

FAITH, RHETORIC, AND DOMINION: HOW SHARED LITERACY LURES
LATINOS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family.

To my parents: know that it was your sacrifices and decisions during my early education that ultimately prepared me for success in the academy. I love and thank you both for your wisdom then and now and for always supporting me.

To my wife: know that I love you with all my heart and that your support and encouragement keeps me going. Also, know that your gaze fixes me and tells me that you believe that I am better than I think I am.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICAL FAITH-POLITICS AND A LITERATURE REVIEW	17
III. AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY OF FAITH PRACTICE.....	42
IV. THE DOMINIONIST AGENDA AND THREAT	58
V. THE PROBLEM OF SELF APOINTMENT/ORDINATION.....	83
VI. THE MEANING OF AN ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE NHCLC AND THE OAK INITIATIVE	93
Dominionism Created: A New Christian Denomination	97
Dominionism and the Seven Mountains	99
VII. CONCLUSION	104
WORKS CITED	114

Chapter One

Introduction

Largely, this research is an outgrowth of my experiences while attending pentecostal churches and constitutes an attempt to understand the deeper meanings behind the particular language and action involved in the practice of the pentecostal version of American, charismatic, evangelical Christianity and how those literacy practices render Latino Pentecostals subject to appeals by groups that fail to hold Latino interests as primary.¹ The term “Latino Pentecostal” is not a denominational term, and as Luis León states, “inasmuch as the discourse of Pentecostalism is translated, it mutates and is transformed, shaped to fit cultural idiosyncrasies, it is better to speak not of a single Pentecostal [*sic*] experience but of many *Pentecostalisms*, [*sic*] each with their regional, class, ethnic, gender, and denominational adaptations and expressions” (211). Agreeing with this, apparently each pentecostal church one attends is likely to have its own particular version or style of execution of doctrine. None of the churches my wife

Note

¹ In this thesis I will use the term “pentecostal” to as an adjective describing religious practice and “Pentecostal/s/ism” to refer to persons, churches that practice denominational Pentecostalism, or the general religious movement. The terms “evangelical” and “Evangelical/s/ism” will be used to describe those practitioners, churches, and that movement in the same way. Similarly, “dominionist” is intended as adjective, describing belief, while “Dominionist/ism” refers to persons or the movement itself.

and I attended were labeled Pentecostal churches, and I use “pentecostal” as a term describing a method of practicing Protestant Christianity which holds “that the spiritual gifts bestowed upon the early church in the book of Acts are available to modern-day believers” (Balmer xv). Or, as referred to by another author, such Pentecostals—to use León’s term—are “multifarious movements concerned primarily with the *experience* [*sic*] of the working of the Holy Spirit and the *practice* [*sic*] of spiritual gifts” (Anderson 440).

After conversion to Protestantism as an adult, I attended Tree of Life Ministries of Houston, a small, training-oriented church for about three years (my wife attended the church for about five years). Ruth McHugh served as the pastor and lead trainer, and the nature of practice at Tree of Life was pentecostal though it lacked the behavioral and traditional rules often associated with denominational Pentecostalism. Ruth was an honest and frank New Yorker who could directly and forcefully correct error in her congregants but did so with love. She could tell you “You’re doing it wrong,” and you loved her for it. The accountability Ruth demanded from us fundamentally shaped my impression and understanding of the pastor-congregant relationship. Always, Ruth stressed the grave responsibility laid on the shoulders of those who seek to lead other believers. She held herself accountable to her congregation and was not above admitting fault. Ruth was my first pastor, and I am a decidedly better person for having known her. She spoke the truth with love and taught the tenets of Christianity in a straight-forward and educational style. Pastor McHugh held a Bachelor’s Degree, and her first career was as an elementary educator. To an extent, she maintained a degree of her former career when teaching in church. Teaching was the term she used to describe what some might

call preaching. Ruth rarely engaged in pure *preaching*—enthusiastic, often loud verbal exultation and/or exhortation—which I was trained to differentiate from *teaching*, exposition of scripture considering historical context, etymology, and iconographic information and/or interpretation. Tree of Life was a training ministry, and attendants who desired the opportunity, could learn to teach; lead praise and worship, or learn “intercession and deliverance,” prayer-based, personal ministries. The congregation of Tree of Life was small, about forty people and composed of white, European-Americans (80%), Hispanics (15%), and African-Americans (5%). Those percentages are estimates created by recalling the composition of Tree of Life’s congregation in consultation with my wife and are not intended to be exact.

Tree of Life was never a big church, nor was it supported by a large and wealthy denominational infrastructure. Pastor McHugh paid for much of the church’s expenses out of her own pocket and did not pay herself from the tithes and offering received by the church. Also, she rarely described Tree of Life as a “church.” She usually used the term ministry and my understanding of the nature of Tree of Life was as a training ministry. As time went on Ruth became convinced the time was drawing near when she would close the church and move on to a different type of ministry, possibly travelling and speaking or writing. Unfortunately, she never got the chance. Pastor McHugh passed away in 2008. When Tree of Life closed in 2002, my wife and I attended other churches most of which applied some level of pentecostal practice. Eventually, we were invited to Cornerstone Ministries of Richmond and immediately noticed distinct differences between it and most of the other churches we had attended in the Houston area. Cornerstone Ministries of Richmond is located literally just on the other side of the tracks

in Richmond, Texas. The area had previously been referred to as “Mud Alley,” and in earlier times, had been the town’s “Red Light District.” This reference was often made in terms of reclaiming the land for God. Related to this, one aspect of Cornerstone’s mytho-history was a story detailing how, during one service, the pastor led the congregation on a procession through the parts of “Mud Alley” that the church did not own or control in a symbolic act of claiming the land. Rudy Lopez and his wife Oralia served—and still serve—as co-pastors, and Oralia’s sister, Aurora, is also respected and considered an associate pastor. This fact alone marked the church as different. It is led by Latinos, and the majority of the attendees were (and likely still are) Latinos. To my knowledge, none of Cornerstone’s leadership possessed any formal educational certification, but the three mentioned above are ordained ministers. Using Beverly Moss’s description of pastoral types, as outlined in “Creating a Community: Literacy Events in African American Churches,” I would classify Cornerstone’s pastor as partial-manuscript minister; he used notes or an outline, and he rarely deviated from it (156).

For me, having attended churches consisting mostly of and usually led by white, European-Americans, Cornerstone’s difference was a refreshing reversal. The composition of Cornerstone was quite different from the first Evangelical church I had attended, Tree of Life. Tree of Life was always small; usually about twenty people attended services on Sunday and rarely more than forty. Among those regularly attending services—there was no formal membership role—I estimate about twenty percent were people of color. At Cornerstone, the congregation was much larger: about one hundred people, mostly members, attending most services and up to twice that number at special services such as Christmas or Easter. The vast majority of them were Latinos, most of

these being Mexican Americans, and I estimate approximately ten percent of attendees were Anglos and two to four percent were African Americans (again, these percentages are estimates). The appearance and general conduct of church services was much more formal and staged than that at Tree of Life. Cornerstone had a band led by the Pastor's son, several deacons, numerous ushers, dance ministry, children's ministry, and large, colorful banners. Formality seemed necessary for these church-goers, and to me, it illustrated their class aspirations. During worship at Cornerstone, many of the people dressed relatively formally, especially on Sunday mornings. This was a change for me, I had always worn casual clothes to church and had been taught that part of the "come as you are" doctrine of Christianity included one's appearance (within reason). Pastor Ruth, at Tree of Life, had said "God knows the condition of your heart," hence, there was no matter how nice you dressed. However, we were expected to dress reasonably, but in Houston, in summer, that often meant shorts. We were required to wear pants if we were conducting praise and worship or teaching. Ruth's apparent lack of concern with appearances was typical of her ministry; she was unconcerned with the trappings of image and appearance, and this extended to those whom she allowed to minister at Tree of Life. There were no "guest" preachers at Tree of Life, primarily because the church existed largely in its own realm. Tree of Life was truly an independent, non-denominational church, unaffiliated with any other churches, denominations, or evangelists. Cornerstone, on the other hand, was associated with numerous other churches, evangelists, preachers, and had an "apostle" presiding over it. There were frequent visitors and guest preachers and teachers, among them prominent, pentecostal figures such as Art Blajos, a Victory Outreach evangelist and former member of the

Mexican Mafia, and Michael Constantine—an evangelist and former musician.

Cornerstone's presiding apostle is a woman named Clarisse Fluitt, and she has demonstrated a dominionist theology in a video posted on the internet containing nuanced yet politically charged language and depicting patriotic and militaristic images (Fluitt *Dr. Clarice*).

By the most basic definition presented in scripture, an apostle is simply one of the original twelve disciples whom Jesus recruited. In modern, American Evangelical usage, the term can refer to who has founded multiple churches or one who oversees a number of churches. Sometimes, the term bishop is also used to refer to those pastors who preside over more than one church. In the most recent version of the American Evangelical world, apostles are accorded great respect and often have ministries of their own in addition to those in the churches over which they preside. But the differences between Cornerstone and Tree of Life did not end with the pastors, the connections, or the demographics of the congregation.

