‘leftist conspiracy’, brainwashing children to make them more appropriate targets for gay paedophiles in the establishment. The bizarre ‘evidence’ of this theory was detailed in the VOF, which attacked both the Labour party and the Liberal-Democrats for having supposed links with homosexuality and paedophilia which were presented as indistinguishable. It reads ‘As has been revealed in previous editions of Freedom, the Labour Party is

\textsuperscript{68} ‘BNP = Family values’, Identity, September 2001, p. 10.
riddled with paedophiles and other perverts from top to bottom.’ It states that,

It’s why the Labour-dominated Scottish parliament rejected the democratically expressed will of the vast majority of Scots who took part in the referendum against the abolition of Clause 28 and the protection it gives school children from pro-homosexual propaganda by left-wing Education Authorities. 69

This shows how the BNP made public attacks on homosexuality by linking it to paedophilia before Christian themes had taken root. After Christianity became more prominent, this supposed ‘homosexual conspiracy’ remained but was presented as being remedied by Christianity as well as part of the conspirators’ efforts to destroy Christianity and the British race, which is further evidence of a ‘dual British identity’. This is expressed clearly on the CCB website, where supposed conspiratorial homosexual paedophilia is attacked as ‘pederasty’, a term evoking interaction between a boy and a grown man practiced in pre-Christian Greece as an educational custom. The CCB saw this practice as being alive and well in the gay community and political establishment. This Christianization of homophobia as well as an attempted populist appeal is apparent in an article published regarding the legalisation of gay marriage on the CCB website. It states:

They are also wanting to promote such inversion amongst our school children, thus undermining both education and morals at the same time. They are odious and abhorrent” he added. The Revd West also said that David Cameron’s “Big society was becoming nothing more than a BIG SEWER. Parents do not want backside sex ceremonies in the schools and we do not

69 ‘The Labour party is the pervert party’, Voice of Freedom, October 2000, p. 4.
want it in our churches either. It is evil and disgusting, pure and simple.”

This is an example of BNP homophobia being presented in a Christian context, as well as mentioning parent’s supposed opinions suggesting that the BNP also regarded their opinion as a popular one. The Christianisation of this issue gave the BNP the opportunity to present their homophobia as being a preservation of Christianity and normality rather than simply bigotry.

The BNP also Christianised the issue of supposedly falling white birth-rates. The clear racism was masked by presenting the issue as opposition to abortion as justified by a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity. The usefulness of an abortion ban for population control is specified in Identity where an article about Afro-Asia’s potential to outbreed Europe states ‘Pope Innocent VIII responded to the crisis (of falling birth-rates) by decreeing the death penalty to anyone, including midwives, who hindered women from conceiving. It did the trick.’

The nationalist incentive was illustrated in an earlier edition, which read ‘Abortion not only denies the child the greatest gift of life itself but prevents our future from existing.’ The article went on to incorporate homophobia and gender roles, stating that ‘the influence of a mother-model and father-model to the child, not matter what sex the child is, is invaluable to their natural development and understand of gender.’ This shows how a typical fascist issue concerning birth rates was legitimised through its attempted Christianisation and the defence of the nuclear family. Robert West, the head of the CCB, summed up this issues relationship with Christianity well, when he writes ‘abortion on demand and easy divorce? Isn’t that a Holocaust and the undermining of wedlock and family, as the major building

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block of both Church and Society?’ This is a clear example of how a typical BNP issue had its true motivation legitimised by dilating it with Christian themes.