A distinct moment of clarity came for me one night as I sat in a Deliverance Training Class at Cornerstone. I had never considered myself a "Pentecostal," but Aurora (the trainer) made the off-hand comment: "We're funny people, we Pentecostals," she went on to say that *we* Pentecostals have our own vocabulary and practices and, after this, I found myself noticing and separating practices these Latinos displayed into the categories of *Biblical* and *traditional*. *Biblical* practices were those which I believed could be directly traced to and supported by scriptural citations, while *traditional* practices were those which I considered to have no basis in scripture. These practices amounted to a set of behaviors that can best be described as *the way we do things*. These

might range from the way we dress to the way we pray, and these traditions are not always behavioral but also, in some cases, are doctrinal. Upon returning to the academy, completing my baccalaureate studies, and beginning graduate study in Rhetoric and Composition, I returned to these observations and began to consider how Pentecostalism, its adherents, their rhetoric, and their literacy practices might be further investigated. While researching and writing on this topic I came across a relationship between Reverend Sam Rodriguez, the President of The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, and a newly founded organization called The Oak Initiative. Further investigation into The Oak Initiative and its leader, Rick Joyner, revealed the existence of a set of low-profile, quasi-political, religious movements loosely gathered under the term dominionism within the American evangelical community. As a result, I have chosen to embark upon an investigation into how the rhetoric and valued literacy practices of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals render them susceptible to the appeals of ultra-conservative political agendas forwarded by some evangelical organizations. Like classical fascisms, these movements have also harnessed the supernatural aspects of Pentecostalism to justify and certify their political agendas (Hedges 11).

The spirit realm is very real for pentecostal practitioners and in “The Expansion of Protestantism in Mexico: An Anthropological View,” James Dow calls it “a normally unseen vital reality” (4). This idea of the spirit realm as a reality aligns perfectly with native religious systems—Dow studied the conversion of indigenous Mexicans—and empowers pentecostal practitioners to make real changes in their worlds. In essence, Pentecostals differ from other, mainstream Protestants because they believe they are empowered actors within this spiritual realm. Pentecostals also believe that they are

empowered and authorized to intervene spiritually through intercession and spiritual warfare on behalf of themselves and other Christians.

To fully understand the appeals of this type of faith and the ways that the literacy it shares with white, European-American Evangelicals render Latino Christians susceptible to the appeals of Dominionist rhetoric, I will study the shared literacy of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals and white, European-American Evangelicals. I will also study the ways that the appeals of Dominionism affect Latino practitioners and how the white, European-American leaders of the movement seek to re-colonize Latino Christians to harness their votes in an attempt to seize control over the United States. Specifically, I will seek to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do the specific literacy practices of Latino Pentecostals establish meaning and group membership within their respective congregations?
- 2) How are Latinos required to compromise or alter their respective ethnic/racial identities in order to establish and confirm their religious identities?
- 3) How do the rhetoric and literacy practices Latino Pentecostals have adopted from white, American Evangelicals render them susceptible to Dominionist religio-political appeals?

To accomplish this, I will conduct textual analysis to explore the language used by Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals and scholars to describe the nature of the empowered spiritual position that Pentecostals/Evangelicals believe they occupy and examine how the specific opinions and beliefs of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals resemble those of their European American counterparts. The idea that Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals might consider their ethnic identity over their religious one in some situations upends the

commonly held assertion that U.S. Evangelicals represent a monolithic voting block whose members agree on all issues. The recent rise of Dominionism and its move from the fringes of American Evangelicalism into the mainstream through its association with a number of conservative presidential candidates and other politicians represents another set of appeals that neatly bundle recent conservative political belief and fundamentalist (Reconstruction) Christian theology. Because this movement shares the literacy of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals it appeals to Latino practitioners and some may be attracted to it without being fully aware of its true goals.

Dominionism is a specific and extremely conservative Christian theology, which finds its basis in a theological worldview called Christian Reconstruction. Dominionism. As its name implies, is a movement that seeks *dominion*, and the movement takes its name from a passage which states,

Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His *own* [*sic*] image; in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (*New King James Bible*, Gen. 1:26-28)

Christians often interpret this passage to indicate that humans are called to be good stewards over the earth, its animals, and its resources. Dominionists interpret this passage

literally to indicate their belief that humans are both free to exploit the earth's animals and resources and called to achieve literal *dominion* over all areas of earthly governance by controlling what they term the "seven mountains of culture," which are religion, government; arts and entertainment, education, business, media, and family (Hillman *Reclaiming*). The website and ministry from which these examples were drawn is but one of a myriad of such "seven mountain" sites. The so-called "Seven Mountains Theology" may also be known as "Seven Spheres Theology" or "Seven Mountains Dominionism" and refers to the ways that controlling these seven influential aspects of society effectively results in dominion over society.

Specialized language and behavior allows individuals to establish their group membership and belonging (Gee 29). Although terms such as *slain in the spirit*, *baptized in the spirit*, *speaking/praying in tongues*, *deliverance*, *intercession*, and *plead the blood* are common to many, mainstream denominations, among Pentecostals/Evangelicals, these terms take on a meaning that refers to specific linguistic/behavioral actions and are easily recognizable to most pentecostal practitioners. The difference between the definitions of these terms as understood by mainstream denominations and how Pentecostal/Evangelical practitioners understand them lies mainly in the *active* nature of the terms as used by Pentecostals/Evangelicals, and how the two groups interpret certain passages of scripture such as Matthew 18:18, which states "assuredly, I say to you, whatsoever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (*New King James Bible*). As stated above, Pentecostals believe they are empowered actors within a vibrant and very real spirit realm, so they view the terms not as concepts but as events or actions, also this scripture passage establishes that

empowered position. In short, Pentecostals/Evangelicals use these terms in a way that focuses on the supernatural action they represent. Deliverance and intercession represent more than simple prayer for Pentecostals and charismatic Evangelicals, these terms are spiritually active descriptions of the practitioners' behaviors. As will be described below, deliverance is conducted by practitioners and involves the active removal and banishment of spirits afflicting the believer. Intercession, which by its most simplistic definition can be described as prayer for another believer, also becomes an action and these two terms are often described using the martial term "spiritual warfare." So, the fundamental difference between the way mainstream denominations of Protestantism understand these terms and the understanding carried by Pentecostals/Evangelicals is the empowered and discerning role of the practitioner in carrying out these actions. Deliverance becomes a province of action not just for God but also for the practitioner who, often without consultation with the believer, discerns his/her prayer needs and then carries out the active spiritual warfare behavior necessary to affect change. Spiritual warfare and active praying become ways for Pentecostals/Evangelicals to alter their environments and improve their lives. Also, when considering people of color who are Pentecostals, these attitudes towards spiritual action empower the believer and offer them routes to change outside of and above conventional societal institutions.

Dominionist practitioners, often resembling Pentecostals in their religious behavior, also employ such terms and concepts as a means of establishing group membership and determining positionality, and Latinos may be lured into thinking that these ministries represent the same type of evangelical faith that they practice while remaining unaware of an underlying political agenda. While speaking, dominionist

preachers may claim that Christians are destined to rule and that Christians are kings on earth, implying that such statements represent an honest and logical interpretation of scripture. This appeal assumes that it will be taken at face value and relies on the faith that congregants place in their leaders, which is fundamentally a belief that the leader would not twist scripture for amoral purposes. As a result, Latinos may be inclined to support such ministries monetarily or theologically. In asking these questions, I hope to explore the linguistic and/or behavioral actions comprising the discourse common to both Latino and White, European American pentecostal/evangelical religious practice. I also examine specific discourse and literacy practices through the lens of Gee's definition of discourse as an "identity kit" allowing group members to establish and confirm their membership in specific groups and give voice to historical and generational discourses (29).

The conservative beliefs often held by Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals might seem more typical of citizens who are more affluent and/or are members of the majority population. Some of these beliefs are surely a result of the confluence of the two groups' shared theological underpinnings. However, practitioners of Pentecostalism, including Latinos, believe in a literal spirit world through which spirit beings such as angels and demons are actively engaged in their lives and also believe that the practitioner has the authority and power to command such beings. Pentecostal practitioners believe they have been empowered by God and possess authority within the spirit realm. This concept of the human believer as an empowered actor within a spiritually active universe is consistent with many native religious systems and the religious systems practiced by peoples in pre-Columbian Americas and throughout the world. Additionally, the modern

version of American Pentecostalism differs from other, more mainstream Protestant denominations in that it traces its lineage to the 1906 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. Initiated by William J. Seymour, an African American pastor, the Azusa Street revival was conducted and led by people of color (León 211; Ramirez 573, 575). The revival spilled into the surrounding, Mexican neighborhoods and nearby rural and Mexican and Mexican American communities in both southern California and northwestern Mexico (Ramirez 576). However, like most evangelical movements, Pentecostalism in the U.S. is currently dominated by largely European American denominations such as the “International Church of the Four Square Gospel” and “The Assemblies of God.” Meanwhile, Latino Pentecostal churches tend to be independent or are associated with one of a few major Latino or pentecostal organizations such as “Victory Outreach Ministries,” or “Victory Fellowship Ministries” both of which share common ministerial ancestries and focus primarily on substance abuse issues. So, non-European American believers often find themselves again faced by organizational and systemic constructs. However, this trend has changed in recent years with the establishment of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) and the Coalición Nacional Latina de Ministros y Lideres Cristianos (National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders CONLAMIC) two Latino Evangelical organizations representing some thirty thousand churches and over twenty million believers (NHCLC, Conlamic).

The study I propose will be conducted using auto-ethnographic research and textual analysis to study the rhetoric used by both researchers and practitioners to describe the conservative beliefs of Latino Pentecostals. In my textual analysis, I will

analyze personal, conversion narratives (Arguinizoni, Blajos, and García), socio-historical expositions of Latino Pentecostals (Espinoza, Stevens-Arroyo, Sanchez-Walsh, and Ramirez), video images of Oak Initiative representatives making statements about the movement (Boykin, Joyner, and Rodriguez), theoretical works that seek to explain the notion of literacy within such an organization (Gee), purely theoretical works (Crowley), and work which examines the influence of our cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, and other identities through which humans establish meaning (Burke). Additionally, because I believe there are racial and ethnic aspects to the current attempt at neo-colonization of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals, I will approach the topic from the perspective of critical race theory as defined by Daniel G. Solórzano. In “Critical race theory race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars,” Solórzano outlines five major themes of critical race theory, and though his research involved the education system, I feel it is adaptable to an examination of religio-political rhetoric, practice, and behavior especially when one considered the pedagogical aspects of religious practice and instruction. Solórzano’s five themes and the most pertinent descriptions of their purposes to this research are listed below.