**Conclusion:**

It has been argued that the rise in Christian themes in the BNP had a legitimising purpose in a number of ways. These include the presentation of Christianity as a symptom of the move from ethnic to civic nationalism. They were also motivated by the appeal to a perceived Christian majority, who BNP strategists thought would be attracted to the BNP who were willing to defend them against Islam and secularism. Another legitimising process was Christianising existing themes which would otherwise appear as simple bigotry, such as gender roles, homophobia and white birth-rates. This would also present Christian activists with an incentive to support the BNP. This explains the Christian element of what Goodwin has identified as the party’s attempt to build a family friendly image through events such as RWB and separate themselves from the image of their past which had denied them an electoral breakthrough. It expanded on the research done by Eatwell who focused on the party’s modernisation process and the distancing from fascist themes, by explaining this legitimising process from the perspective of the Christianised elements of the BNP. It also supports Goodman and Johnson’s argument that identifying an ‘in-group’ and ‘out-groups’ religiously meant the BNP could avoid the unpopular tactic of criticising the members directly, and instead attacking the religion as a whole rather than specific ethnic

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groups. The historical context also suggests that this provided real results, as during Griffin’s trial for incitement of racial hatred in 2006, the successful defence remarked that Griffin was criticising a religion rather than a race. Had Griffin been found guilty, it would have had a serious effect on the local elections later than year, in which the BNP gained a record number of councillors.

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79 Ibid, p. 166.
Chapter 3: Seizing the spirit of Britishness

Before the totalitarian motivation for the BNP’s incorporation of Christian themes is demonstrated, totalitarianism itself must be defined. This dissertation considers Gentile’s definition to be a valid understanding of totalitarianism and its relationship with fascism and political religion. Gentile offers a complex definition of totalitarianism, seeing it as an attempt to ‘conquer society’ and impose a monolithic system which shapes individuals via a political religion for the sake of anthropological regeneration.\(^\text{80}\) Gentile’s definition strongly relates to the BNP, especially regarding the use of totalitarianism as a means of reversing the moral decline which supposedly accompanies modernity.\(^\text{81}\) Many fascists, including the BNP, regarded totalitarian principles as effective tools for the construction of a new civilization in adherence with their founding mythology.\(^\text{82}\) Gentile’s understanding of political religion is also relevant to the BNP and Christianity. He regarded political religion as distinct from traditional religion due to the ‘extremist and exclusive nature of its historical mission’. He regarded it as expressing hostility to traditional religions or establishing a symbolic coexistence with them to incorporate elements of traditional religion into the political religion,\(^\text{83}\) as well as the fascist mythic core identified by Roger Griffin.\(^\text{84}\) This relates with the BNP, who used a revision of Christianity to compete with mainstream Christianity to attempt to occupy its role of enforcing traditional morality. This revision was their means of ‘conquering society’, developed after the initial ‘knee jerk’ use of Christianity occurred early in the Griffin era due to the 2001 attacks.

Due to Griffin’s ‘modernisation’, the BNP presented themselves as Liberals hoping to expand civil liberties. However, Copsey has

\(^{81}\) Ibid, p. 356.
\(^{82}\) Ibid, p. 332.
\(^{83}\) Ibid, p. 338.
demonstrated how beneath this supposed liberalism, totalitarianism remained prominent.\textsuperscript{85} Despite totalitarianism in the BNP being touched upon by the historiography, its link with Christianity has not yet been explored. However, Thomas Linehan’s study of Anglican clergy in the British Union of Fascists has shown that a link between fascist totalitarianism and Christianity was not a recent development.\textsuperscript{86} In this chapter, it will be argued that the BNP hoped to reclaim Christianity from what they regarded as a liberalised clergy who supported multi-culturalism, possibly as a result of infiltration by the leftist conspiracy. It was hoped that once reclaimed, Christianity could be replaced by a nationalistic revision of Christianity, providing the BNP with a totalitarian tool to effect moral control over the ‘Christian majority’, redesigning their moral code. This will be argued by demonstrating that the BNP did in fact remained committed to totalitarianism. It will then be shown how the BNP viewed the mainstream clergy as being terminally liberalised. Finally, it will be shown that the BNP developed their own competing revision of Christianity which they hoped could challenge mainstream Christianity and take its place as enforcers of morality, which they can redesign.