1. *The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism*: Critical race theory starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic, permanent, and, in the words of Margaret Russell...“a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law.” Although race and racism are at the center of critical race analysis, they are also viewed at their intersection with other forms of subordination such as gender and class discrimination...

2. *The challenge to dominant ideology*: A critical race theory...challenges the traditional claims of the educational system and its institutions to objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity. The critical race theorist argues that these traditional claims are camouflage for the self-interest, power, power and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society...

3. *The commitment to social justice*: Critical race theory has an overall commitment to social justice and the elimination of racism...

4. *The centrality of experiential knowledge*: Critical race theory recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination...

5. *The interdisciplinary perspective*: A critical race theory...challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism...by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods. (Solórzano 122-123)

In this chapter, I have attempted to offer a brief introduction to my background, descriptions of the churches I attended, a brief introduction to Dominionism, and a description of how my experiences and early research led me to the topic I am exploring. Additionally, I presented my research questions, a description of the research methods I will employ, and ended the chapter by describing critical race theory as defined by Daniel G. Solórzano. In the following chapter, I will present a brief description of the influence

the normative image of evangelical Christianity as white, middle-class, and politically conservative had on the pentecostal churches my wife and I attended in order to attempt to provide an explanation for the behaviors and attitudes of congregants, using citations from the literature to support my observations. Following this brief exposition, I will present a literature review that approaches and describes pentecostal and evangelical religious practice from a variety of disciplines.

Chapter Two

Understanding Evangelical Faith-Politics and a Literature Review

Solórzano's description of the themes of critical race theory, especially placing the research subject "in both a historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods" (123), is critical to understanding how political belief, socioeconomic status, class, gender roles, and race intersect in the formation of religio-political belief systems. Additionally, Solórzano's emphasis on individual experience as "legitimate, appropriate, and critical to the understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination" (122) is central to the following description of our experiences attending pentecostal churches. The following observations regarding Cornerstone Ministries of Richmond are designed to position the organization rhetorically within the religious, political, regional, social, and historical framework appropriate to our period of attendance. We attended Cornerstone from August 2003 to September 2004, during much of the 2004 presidential campaign and because of this timing, were probably exposed to an increased level of political speech framed as religious belief. However, political speech issued from the pulpit seemed merely to be a public voicing by church leadership of attitudes and beliefs I had heard privately from a number of Cornerstone's members. Put simply, for some members of Cornerstone, conversion or adherence to Pentecostalism was total and included the adoption of political beliefs common to those voiced by prominent European American Evangelical figures. These figures—often spokesmen for national religious

organizations or pastors of mega-churches—have set the “platform” of evangelical political belief in the United States, framing their often highly conservative agendas as biblically based.

The Evangelicalism that my wife and I experienced while attending a Latino pentecostal church was an ideology of faith that aspired to the middle-class. Often, this thinking functioned as a veiled political statement, and the apocalyptic ideology of the leadership at Cornerstone conformed to the recent version of conservative Christian politics (Crowley 167). The rhetorics of faith and politics at Cornerstone also aspired to the middle-class, and the church’s leadership modeled the theological image of the church after mega-churches typically led by white pastors. Cornerstone is located in the hinterlands of Houston, Texas, just south of the very affluent suburbs in Sugarland and Sweet Water, and in southeast Texas, evangelical Christianity—often non-denominational in name but pentecostal in practice—looks decidedly white, middle class, politically conservative, and in leadership, male. Hence, Latino Evangelicals/Pentecostals adhere to and repeat discourses amenable to membership in such populations. The two groups share a version of Christian belief and literacy, and “conversion has reoriented their worldview to look to a supernatural agent as the root of their troubles” (Sanchez-Walsh 125). Focusing on a spiritual cause to problems allows Evangelicals to ignore systemic and institutional conditions that perpetuate social ills and feeds a larger myth holding that social problems are best handled at the grass roots level by local community and/or religious groups. On more than one occasion, political messages or endorsements were issued from the pulpit. The use of the pulpit as a venue for political speech was fairly mild at Cornerstone and consisted mainly of open praise for and endorsement of

George W. Bush. Though one instance was blatant and seemed deliberately defiant. During one service, Rudy said (paraphrased) “I met President Bush when he was governor and I’m telling you that President Bush is a godly man.” While he gave no direct *order* to congregants to vote for Bush, the implication of his statement was clear: Bush is the candidate of God. In some churches however, the political preaching can convey beliefs and messages that are far more alarming (Hedges 58, 70). In churches led by pastors who espouse dominionist theology, the goals of political speech are part of a larger movement that seeks “to broaden the political base of the movement and impose a theocracy” (70). Political messages forwarded by some large ministries seem counter to the intent of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution and are openly bent on altering the type of government in the United States (Goldberg 41). These agendas are not necessarily created by the pastors or based on their own ideas. In some cases, these agendas are driven by revisionist history created to deny that the United States is a legacy of the Enlightenment and that “the foundations of our country lay not in the Constitution, but in the New England theocracies of the 1600s” (43). Such belief systems also deny that the Constitution “represented a decisive break with the type of theocracy erected by the Puritans” (43). These appeals offer adherents a simplified message they want to hear and one that both reaffirms their faith by making it central to the foundation of the United States and reassures them that their political beliefs are perfectly aligned with and even inspired by their religious faith.

In her essay “Clarity, Mothers, and the Mass-Mediated National Soul: A Defense of Ambiguity,” Linda Kintz argues that “simplification has...long been a part of the U.S. mythology of common sense and the common man” (115). Kintz uses the term “ideology

of clarity” to describe the rhetoric conservative religious organizations use to couch their belief in the concept that they represent “the ‘true’ nature of God-given humanity” (115). The efforts by conservative, religious, political organizations to establish their mythic version of American democracy as the norm meshes with Justin Watson’s assessment of their goals. Watson says that religious conservatives “want ‘their place at the table’ *and* they want everyone at the table to agree with them” (Crowley 135; Watson 175). For these religious people, dissent can be equated with apostasy, and “this cultivated sense of persecution—cultivated by those doing the persecuting—allows the Christian Right to promote bigotry and attack any outcry as a part of the war against the Christian faith” (Hedges 97). Simplification of ideology through the ideology of clarity combined with a self-justified sense of purpose, renders Dominionism a threat to American democracy, and because Latino Evangelicals/Pentecostals share their religio-political ideologies and literacies, they are subject to recruitment into Dominionist organizations whether as willing or unwitting participants. In *Latino Pentecostal Identity*, researcher Arlene Sanchez-Walsh states

that Latino Pentecostals...tend to subsume their ethnic identity under the rubric of their religious identity for very specific reasons: (1) the feeling Pentecostals have that they are commanded to relinquish any identity that deters them from a religious one; and (2) ethnic identity has little to do with the experiential nature of Pentecostalism, and therefore adherents are loosed from their ethnic moorings through a revitalized spiritual life. (1)

When Latinos’ ethnic identity is subsumed “under the rubric of their religious identity” and that religious contains a political aspect, the group has been effectively re-colonized

by those creating and issuing the political agenda. Also, Sanchez-Walsh's observation justifies and explains why the members of Cornerstone might assume modes of religious practice and behavior that *look* like those of the white, middle-class evangelicals. Another important part of looking like White, European American Evangelicals is maintaining the conservative political beliefs many evangelical Christians hold. This line of thought also sheds light on the conservative dress often observed among Pentecostals and highlights the importance of image, appearance, and control among them.

Controlling the urges and desires of one's flesh is of primary concern in Pentecostal churches. Luis León and Pablo Vila both assert that domination of the body is one method by which Pentecostals can demonstrate their piety (León 214; Vila 100). In Cornerstone's congregation were several members who had formerly been addicts and at least one member of leadership who had completed a ministerial drug rehabilitation program based in Hawaii. Founded by members of Sonny Arguinzoni's Victory Outreach drug rehabilitation ministry, My Brother's Keeper had split from its parent organization but continued to offer drug rehabilitation ministry. During the winter of 2004, my wife and I joined a team from Cornerstone who travelled to Hawaii and presented a deliverance training program and ministered to the people participating in the drug rehabilitation program there. Total abstinence from all substances was considered the only acceptable lifestyle for members of Cornerstone. The body may be viewed as the gauge of God's favor, or in the case of addicts, it may be the condition of the body that renders them susceptible to the message of salvation (León 213-214). In *Treasures from Darkness*, Arguinzoni recounts his early ministry experience at Teen Challenge, stating "revival broke out among the addicts. I developed a burden for them, and also for the

gang members” (61). Arguinzoni describes his desire to minister to addicts and gang members as a “burden,” but he does not mean burden as a weight or a load to carry. Rather, the “burden” is a desire to perform ministry interpreted in Pentecostalism as placed in the believer by God (Arguinzoni 61; León 220). In his narrative, Arguinzoni relates an incident in which he was determined to leave a church he was pastoring. Realizing that he cannot leave, Arguinzoni writes, “I suddenly realized that God had not released me” (106-107). Later, when he invites a well-known preacher to his church the preacher replies that he is free the entire week in question, so “it must be God’s will” (107). These quotes illustrate the Pentecostal belief that God’s attention is focused on every detail of the believer’s life and is actively manipulating the natural world for the believer’s benefit. The concept of God’s constant and active intervention in believers’ lives can lead those believers who espouse dominionist theology to foist their opinions and wills on God, effectively turning the Christian concept of seeking *God’s* will and following it on its head, and the notion that God is concerned with even the most mundane aspects of His follower’s lives is prevalent throughout American Evangelical Christianity.