\textit{Commitment to the totalitarian project: -}

In his book \textit{The Eleventh Hour}, John Tyndall made the following comment: ‘At the heart of the sickness is the doctrine of liberalism, which has atrophied every healthy national instinct for survival and growth.’\textsuperscript{87} But during Griffin’s legitimising mission, these themes were masked by a façade of liberalism. Beneath this façade, lay a desire to centralise power and effect direct control over the ideology of the public. This is most evident in the BNP’s attitude towards education and the influence of the mass media on young people, which they

identified as useful tools for shaping the public’s morality. This desire to influence young minds is evident in VOF, remarking that,

Raising a generation of children gawping at a goggle-box spewing out brain-dead violent foreign junk TV is rotting our children’s minds and corrupting their morals. There needs to be strict controls on imported foreign TV and control on advertising.88

This is an example of how the BNP viewed morality as malleable once a level of influence into an individual’s private life had been acquired, even if this method was exploited by their enemies. The desire to use these methods for their own purpose was notable in their education policy, where they articulate their intention to ‘instil in our young people knowledge and pride of British history, traditions, identity and origins and scrap the compulsory study of other cultures.’89 This is an example of how the BNP wished to instil nationalistic sentiments into young people via control of the education system. Other means of conquering society are illustrated in their 2010 manifesto, where it is stated with regard to ‘media falsehoods’ that ‘for grave offences, we shall create a new criminal offence embracing the “deliberate dissemination of falsehoods about an individual or organisation for financial or political gain.”’90 Presumably, what may be considered a ‘falsehood’ would be decided by the party, showing a desire to restrict free speech. This demonstrates how despite their liberal façade, the BNP remained committed to totalitarianism.

Their 2005 manifesto reveals even more about their opinions regarding the malleability of people’s ideology and control of their behaviour,

We support a return to traditional standards of civility and politeness in British life, standards of politeness must be taught in school, demanded of government employees in their interaction with the public and exemplified on the BBC. Soap operas, for instance, should seek to portray slightly ‘higher’ than real-life behaviour as the norm, rather than setting out to show ordinary people – in particular the white working class – in the most negative and unattractive light possible.  

This is an example of how the BNP sought to shape the ideology and regulate the behaviour of the public, which they thought could be achieved via state control of the media. Considering how the BNP viewed the mind-set of individuals as malleable by popular culture and the community, it is not surprising that they considered the moral influence of Christianity to be significant.

'A weak and liberal Clergy'-

The notion of the clergy no longer enforcing traditional morality is also a continuation of themes addressed by Tyndall, who said on the subject of ‘the collapse of family life’,

And these people of the clergy scream about the evils of racism while the moral order collapses around them. These are the

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people who set themselves up as the leaders of the great crusade of moral righteousness!92

This view of a corrupted clergy remained prominent during Griffin’s reign. This is evident in the VOF which reads ‘the Church of England is suffering from a total lack of leadership. It needs to go back to basic beliefs and principles – practising and preaching British Christian Values.’93 This point was reiterated in the VOF the following year, were it states that ‘it is as if today’s church leaders are encouraging events that will lead to the final demise of 2000 years of Christian history in Britain. The strength of the Church grew from its bedrock of clear principles and family values.’94 This shows a clear perceived need to redirect the church for a more nationalistic purpose by ‘preaching British Christian Values’, illustrating the ideological influence the BNP thought the church was capable of asserting over the public.

Another example appears in a series of articles published in Identity regarding the decline of British Christianity, which reads ‘the Christian churches in the West no longer preach historic Christian doctrine or morality: they preach niceness in season and out of season.’95 The following article in the series detailed the culprits responsible for this. It reads ‘And the plain truth is that the Church of England has collapsed – it is a mere rotten shell, infested by homosexuals and radical feminists, kept going locally by declining groups of elderly female parishioners and centrally by accumulated investments.’96 These themes are also voiced by the CCB, which stated in an article on its website that,

92 ‘John Tyndall speaks to the BNP in 1990’, YouTube, (08/03/2013) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVs-1_Ir94Y> [last accessed 23/02/2016].
94 Reverend Mark James, ‘Traditional image was the strength behind the church’, Voice of Freedom, issue 40, July 2003, p. 3.
The objection against the British National Party seems to be grounded on the fact that it’s policies and activities are, or may be, declared incompatible with Christian teaching. By whom, however? The answer seems to be the House of Bishops, unelected toadies who are unaccountable to their members and who have already presided over the steepest decline of their Church in centuries.97