This control or submission of the body, often in reference to overcoming addiction, was a key element of the theology at Cornerstone and is a commonly cited factor in salvation testimonials. Researchers have also cited it as a factor in the conversion of Latinas to evangelical Protestantism. Pablo Vila quotes David Smilde who stated “Evangelicalism appeals to...women as it does not attempt to overthrow the [patriarchal] [*sic*] system but rather undermines the ideals of machismo, re-moralizes the male ideal, and refocuses the male on the household” (100). So, the substance and dogma

of Pentecostalism solve or at least address fundamental social problems affecting Latinas' lives, and that change is affected through the control and redirection of their husband's behavior. However, Vila astutely points out that the Evangelical world has not been a bastion of women's rights nor have women's rights been a central focus of Evangelicalism (100). At Cornerstone, the patriarchal orthodoxy of Evangelical Protestantism is simply accepted, almost apologetically, as the natural order (Crowley 12). This condition demonstrates the status of the Bible as the final and authoritative source of truth for believers (Vila 105-106) and relies on a patriarchal interpretation of scripture. It also requires that believers conservatively interpret Galatians 3:28 which states "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (*The New King James Bible*). However, having met some very strong women at Cornerstone, I am uncertain of the degree to which the patriarchal dominance displayed in church was extended to their homes. The act of insuring the perpetuation of the "image" of Christian patriarchy is itself a rhetorical act and becomes a part of the physical literacy of Latino Pentecostalism. While men at Cornerstone worked cleaning the outside of the church or building sets for the Christmas pageant, the women of Cornerstone supervised the children's ministry and organized potlucks, each group organically separating into stereotypical male and female roles. Additionally, according to Arlene Sanchez-Walsh, Pentecostal women find empowerment in the ability to "heal themselves and their families" when Pentecostalism is pursued as a reformative faith that allows and empowers women to affect change in their husbands' behavior and thus improve their lives (120).

Worshippers at Cornerstone often demonstrated their group literacy physically, a

consistent theme in Pentecostalism. Prayer often resulted in being “slain in the spirit;” the people receiving prayer often collapsed and lay prostrate for some time, interpreted as a period of communion with God. During worship, congregants often raised their hands or might approach the dais and kneel and do so. These behaviors signified membership in the group by demonstrating the participant’s willingness to assume a position of vulnerability and surrender to the Holy Spirit and showed the member’s ability to engage in acceptable behaviors that confirm group membership (León 214). Church members often paraded around the sanctuary in a joyful procession to quick-tempo music. Members might feel compelled to rise during worship, approach the dais, and prostrate themselves in an act of submission. Tanya Lührman uses “*metakinesis*, a term used in dance criticism to depict the way emotional experience is carried within the body so that the dancer conveys the emotion to the observer” (519) to describe the way these intimate, spiritual encounters manifest bodily in practitioners and are recognized by observers. In a larger context, the actual actions performed by participants, can be viewed as an appeal. According to Lührman, “the dancer conveys the emotion to the observer” (519) just as the physical behavior of Pentecostal practitioners establishes their membership in the congregation as they appeal to God using worship music, physical prostration, and singing. Worshippers follow a specific pattern hoping that their praise might be rewarded by a manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation. The consistent, repeated pattern suggests both a rhetoric and a literacy to worship for the congregation. Having attended many different evangelical churches, I have observed that each carries out its own set of behaviors that have as their goal a manifestation of God’s presence. As mentioned above, most worship services are fairly similar and consist of worship music

and communal singing and praise, followed by a message delivered by the pastor or a designate. An “altar call” might be offered and finally, personal prayer—leadership and designated prayer ministers praying for and laying hands upon recipients. This manifestation is discussed using special jargon, referred to as “the anointing” or “entering the throne room.” The “throne room” refers to that of God and serves to illustrate the personal nature of the relationship between evangelical worshippers and their God (525) and reinforces the empowered position afforded practitioners of Pentecostalism. Lührman refers to this intimacy between believers and their God using dance criticism terms, further expanding and commenting on the experiential nature of American evangelical Christianity. Her assessment is valuable to this research because her essay explains in part the appeal Pentecostalism holds for Latinos in the U.S.

The Pentecostal denomination of Protestantism is the fastest growing religious segment of the Latino population, and among the many Protestant groups Mexican-origin folk belong to, Pentecostals represent the highest percentage and the fastest growing segment. The spirit realm is very real for Pentecostal practitioners and in “The Expansion of Protestantism in Mexico: An Anthropological View,” James Dow calls it “a normally unseen vital reality” (4). This idea of the spirit realm as a reality aligns perfectly with native religious systems—Dow studied the conversion of indigenous Mexicans—and the same kind of belief empowers Pentecostal practitioners to make real changes in their worlds. Additionally, Pentecostals differ from other Protestants because they believe they are empowered actors within this spiritual realm. Explanations for the rapid growth of this group may be classified as psychological, historical, or materialist (Dow 4). For my research, Dow’s psychological explanation has the most affinity. Dow discusses the

appeal of modern Pentecostalism to indigenous peoples of Mexico, stating that “many Indians understood the similarity between Pentecostal spiritual healing and traditional supernatural curing that invokes the aid of divine elements or entities” (4). Worship and the occasional use of hallucinogenic drugs allow the practitioner to “experience a normally unseen vital reality” (4), and for American Evangelicals/Pentecostals, this conception of a spirit realm every bit as *real* as the physical world we know is a scriptural dictum elucidated in the story of Elisha. In this story, the Old Testament prophet asks God to open the eyes of his servant so he can see the “truth” of the pending outcome of the coming battle (*The New King James Bible*, 2 Kings 6:16-18). Elisha saw angels arrayed in chariots ready to assist the people of Israel while his fellow saw only the enemies arrayed against them. In a pattern that occurs among native peoples across the globe, the Old Testament prophet Elisha enters the spirit realm and enacts change for the patient, functioning like the traditional shaman/healer. Dow’s unseen vital reality and the parallels between the healing rituals conducted by shamans and those conducted by Pentecostal practitioners is quite clear though most pentecostal practitioners would probably deny such a similarity. In some part, Pentecostals exist in a world that is a mere slice of true reality, and because the values advanced by such groups are often highly conservative, it is important to understand the rhetoric behind the conservative religious beliefs associated with this growing part of the U.S. population and understand the nature of membership/literacy in the Pentecostal community.

In “What is Literacy?,” James Paul Gee calls discourse an “identity kit” (29). Gee defines “discourse” as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially

meaningful group or ‘social network’” (30). This idea of discourse as a means of group association and Gee’s further statements linking literacy with this concept of discourse as a group identification, serves to allow researchers to understand the relationship between literacy within and from without a group and how that literacy empowers group members. Interestingly, Gee asserts that we as individuals do not speak but rather give voice to existing, social or historical discourses to which we are members and as such are the loci of numerous, sometimes oppositional discourses (19-20). Gee describes the difference between *acquisition* and *learning* (20) differentiating between the two concepts, describing *learning* as a process of acquiring knowledge in natural, meaningful settings and noting that learning is the result of conscious effort to gain knowledge through teaching though “not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher” (20). Meanwhile, *acquisition* was defined by Gee as “a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models and a process of trial and error, without a process of formal teaching” (20). This concept is applicable here because it helps explain and define the ways membership in the specific group identities held by Latino Pentecostals function. Kenneth Burke’s concept of terministic screens offers an insightful way to envision how Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals view their world. Behaviors and language both play pivotal roles in creating the screens through which Pentecostals view the world. The pentecostal church service and life experience is replete with a dizzying array of concepts and ideas, most of which have some sort of imagery attached to them whether overtly visual or imagined. As an example, consider the visual images produced by a description of deliverance as the binding of demonic spirits and casting them into waste places. Each individual’s image set is different, but in a collective, pentecostal context,

the importance is placed upon the action conducted and the details of the action are secondary. It is akin to the order, familiar to many, “I don’t care how it gets done, just get it done.” The import is placed on the fact of the deliverance and the elimination of the temptation. Burke directly addresses the relation between faith and reasons stating that, “if one begins with ‘faith,’ which must be taken on authority, one can work out a rationale based on this faith” (47). Burke’s terministic screens and Gee’s notion of historical discourses speaking through individuals fit together very nicely because I feel that the one (Burke) describes the mechanics of why and how we possess the meanings we possess and the other (Gee) offers one possible explanation for why we do this. I believe these two theories can work in conjunction to: 1) analyze the nature of membership and the specific literacy associated with Latino Pentecostalism and American Evangelicalism and 2) assess how the terministic screens held by Latino Pentecostals influence their beliefs. A number of the tropes vital to this understanding are described by practitioners themselves in “conversion narratives,” a genre of religious nonfiction in which converts relate their conversion experiences.