The moral and societal implications of this decaying of Christianity’s is explained in a following CCB publication,

Society has deteriorated to secularism and so the law must deteriorate with it, they seem to be saying, rather than the law acting as a preservative to society and a corrective of its ills. If we become a society of whores and homosexuals, of sex-pests and paedophiles, then our law must reflect that, and must deteriorate with it.98

This shows how the BNP viewed the mainstream clergy as no longer enforcing the traditional morality of Christianity, so the responsibility of maintaining Christianity’s ‘true place’ in British society fell to them.

Totalitarian revision of Christianity:-

The BNP believed that the mainstream clergy preached the destruction of the traditional values they thought they should be enforcing. They responded to this perceived threat with their own revision of


Christianity with heavy nationalistic undertones, giving them the opportunity to gain a degree of social and moral control over the ‘Christian Majority.’ Their revision of Christianity was to be used to enforce values such as the nuclear family, national pride, homophobia and monoculturalism.

The BNP constructed this revision by giving Christianity a more prominent role in its national mythology. The existence of a ‘mythic core’ of fascism is observable in many fascist groups, as illustrated by Roger Griffin. Christianity’s role in the BNP’s mythology often relied on flawed and biased understandings of history. This is evident in an article published in *Identity* regarding what it calls ‘the Christian crusades’, were the romantic style which fascists often used to detail their founding mythology is very prominent. It reads:-

The rise and flourishing of the religious military orders of the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars brought about a rebirth of lofty ideas and noble fighting spirit. They were a true aristocracy that was both benevolent to those in need yet ready to bear swords to protect its ideals. Probably the single greatest achievement of the Crusades was that the sacrifice of the tens of thousands of our western European folk was not in vain – Europe remained white and Christian and did not succumb to the Islamic hordes!100

This source is significant as it not only presented a militaristic revision of Christianity as an integral part of European identity and part of the BNP’s founding mythology, but it also incorporates resistance to Islam into this mythology as well as mentioning the ability of Christianity to bring about a ‘rebirth of lofty ideas.’101

101 Ibid.
But BNP strategists did not simply attach their mythology to Christianity, but also searched for Biblical justification for their ideology. In a debate with George Hargreaves, the leader of the Christian Party, Griffin made the following response to Hargreave’s point that the Bible did not recognise the existence of races and nations:

As I understand it’ Griffin said ‘in Revelations it’s for Jesus at the end of time to abolish nations, nations are to be there up until then, and we are merely saying that Britain has a right to control its own affairs and anybody else here is a welcome guest. In the end, we are here for all time. And those who attack us, the Marxist left, once they have dealt with us, they will come for you!102

Griffin’s words ‘as I understand it’ are especially relevant, as his understanding of Christianity was far removed from that of the Christians in the audience, but was echoed by many BNP activists.

The totalitarian purpose of this revision is illustrated in an article published in Identity which, after quoting the Old Testament for justification for homophobia,103 reads:-

The Christian Church is in the process of allowing openly homosexual clergy, so that people are to receive a message of holiness or communion from individuals who are sinful in the eyes of traditional teaching (because they have sex outside of

102 Nick Griffin, ‘BNP leader Nick Griffin Talks to a Black Political Leader’, YouTube (31/03/2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geMkWmIm0IM> [last assessed 23/02/2016].
103 Tim Heydon, ‘Homosexuality should be tolerated but not celebrated’, Identity, August 2005, p 10.
marriage) and who must necessarily engender feelings of repulsion, if they think about them at all, which they will.¹⁰⁴

This is a clear example of the ‘BNP’s Christianity’ being contrasted with that of the mainstream church for the sake of defending ‘traditional values’, even staking a claim to Jesus Christ himself. This was evident during the BNP’s 2009 campaign for the European elections, which used a poster depicting Jesus Christ next to the words ‘If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you’ what would Jesus do? Vote BNP”¹⁰⁵ referencing John 15:20. This supports Gentile’s notion of fascist political religion incorporating traditional religion into its own beliefs.¹⁰⁶