Prominent Pentecostals have written testimonials, usually autobiographical in nature, that describe their personal transformations from lives of drug abuse and crime to lives as Pastors or ministers. Three narratives, Art Blajos’s *Blood In, Blood Out*, Sonny and Julie Arguinizoni’s *Treasures out of Darkness*, and Freddie and Ninfa Garcia’s *Outcry in the Barrio* share a common ministerial ancestry in that the Arguinizonis founded the organization through which both Blajos and Freddie Garcia passed. Blajos, the Garcias, and the Arguinizonis have all founded and developed successful and far ranging ministries. Substance abuse and subsequent conversion, recovery, and sobriety,

are major themes in these three narratives. In my opinion, Art Blajos's *Blood In, Blood Out* stands out among these narratives. Blajos's story, because of its extreme character arc, seems the best-articulated vision of the value American Pentecostals/Evangelicals place on salvation. Taken on its face as a factual narrative, Blajos's story is both a brutal depiction of life as a criminal assassin and a testament to the transformative power of faith. However, there are passages in *Blood In, Blood Out* that seem coached, as though crafted to position Blajos as having acquired social conservatism as a byproduct of his salvation (Blajos 77-79; Sanchez-Walsh 128). Regardless, Blajos has managed to translate his conversion into a successful and international ministry. Like some other Latino pentecostal practitioners, Blajos has experienced success, overcoming addiction to drugs and graduating from the ministerial residential rehabilitation program conducted by Victory Outreach. Art Blajos visited Cornerstone while Amy and I were attending and while I must admit to a mild degree of hero worship, I found his message lacking. Specifically, I believe Blajos was outside of his game while speaking at Cornerstone. Blajos's first calling is probably as an evangelist, that is one who spreads the gospel. In short, I think, at least on that night, Blajos had stepped out of his category and away from his strength when he spoke at Cornerstone. He wasn't doing what he was really good at, but maybe it's because he was preaching to the choir.

Specific beliefs greatly influence Latino Pentecostal/Evangelical worldview and opinion on such diverse subjects as environmental change, world history, and personal political practice. Beverly Moss's essay "Creating a Community: Literacy Events in African American Churches," offers a model for the examination of literacy within churches. Using ethnographic methods, Moss studied three African American Churches

and their pastors, labeling each as having a distinct style (152-160). The author studies the techniques used by each preacher to establish and reaffirm relationship with their respective congregations, and Moss illuminates the aspects of sermons and communicative styles that are valued by the African American congregations in her study. Also, Moss notes that, despite denominational differences between the three congregations she studied, there was “some consistency in the kinds of literary events which took place in each church” (174). Moss’s description of similarities is interesting because I have found that similarities in Pentecostal churches I have attended extended across the spectrum of race/ethnicity and seemed to be based on Pentecostal practice rather than race/ethnicity.

In “‘El Azteca’: Francisco Olazábal and Latino Pentecostal Charisma, Power, and Faith Healing in the Borderlands,” Gastón Espinoza conducts a detailed examination of the life and ministry of Francisco Olazábal, an early Latino Pentecostal minister and faith healer. Espinoza asserts that Olazábal represents an example of a Weberian prophet in that he was a charismatic religious leader, operating from the margins of his denomination/movement, whose movement devolved from charismatic leadership into institutionalization (598). Until recently, most Pentecostals have likely felt the sting of marginalization and the people of color among them might empathize with Espinoza’s description of Olazábal’s ministerial journey and his struggles with paternalistic, Anglo religious authorities who opposed his ascent. The author’s description of Olazábal’s ministry in New York and Puerto Rico clearly demonstrates the Mexican minister’s willingness to cross color lines and linguistic boundaries “in a day when the KKK, white supremacy, and Jim Crow segregation dominated the imagination of U.S. society” (605).

According to Espinoza, Olazábal's story and the widespread nature of his ministry successes dispel the notion that Latino religious expression in the United States during the early twentieth century was limited to "isolated island communities having little or no contact with each other" (614). This history also questions recent scholarship on this subject by demonstrating that the current wave of religious conversion and revolution in the Latino community can trace its roots "to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not to the 1960s and 1970s as is often asserted" (614). Espinoza reminds Latinos Evangelicals/Pentecostals that Pentecostalism is over one hundred years old and reinforces the idea that their faith's history and founding is as rich and storied as those of more mainstream denominations. In conducting a literature review entitled "The Latino Religious Resurgence," Anthony Stevens-Arroyo, follows the development of Latino influence within mainstream, American religious denominations (mostly Catholicism). He asserts that a similar reassessment of the current wave of conflation between religious and political views can be traced to the mid- and late-nineteenth century wars of expansion conducted by the United States. This point is both interesting and poignant when one considers the resurgence of and assimilation of power by a greater U.S. Christianity in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and its spawning of war on two fronts. Like Espinoza, Stevens-Arroyo points out the pious superiority demonstrated by Euro-Americans in their pursuit of global, imperialistic hegemony during the Mexican American and Spanish American Wars, which he labels "pious colonialism" (165). This term is analogous to the pious patriarchy Espinoza describes in detailing the struggles Olazábal endured against the Anglo leadership of the denominational organization the minister eventually left to found his own denomination. When questioned later about the

split, Olazábal was quoted as saying, “the gringos have control” (Espinoza 602). Olazábal then left, “with nine cents in his pocket,” (602) to found his own, Mexican denomination. Espinoza continues to describe Olazábal’s ministry including his brief collaboration with noted female, evangelical minister Aimee Semple McPherson, describing the ugly dissolution of the short-lived union, based on Olazábal’s refusal to submit his own denomination to her denomination, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. This split also is couched in the realities of the early twentieth-century, Jim Crow United States in which it was assumed that Anglos gave graciously, while it was the role of Mexicans (and all minorities) to thankfully accept (603).

The concept that *the border crossed us; we didn’t cross the border* is evident in Stevens-Arroyo’s work, and he opines that “manifest destiny contributed a religious component to the conquest and the struggle, because Latino religion, with its myriad Catholic devotions was by analogy a ‘wilderness’ destined for attack and elimination” (165). The author then recounts mid-twentieth-century efforts by the Catholic Church to train clergy in Spanish, increase social services available in local churches, and provide cultural training about Latino homelands to “non-Latino church personnel” (167). Stevens-Arroyo also notes that, over time, former church policies designed to facilitate assimilation morphed into policies seeking to preserve Latino culture and notes that much of this change came as Latinos “demanded de-Americanization of the American churches” (168) which they attended. Unlike Stevens-Arroyo, Daniel Ramirez discusses immigration patterns and the effect of Pentecostalism on new immigrants. In “Borderlands Praxis: The Immigrant Experience in Latino Pentecostal Churches,” Ramirez discusses the foundation and early history of the Latino Pentecostal movement,

social upheaval experienced by immigrating Latinos, and the roles Pentecostal congregations play in easing transitions for these immigrants.

In effect, Ramirez and Stevens-Arroyo examine the roles played by two different churches (Stevens-Arroyo the Catholic church and Ramirez the Pentecostal church) in aiding Latino immigrants to the United States during the twentieth century. Ramirez goes into more detail about the mechanics of immigration and social upheaval faced by new immigrants. The author also examines struggles within the Pentecostal movement and the strengthening effect Mexican repatriation and the later *bracero* program between 1929 and 1937 had on the development of Latino Pentecostalism in the United States and Northern Mexico. While Stevens-Arroyo does not mention specific events or programs, as does Ramirez, he provides a very detailed assessment of demographic trends and projections for the Latino population, comparing the data to that of European-Americans and African-Americans. Just as Stevens-Arroyo did describing the role of the Catholic Church, Ramirez discusses the effects of the aforementioned Mexican repatriation movement and *bracero* program, asserting that, despite the relative streamlining and institutionalization that occurred within the Pentecostal denomination, the Latino element of Pentecostalism “retained strong elements of protest and precipitated a resurgence and affirmation of cultural and religious identity” (Ramirez 573). Ramirez’s statement is similar to the conclusion drawn by Stevens-Arroyo regarding the Latino element within the Catholic Church. Finally, Ramirez states that Latino pentecostal churches have been successful and grown because their theological mission addresses real-life issues in the lives of congregants who often live on the fringe of society (addicts, gang members, undocumented immigrants). Ramirez says that these churches have “proved harbors of

secure and effective refuge on the margins” (591). The author juxtaposes this aspect of the Latino Pentecostal movement to the “Sanctuary Movement” (the Reagan era movement by Catholic churches offering sanctuary to refugees from Central American conflicts) noting that the Pentecostal refuge movement was motivated by a heart-felt need to act as opposed “to the reflection and analysis informed and preceded the actions of the” (592) Sanctuary Movement. Considering the stance currently taken by most conservative politicians (many of whom identify themselves as Christians) regarding undocumented immigrants alone signals a disconnect between interests of Latino Evangelicals/Pentecostals and those who purport to represent them.

As described above, Tanya M. Luhrman studies the bodily and trance experiences used by U.S. evangelicals to build intimate relationships with God in her essay “Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U.S. Christianity.” Luhrman argues that “the patterns of new U.S. religious practice suggest that ritual practices and psychological techniques are not ancillary but central to contemporary spirituality” (518). The author states that two-thirds of *baby-boomers* abandoned the religious traditions with which they were raised, and not quite half of those are returning to religion but in a more intensive and experientially different form (518-519). Pentecostalism’s experiential nature has surely drawn some of these returnees and experiential Christianity is similar to the tradition of faith healing along the Mexican/U.S. borderlands described by Luis León in his book *La Llorona’s Children*. León outlines the history of faith healing offering the lives of Don Pedrito Jaramillo, “Santa” Teresa Urrea, and El Niño Fidencio as examples of curanderas/os, describing Don Pedrito’s healing practices, El Niño’s acquisition of his gifts, and the trance-like practice that “Santa” Teresa used during her healing ceremonies

(139-152). León's research is conducted after the fact, while Lührman's research encompassed three years, (1997-2000) and she studied not only an evangelical church but also a charismatic Catholic Church, a New Age Santeria house, and a *baal tshuva* shul. The scope of her research is significant because Santeria practice is essentially a conflation of West African religions and Latino American folk Catholicism much like Mexican and Mexican American curandismo (Mexican and Mexican American faith healing), which conflates Catholicism and Native American healing practices. The author demonstrates a willingness to consider and study religious beliefs and practices that fall outside the realm of orthodox faith practice. Lührman comments on the cognitive/linguistic knowledge imparted to devotees of Horizon Christian Fellowship, dividing the knowledge into the lexicon (the jargon), the syntactic knowledge, and the conversion narrative. She conducts a study of prayer in the context of evangelical Christianity and compares it to meditation, noting that the word *prayer* is "tinged with the mystery of the sacred but ordinary in a way that words like *meditation*, *visualization*, and *trance* are not" (522). The author uses the term *metakinesis* to refer to the mind/body states evident in evangelical groups and serve as markers of God presence in the lives of those who are members of the community. Since the relationship with God, fervent prayer, and experience are fundamental tenets of all evangelicalism (including Pentecostalism), her study will provide a framework through which one can understand the rhetorical value of language and action within the Latino Pentecostal experience. Additionally, Lührman's essay offers a theoretical basis to León's exposition of the history of Mexican and Mexican American faith healing.

In *La Llorona's Children*, León offers a brief history of the Latino Pentecostal

movement, an exposition of the lives of certain Latino Pentecostals (Sonny and Julie Arguinizoni and Art Blajos), and positions the certainty of evangelical practitioners' belief, which allows them to "give simple and plausible answers to profound existential questions" (235). León's exposition relies heavily upon Sonny and Julie Arguinizoni's personal conversion/ministry narrative *Treasures Out of Darkness*. León is careful to point out that he considers the book a foundational myth. Additionally, León states that Mexican American Evangelicals (and Pentecostals) "wear suits and ties on Sundays, carry Bibles, and speak the dominant religious language of the country, performing its hegemonic religious codes" (235). The conversion to Christianity, the religion of middle class, white hegemony in the U.S., is often viewed as the route to the middle class by Latino (and other) Evangelicals and Pentecostals, and I believe León's point is to bring attention to converts' desire to also "convert" to the middle class. This point is fundamental to understanding how Latinos are subject to recruitment, indoctrination, and subversion at the hands of dominionist adherents and illustrates the socioeconomic aspects of the syncretistic appeals of dominionism. León notes that Arguinizoni's narrative is typical of such salvation and conversion narratives in that it "has become a foundational myth for the VO/AV [Victory Outreach/Alcance Victoria] cosmos" (215). Its veracity cannot be weighed objectively and its complete acceptance requires a "faith move" on the part of the reader. The Arguinizonis relate Sonny's life of crime, gang involvement, and drug addiction, prior to his encounter with Nicky Cruz and David Wilkerson. Cruz was a former leader of the powerful, Puerto Rican *Mao Mao* gang in New York City who converted to Christianity under Wilkerson's ministry, Teen Challenge. Wilkerson concentrates on drug rehabilitation and maintains that as his

ministerial focus. Arguinzoni's narrative is written in simple language, is designed to be accessible to all readers and is important to this research because it was written by a Pentecostal pastor who provides an example of the rhetoric of Latino Pentecostal experience in the words of a practitioner. Like León, Pablo Vila investigates the identity of Mexican and Mexican American Protestants on the Texas-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, in chapter two of his book *Border Identifications: Narratives of Religion, Gender, and Class on the U.S.–Mexico Border*.

Vila's research is unique because he presented his research subjects with relatively innocuous photographs and asked them to interpret those photos. By doing so, Vila's allowed his respondents to offer unrestricted and untainted responses, replete with rhetorical value. His study also details the appeals that Evangelical Christianity holds for Latinos (he studied mainly Mexicans and Mexican Americans) and how those appeals allow a Latino male to gain "status by simply providing for his family as well as he possibly can" (99). To an extent, this statement demonstrates the economic values underlying evangelical Christianity and shows one way that Latino practitioners perceive the benefits of their conversion. Because evangelical Christians in the United States often espouse conservative political beliefs, converts may feel pressured to adopt the same types of political beliefs as part of their faith, especially when these positions are justified by scriptural references.

In "Acts of Faith: Churches and Political Engagement," David E. Campbell studies the political engagement of White Evangelical Protestants. I believe that this study is vital to my research because my experiences attending Pentecostal/Evangelical churches has shown me that the political views of Latino Evangelicals/Pentecostals often

agree with those of White Evangelical Protestants. In his essay, the author hypothesizes that “service to their church comes at the expense of participation in the wider community,” (155) but also points out that the tight social organization of evangelical churches allows rapid mobilization of the congregation in support of political candidates or movements. Sharon Crowley conducts an in-depth examination of Christian fundamentalism in her book *Toward A Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism* contending that it may pose a threat to the discourse necessary for the conduct of a civil democracy (1). Crowley’s examination of fundamentalisms breaks ground in that it turns to religion, (as predicted by Stanley Fish) and she asserts that the tactics used by “liberal argument[s]—empirically based reason and factual evidence—are not highly valued by Christian apocalyptists, who rely instead on revelation, faith, and biblical interpretation to ground claims” (3). Employing an approach similar to that of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, who studied organizational characteristics of churches to determine the effects of organizational structures on political participation, Campbell distinguishes denominations by their “level of organizational hierarchy” (Campbell 156) and conducts a study that seeks to understand Christian political motives and participation at the grass roots level. Meanwhile, Crowley examines various apocalyptic texts including apocalyptic prophecy, the *Left Behind* series, and television appearances by Jerry Falwell and other fundamentalist public figures. She also proposes that Christian apocalypticism poses a real threat to American democracy because representatives of the Christian right often refuse to engage in dialogues with non-believers and cites this practice as dangerous as the Christian right amasses power and seeks to impose its beliefs on the rest of the nation. She also examines apocalyptic Christian writers who advocate actively working to induce

the onset of the apocalypse.

Campbell conducts an exposition of “strict churches,” noting that such churches prohibit alternative activities that might compete with the church’s access to the member’s time and weed out members who are less committed (158). The author discusses the irony of civic participation among evangelicals stating that the nature of the formation of the social networks that allow rapid mobilization can also serve to diminish civic participation (158). Additionally, Campbell writes that the group’s religious fervency both encourages and discourages their political mobilization and activity (158). Despite the fact that Campbell’s study is based on White evangelicals, the tight social organization and potential for rapid political mobilization and the rhetoric and literacy Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals share with White, European American Evangelicals render this essay relevant. Also, Campbell suggests that “the insights of the literature on strict churches” (158) constitute a generalized theory that would allow it to be tested on other religious groups.

Finally, “The Expansion of Protestantism in Mexico: An Anthropological View” by James W. Dow, seems to stand apart from the other literature included in this review. However, I feel this essay is invaluable because Dow’s research confirms a suspicion about conversion to Pentecostalism that I have held for some time and is based upon my training in Anthropology during my undergraduate college career. In short, Dow’s research on Mexican indigenous converts to Protestantism—specifically Pentecostalism—converted because “modern Pentecostal Protestantism appeals to Indian groups because it is closer to native spiritual healing than Catholicism” (832). Dow also conducted a study of Mexican Census records, which unlike those in the U.S., record the

religious affiliation of respondents (829). Ultimately, Dow found that conversion to Protestantism by indigenous people in Mexico is less a reaction against Catholicism than “a reaction against traditional Indian cargo systems” (827). Dow points out that his point of view is “one of cultural materialism which sees the underlying causes of religious change in the material relationships that people have with their environment and each other” (828). This point by Dow also supports my own previously held and unsubstantiated hypothesis that, for many Latinos, conversion to Protestantism is as much about class and economic aspirations as it is about faith.

This literature review is far from exhaustive. However, I envision it as a tentative step toward an understanding of the factors that lead Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals to possess the conservative views they often do. Additionally, further research into this topic is clearly warranted by the relative lack of specific, focused studies on this rapidly growing segment of the Latino and U.S. population. Thankfully, much of the research that has been conducted into Latino identity construction and into American Evangelical Christianity can be applied (or adapted to) the study of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals. The personal narratives are important to this research because these narratives represent first hand accounts of experiences which, while not unbiased, represent the direct rhetoric used by the writers to describe their own experiences and beliefs. By comparing those narratives with the work of researchers and theorists will allow a more clear understanding of the rhetoric of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals and illustrate the ways the rhetoric of conservative Christianity serves to set Latinos up for recolonization. Further, the roles played by Latinos in conservative political movements has been explored only in terms of how those voters might be harnessed within a larger, Anglo-

dominated, conservative religio-political movement. While the political beliefs of Latino Pentecostals are often similar to those of European-American evangelical Christians, their opinions and beliefs regarding issues that specifically impact members of their communities, such as immigration, may diverge from or even diametrically oppose those of European-American evangelicals. As one of the fastest growing groups in the United States, Latinos and sub-groups within this group should be extensively studied. Also, Pentecostalism represents the fastest growing segment of Protestant Christianity worldwide.

Chapter Three

An Auto-Ethnography of Faith Practice

In the last chapter, I offered experiential observations and citations from literature to briefly describe the affect of greater evangelical trends have in forming pentecostal/evangelical religio-political beliefs. Additionally, I presented a literature review seeking to exposit various aspects of Latino and non-Latino Pentecostalism/Evangelicalism from the perspective of several different disciplines. In this chapter, I will offer a brief description of the events common to pentecostal church services, describing the differences between these services and mainstream protestant services. Additionally, I will present an auto-ethnography using Gee's conception of discourse as an "identity-kit" and based on my experiences while attending a Latino Pentecostal church and other evangelical/pentecostal churches.