By utilising Christianity in this way, the BNP hoped to present their revision as the authentic Christian faith, thus giving them licence to shape the moral codes of Christians. This is reiterated in ‘Question Time for Patriots’, an online parody of the BBC’s political panel show ‘Question Time’, recorded soon after Griffin’s ignominious appearance on the show. When asked how to counter Marxist propaganda aimed at school children, BNP spokesman Lynne Mozar answered ‘Bring back Christian scripture in schools. And make prayers compulsory.’¹⁰⁷ This proposal also appeared in the BNP’s 2005 manifesto.¹⁰⁸ The ‘compulsory’ nature of this proposition is a clear example of a BNP spokesperson using Christianity as a means of effecting totalitarian control over children, illustrating the great potential for indoctrination they invested in Christianity.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Faith diary: Vote Jesus?’, BBC (2009) [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7978981.stm] [last assessed 31/03/2016].
¹⁰⁷ ‘Exclusive: Question Time for Patriots #1’, YouTube (06/10/2012) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xvWajiFJR8] [last assessed 23/02/2016].
Conclusion:

This chapter has demonstrated that the BNP remained committed to totalitarianism despite its liberal façade during the Griffin era. It showed that the BNP developed its own nationalistic revision of Christianity which it hoped to use as a tool to facilitate this totalitarian project by influencing the ideology of the perceived Christian majority. This revision of Christianity was presented as parallel to mainstream Christianity, which the BNP regarded as being in terminal decline due to the clergy being liberalised or being infiltrated by the leftist conspiracy. This caused the mainstream clergy to neglect what the BNP regarded as their role of enforcing traditional values. This builds upon the point made by Copsey that the totalitarian elements of BNP ideology survived the ‘modernisation’ process. It does this by exposing one method that the BNP hoped to use to gain access to the moral codes of the public. This way the BNP could indirectly effect control over the morality of the population. But, as illustrated by Woodbridge, this strategy was a failure, evoking far more hostility from the Christian community than sympathy.109 This was predicted by Gentile who regarded political religion as necessarily encountering opposition from existing religion.110

This chapter also applies the broader model of fascism with a mythic core by Roger Griffin to the context of the BNP. When the Christian revision appeared in BNP ideology, this revision was integrated into the party’s national mythology. This was demonstrated by arguing that Christianity and its supposed historic struggle with Islam was regarded as a vital element of British and European identity, and must therefore be defended and maintained in its most authentic form and as an extension of the ‘duel British identity’. This is significant to the totalitarian project as communicating this founding myth to the Christian majority was equally as import as enforcing

atavistic morality upon them in the eyes of the BNP. Therefore, this Christian revision served a legitimising as well as totalitarian purpose, as the BNP’s influence on this revised Christianity was masked by claims of historical authenticity.
The Griffin era of the BNP was one of modernisation, frustrated potential, the greatest electoral success for a British fascist party and a steady rise in Christian themes before his expulsion, which was been largely neglected by the historiography. However, the argument put forward by this dissertation has expanded upon the work by Woodbridge, providing the primary analysis he requested in future studies.\textsuperscript{111} Notions of the impact of Islamic terrorism, the legitimising mission, the ‘Liberalised Church’ and mobilization of the Christian majority all appear in Woodbridge’s work, but this dissertation has presented these themes in a cohesive and thematic structure based on primary sources. This dissertation also draws on the work of Copsey who argues that the BNP exploited the trend of popular Islamophobia among the public.\textsuperscript{112} This was done by identifying a link between the broader societal fear of militant Islam and the way it affected the role of Christianity in BNP ideology. This also fulfils another suggestion by Macklin, who suggested that the current historiography was lacking an in-depth study of the historical context of modernisation.\textsuperscript{113} Though this dissertation is not conclusive in this area, it does highlight the role of Islamic terrorism and religion as part of this missing historical context of modernisation.

This dissertation also draws upon broader theories of fascism, one of which being Roger Griffin’s notion of fascism with a ‘mythic core’.\textsuperscript{114} This theory has played an important role in this dissertation’s argument, as it has identified a place for Christianity in the BNP’s mythic core. This links heavily with another theory of fascism. Paxton’s

\textsuperscript{114} Roger Griffin, \textit{The nature of fascism} (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 32.
notion of fascism being ‘propelled by feelings rather than thoughts’\textsuperscript{115} is the basis of several arguments made in this dissertation, namely the existence of a ‘duel British Identity’, as this presents an irrational concept which can only be embraced by individuals who are reactionary or irrational.

This dissertation suggests that the BNP harnessed Christianity in three ways. Firstly, the rise in Christian themes in the BNP was a defiant statement against Militant Islam and a nebulous leftist conspiracy which were often regarded as being in alliance. This is notable in the timing of anti-Islamic and pro-Christian sentiments in relation to the increase of popular Islamophobia, which peaked after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 and London in 2005. This leads to a Manichean view of the relationship between the West and Islam being presented by the BNP, and caused the inception of a ‘duel British identity’ based on both religion and race, as activists were unable to distinguish between the two as the perceived ‘outside threat’ now took a religious rather than racial form. This shows how despite the modernisation attempt, the BNP was unable to break from racial themes.

Secondly, this dissertation has also argued that Christianity was harnessed by the BNP as part of the legitimising mission. This included an attempt by the party leadership to move the party’s image from ethnic to civic nationalism, as it gave them an opportunity to present their Manichean ideology in religious rather than racial terms. However, this did not represent a genuine change, as race still remained prominent in the BNP, and voters accordingly remained largely unconvinced. Also, the BNP thought that by attaching itself to Christianity, it could also appeal to a perceived ‘Christian majority’. They hoped this would rally these Christians to them, naturally gravitating to a party defending them against militant Islam and the far left. The final legitimising purpose Christianity served linked heavily with their totalitarian motivation, as the BNP hoped to mobilize this

'Christian majority’ by exploiting issues common to both Christian fundamentalism and fascism, such as apportion, homosexuality and the nuclear family.

Finally, the BNP also hoped to use their own revision of Christianity to gain control over the moral codes of this ‘Christian majority’ to shape their ideology. It has been shown that the BNP remained commitment to totalitarianism, despite their liberal facade. This is observable in the desire to control the media, centralise power and use education for indoctrination, showing that the party viewed the public’s ideology as malleable. They hoped that their revision of Christianity could compete with the liberal clergy who they regarded as no longer fulfilling their role of enforcing traditional morality, and that their revision was the ‘authentic’ Christianity. This revision of Christianity was observable in the founding mythology of the party, presenting the faith as an inherent part of British history and a vital weapon in the historical struggle against Islam.

However, despite the increase in Christian themes in the party, its prominence must not be overstated. Acceptance of these themes in the BNP was not universal, with many members retaining their racial concerns. During a speech at a German Democratic Party conference, Griffin remarked:-

So people like the EDL, they says it’s just Islam, all the other immigrants are wonderful! Not there not! Many of the Africans who have swarmed Britain, hundreds of thousands in the past five years, there Christians, there perfectly good Christians. I don’t care, they have no place in our Europe.116

This shows a clear attachment to racism which overrides religious themes, as well as suggesting that the attachment to Christianity was

116 Nick Griffin, ‘A Europe of Free people’ YouTube (25/03/2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59k3TNnorFOg> [last assessed 03/03/2016].
a politically pragmatic move by some. But despite this, Christian themes increased across the period and survived the fall of Griffin, continuing into the leadership of Adam Walker, as demonstrated by a quote of his published online in 2014, stating that ‘Our Christian values are not just under attack from Islamisation, but also from the politically correct authorities who put immigrants before us, the British people’. 117 Therefore, it is import that the historiography continues to analysis this relatively recent change in the BNP’s tactics and ideology.

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Secondary sources – Articles


**Secondary sources – Books**