The nature of a pentecostal church service is much like that at any of a number of other, mainstream protestant churches. Positionality, both physical and spatial dictates authority. At Cornerstone it was clear, by virtue of seating, who comprised the leadership of the church. As at most churches I've attended, the leadership occupies the front row of the pews or seats. In several churches I have attended, the pastor and his wife were considered co-pastors, and women occupying leadership roles has been the norm in my experience. During regular services, specific events occur, marking the service's progression and its completion. These events are: worship (collective singing usually

with musical accompaniment), a message (usually delivered by the pastor), a collection (and sometimes a second collection for specific causes), an “altar” call (an appeal to anyone in attendance who might not be “saved”), and personal prayer—the pastors and designated individuals offer prayer for congregants with specific requests. These events may occur in different orders at various churches but these represent the main events of most protestant church services. In the pentecostal churches I attended, these events took on a specific order—unique to each church—and rarely varied from that order. But, at times certain events might be omitted. In my experience, the message was the event most likely to be omitted and this only happened in the event of an extended worship period. Often during these extended periods of worship the leaders or others with leadership’s permission may make “prophetic utterances.” This activity signifies a major divergence from traditional protestant services and might strike a member of such a denomination as surprising or strange. Such statements are considered God inspired and may be very specific and directed toward an individual, repetitions of scripture; or very general and vague exhortation or exhortation of the greater church or the specific congregation. This event can be considered one of the fundamental differences between mainstream protestant church services and those conducted by pentecostal practitioners.

Pentecostalism’s experiential nature and the way its practitioners are empowered to enact change within their own and other believers’ lives through the application of faith through spiritual action represent the major differences between the two services. Aside from this difference, services at a pentecostal church look like a service at a mainstream denominational protestant church.

Heewon Chang describes the version of auto-ethnography employed herein as

“combin[ing] cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details. It follows the anthropological and social scientific inquiry approach rather than descriptive or performative storytelling” (46). I hope to recall and reflect upon my experiences and tie them to a larger body of Pentecostal/Evangelical literacy and rhetoric. As described by Luis León, each pentecostal church operates by its own unique set of doctrines. Additionally, while agreeing with a version of León’s assertion of “Pentecostals” in his description of fundamentalisms, Peter Herriot notes that such movements tend to be cultural in nature. In the U.S. evangelical Christian community, there are often similarities between individual churches, especially on the major tenets of Christian faith, but each church may also espouse very specific doctrinal beliefs that may or may not be based on a scriptural reference. Sometimes, these beliefs may be actual beliefs (faith items), while in other instances, they are physical or behavioral doctrines. These physical or behavioral doctrinal differences are one aspect of my experience in Pentecostal churches that I find particularly interesting and will explore in detail in this chapter.

Largely, the literacy practices of Latino Pentecostals are very similar to those of mainstream, American, evangelical Christians, and the two groups often mix freely within and outside of churches. Considering Gee’s “identity-kit” definition of literacy, the similarity of literacy between Pentecostals and mainstream Evangelicals allows members of both groups to move back and forth between respective congregations with relative ease. The literacy necessary to move between unrelated evangelical churches and remain fully literate demonstrates both the widespread nature of American, evangelical literacy and the extent to which Latino Pentecostals and Evangelicals have adopted it. At Cornerstone, leadership had established a series of required classes for those hoping to

join the church as official “members.” The conception of “classes” and the need for such classes to indoctrinate new church attendants into the specific doctrines and practices of specific churches is one that my wife and I have found to be a common aspect of non-denominational churches we have attended. Often, these classes seemed designed for congregants who had never attended church and taught fundamental doctrines and practices largely common to all protestant denominations. However, classes also allowed new converts and potential members to establish literacy within their particular faith communities. Sometimes, the classes are presented and framed as a sort of discipleship and might last for a considerable amount of time. Such classes might involve meeting with a pastor or elder weekly for an hour or so for several weeks; the Membership Class at Cornerstone consisted of four meetings of about an hour conducted before four, consecutive Sunday services. Curiously, these classes function much like the initial courses of a university education in that they seek to educate the student in the specific and acceptable literacies of the congregation. At Cornerstone, the “New Believers” class was required even if the new attendant was *not* a new convert to the faith. The main purpose of this three-week class was to teach fundamental tenets of Christianity to new converts and to establish Cornerstone’s doctrinal position within the larger milieu of evangelical belief for neophyte Christians. This class also served to expose new congregants to Cornerstone’s particular doctrines such as the church’s dress code. I specifically mention “dress code” because, after attending Cornerstone for a few weeks, we went to lunch with a long-time member who told us that he (and others in the church) thought we “knew nothing about Jesus, because we wore jeans to church.” This incident demonstrates the *surface* nature of Cornerstone’s members’ understanding of belief and

faith; they felt that dress code spoke specifically to and demonstrated a believer's level of both faith and understanding of Christianity. Congregants who wished to serve in any ministerial capacity at Cornerstone were required to complete both the "New Believer's Class" and the "Membership Class." As its name implies, "Membership Class" was designed for those wished to become official members of Cornerstone and offered a more detailed and scripturally cited version of Cornerstone's doctrine. It offered new members an understanding of not only what Cornerstone's members believe but also answered why (scripturally) they believe it. Finally, members wishing to participate in "Deliverance Ministry" were required to complete the eight-week long "Deliverance Training Class."

Deliverance can best be understood as a personal ministry activity during which an individual receives prayer designed to free him/her from the influence of negative spiritual forces. The deliverance ministry is also one ministerial practice for which Pentecostal churches are known. At its best, deliverance is a peaceful, quiet period wherein one or a few people pray for a single individual; it maintains both the dignity and respect of the individual being prayed for and focuses on God as the believer's ultimate deliverer. When conducted poorly, it becomes a chaotic and often dramatic display, demeaning for the person receiving prayer and glorifying not God, but the individual leading the deliverance. Bob Larson, a well-known evangelical "celebrity," conducts such types of deliverances, and though he is not a Latino, he is an influential, pentecostal practitioner. Examples of his style of deliverance can easily be found by searching the internet for his name. In one video, posted on the internet, Larson is shown in a noisy and chaotic deliverance of a young, Asian woman (Larson). The minister stands nose to nose with the young woman, yelling and demanding to know the name of the demon to whom

he is speaking (Larson). This video also reveals one factor that, if allowed to drive a deliverance ministry, will ensure that it is conducted in as dramatic, theatrical, and undignified a manner as possible. This factor is of course, money. Deliverance is a ministerial rite that requires no payment, yet Larson actively solicits donations from the congregations he visits and is well compensated by his own ministry. Individuals like Larson lend credence to the idea that some ministers are only *in it for the money*.

After completing the “Deliverance Training Class,” my wife and I participated in both individual and group deliverance sessions at Cornerstone, all of which were led by Aurora, Pastor Lopez’s sister-in-law. The individual sessions progressed in the quiet and calm manner I described above. Sessions were conducted in private with only those involved, two to three ministers and the person receiving prayer present. In this case, “minister” does not designate “ordained minister,” rather I use the term to refer to those praying *for* the individual who may or may not have been ordained. (The word “minister” might also be used as a verb as in The pastor *ministered* to a congregant.) Interestingly, though the recipients and ministers involved in individual sessions were segregated by gender, because Aurora was *the* Deliverance Minister, she supervised all individual deliverances in which I and/or my wife participated. I find this intriguing because the behavior violated the conservative standards of modesty and values implied by Cornerstone’s doctrine and demonstrates the degree of control of rites required and desired by church leadership.

The group session my wife and I attended was relatively quiet (trainees are required to undergo such a session after completion of the Deliverance Training Class). One woman screamed a number of times and spoke loudly, revealing some terrible

incidents in her past during which she was victimized. Apart from these outbursts, there was some soft crying and sighing. We participants were scattered around the sanctuary of the church seated in the same metal, folding chairs used during services. Ministers wandered among us, occasionally pausing to *lay hands* on individuals as they *felt led*. While I agreed with the method and practice of individual deliverance sessions I participated in while at Cornerstone, I felt that this group session was inappropriate in both conduct and method. Personally, I was uncomfortable hearing the intimate details of the childhood molestation and sexual assault of a woman with whom I was acquainted. Also, I was uncomfortable for her. From a ministerial perspective, I felt that the method used to conduct the group deliverance was untenable and ineffective. In short, there were too many participants and too few ministers. I make these comments not as a neophyte to deliverance ministry but as an experienced practitioner. My wife and I had both been trained in deliverance ministry by Pastor McHugh while we attended Tree of Life Ministries, and by the time I participated in that group deliverance at Cornerstone, I had about five years of experience conducting deliverances and Amy had even more. Because of Ruth's training, I was able to note the differences between the two programs of deliverance training. For instance, as mentioned above, individual deliverance sessions at Cornerstone were segregated except that Aurora supervised *all* of them, male and female. At Tree of Life, Pastor Ruth supervised many of the deliverances in which I ministered, but, because Tree of Life was a training ministry and because Ruth wanted to ensure that we received good experience, she often appointed one of her trainees to lead deliverance ministry. The concept of gender segregation—males conducting deliverance ministry only for males and females doing the same for females only— was a decision left to the

recipient. Also, I was struck by the fact that, though Tree of Life was much smaller than Cornerstone, there seemed to be fewer men trained and willing to minister in deliverance sessions at Cornerstone than at Tree of Life. However, as mentioned earlier, this inability to provide gender specific ministers for deliverances may have stemmed from the inability of Cornerstone's leadership to release and cede authority to ordinary church members. This may have resulted from previous experience, fear of usurpation of authority, or a desire to maintain absolute control over the ministry. Further, this practice illustrates leadership's desire for unquestioning loyalty from those whom they assumed had been exclusively equipped and trained by the church. But it also demonstrates church leadership's inability to trust those whom they have trained to properly conduct deliverance (and other) rites.

Loyalty is implied at Cornerstone and is mostly defined by attendance. Once congregants have completed the membership process, they are expected to remain in the church (as congregants) indefinitely, or at least, this expectation is implied. The indefinite nature of membership stood in stark contrast to the attitude held by Pastor Ruth at Tree of Life. Ruth openly told us that she intended to train us and send us out; she *expected* us to leave eventually, and if we refused to leave, she would tell us when she thought it was time to go. I saw this happen on at least one occasion. In terms of *church building* and *tithe*, such behavior would seem counterintuitive to church perpetuation, but Ruth was not concerned with such worldly matters.

At Cornerstone, the *loyalty* doctrine manifests itself in ways that are familiar as "traditional" Latino familial characteristics. In *La Familia: Chicano families in the urban Southwest, 1848 to the Present*, Richard Griswold del Castillo defines "traditional"

Chicano family values as a system whose most prominent features “are the belief that there should be a strict separation of male and female roles, a respect for elders, a positive value given to male superiority (*machismo*), a priority on maternal devotion to the home and children, and the importance of the family as an emotional and physical support system” (2). Cornerstone’s leadership, as I experienced it, sought to establish these values—sometimes covertly, sometimes overtly—but always in a manner that applied importance to the local church. While collecting the offering, Pastor Rudy used the scripture Malachi 3:10 that says “bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My [*sic*] house” (*New King James Bible*).

The analogy of pastor and spouse as *spiritual* father and mother to congregants has often been present in evangelical and pentecostal churches I have attended. Sometimes, these roles were overtly espoused by the pastors—the spouses of pastors in some of the churches I attended were both considered pastors. In other churches, the pastors’ roles as spiritual parents existed but were not actively forwarded by the pastors from the pulpit. In the first church I attended, my female pastor (Ruth) served alone. I knew her husband, and he occasionally attended services but was never considered her *co-pastor*. The pastoral/parental concept fosters both a model for viewing the local church as an extended family—a construct familiar to many Latinos—and as a reinforcement of the patriarchal hierarchy inherent in Judeo-Christian tradition. So, if the pastor and spouse are the parents, then other members of the church fulfill the other familial roles. Deacons might fulfill the roles of uncles/tíos making their wives our aunts/tías. Adding to the similarity between Latino extended families and churches, some churches have actual positions labeled “elder” while in others, like Cornerstone, “elder”

may be less a proper title than a practical understanding. Cornerstone had no formal “elders,” but everyone *knew* who the “elders” were. Often they were the original members of the church or those who had joined the church during its formative years. Like loyalty to Cornerstone, respect for the “elders” was implied and expected. However, in application and practice, those designated formally or informally as “elders” often behaved in ways expressly forbidden by scripture or sometimes society in general.

Quoting David Smilde, Pablo Vila states “evangelicalism appeals to...women as it does not attempt to overthrow the [patriarchal] [*sic*] system but rather undermines the ideals of machismo, re-moralizes the male ideal, and refocuses the male on the household” (100). This statement illustrates one way the practice of Pentecostal evangelicalism requires Latino males to alter their identities. Additionally, this positive valuation of evangelical masculinity eliminates the negative aspects of patriarchy as *machismo* and establishes the possibility of an uplifting role for the Latino, Christian, male who reflects only the positive and scripturally supported characteristics of patriarchy. While machismo is at best a cartoonish and stereotypical version of Latino male behavior, many aspects of it—drinking alcohol, carousing at all hours with other men, and philandering—are aspects of general male behavior focused upon by practitioners and leaders of pentecostal and evangelical Christian congregations as part of the faith’s larger goal of leading congregants to righteous lifestyles. Factors influencing this practice for Latino Pentecostal practitioners are its substance use aspects and the fact that large, successful, and Latino led ministries (Victory Outreach and Victory Fellowship) were founded primarily as drug rehabilitation ministries. Both of these ministries trace their ancestries to and through David Wilkerson’s Teen Challenge, also a

drug rehabilitation ministry. However, while these outward physical behaviors are marked for elimination by evangelical practice, at least one aspect of machismo is reinforced and even encouraged by Latino Pentecostals and evangelical Christians in general.

Patriarchy is espoused and encouraged by Pentecostal/evangelical pastors and congregations, citing selective, literal, and conservative interpretations of scripture. Societal models described in scripture, clearly reflect a patriarchal power arrangement and pentecostal and evangelical practitioners seek to mimic this model in the belief that such power structures are both pleasing to God and his intention. Even the gendered conception of God as male carried by many evangelicals reinforces the belief that the universe is itself inherently patriarchal. Males are extolled and their maleness is celebrated. Congregants are called to submit “to the [male] Christian leader, and to a powerful male God who will destroy those who misbehave...[and] avoid dealing with life” (Hedges 81). Retreating to Kintz’s ideology of clarity, church goers reduce the mysteries of faith and life to binaries that render the “world knowable and predictable” (Kintz 115, Hedges 81), but such constructs may not be as solid as they seem.

Despite overt statements reinforcing and supporting the patriarchal order, as a congregant at Cornerstone, I often saw powerful women in the church occupying and operating from positions of authority that seemed contrary to the literal scriptural order of patriarchy as defined by the church’s own prescriptive and patriarchal definition. Amy’s assessment of the patriarchal nature of the church agrees with my own that the approach of leadership was that *it just was* (Besa). Patriarchy is/was the natural/God-ordained order of things, again based on a conservative interpretation of scripture. She stated that “she

(Oralia) completely edified him (Rudy) and uplifted him as the head of everything” (Besa). But Amy observed that she felt the patriarchal arrangement was sometimes abused. “We were constantly told every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, you need to grow up, you need to be in service... We work in this church. This church is going to be an 800-seater, and we gotta bring these people in and do all this stuff” (Besa). Amy refers to constant calls for volunteers to do all manner of tasks about and for the church. We built a “Fishing Booth” for a harvest carnival—purchasing all the materials and prizes—and a moving and descending star for the Christmas Pageant (which we could not attend because of prior arrangements). I also helped cook turkeys in a giant barbecue pit behind the church on the night before a turkey dinner plate giveaway.

My participation in these events proved to be typical of my experiences at Cornerstone; they always seemed to hold a sense of both urgency and confusion. These men were capable, but they had several habits that always worked against them. They were often late and rarely very creative, also, they could not start without leadership’s approval. Often there would be a number of men standing around waiting to start on a project because no member of leadership was there to direct them. In those times, Cornerstone’s men seemed like a group of ants, willing and capable of working but lost and directionless without the presence of the queen. When I arrived at about 9:00 pm to begin cooking the turkeys for the following day’s food giveaway, I found the huge smoker we would be using filled with large mesquite logs. I have built enough fires in my life to know that starting one is a process of lighting small kindling and slowly adding larger pieces of wood as the fire allows. The process at Cornerstone was to fill the smoker with large logs then stick a propane “brush-burner,” a long metal wand with a

burner on one end that produced a blue flame about six inches long and three in diameter, directly into the wood pile. By this process, it took about five hours to the fire get started. At the time, I offered no suggestions for starting the fire more quickly but felt that the process used by the church was unnecessarily time consuming. Later that year, I helped with the creation of a set for a Christmas pageant. When Pastor Rudy left us on the night before the Christmas Pageant, at about 2:00 am he said, "I know Andy can figure it out." And always it seemed like that, church leadership arrived to commence the work then departed hoping that someone would stand up and take the lead. Amy describes unloading a donation the church received of two semi-trailer truckloads of donated food saying, "when we emptied all those trucks of all that food everybody showed up because the pastors are there. I mean, Thanksgiving everybody showed up, the pastors are there, but if the pastors weren't going to be there and somebody else was in charge, well, it was kind of like, well, the teacher's out so" (Besa). My wife's assessment of the situation at Cornerstone mirrored my own, and the situation was the same when the church needed upkeep.

When maintenance work was needed at the church, the basis of attendance occasionally seemed to be fear or perhaps guilt. On one occasion, when Amy and I had first begun attending Cornerstone, an announcement was made during a service that the men of the church would meet the following Saturday to clean the outside of the building, power-washing the exterior of the building among other tasks. That day, it seemed that every male congregant, thirty to forty men, worked together to clean their church, led by their pastor. When a similar workday was announced several months later, I again made plans to attend. That day, there were three of us: two deacons and me. The main

difference between the two days was the presence of the pastor on the first day and his absence on the second. For me, it was one of the first indications that Biblical and doctrinal practices at Cornerstone were not immune to the whims and vices of human nature. Also, it reflected a juvenile attitude toward faith-based service on the parts of some members of the church. It was as though the pastor was the school principal and the men were students given detention, but knowing the principal will not be supervising detention on Saturday, the *students* know they don't have to show up. I was reminded of Amy's description of the situation during the Thanksgiving food giveaway.

As a cultural component, food is considered an acceptable and satisfying way of maintaining Latino cultural identity without violating Pentecostal doctrine. So, homemade Mexican food was always present and served as a physical reminder of our Mexican identities. However, some food practices could be interpreted as attempts to establish congregational assimilation into mainstream evangelical practice and membership within a larger, white, ministerial mainstream. One of Cornerstone's annual practices—and a key part of its foundational mytho-history—was the practice of giving food to needy members of the community as a part of the Thanksgiving holiday. By offering traditional turkey dinner plates and sometimes bags of groceries on the Wednesday before each Thanksgiving, Cornerstone's pastor and congregation assimilated to an Anglo expectation within an appropriate context. The gift of food also serves to disseminate an example of the church's viability and sincerity using a meaningful gesture to address a real need of those receiving the food. The gesture is genuine and truly a grass-roots effort in that all foodstuffs prepared, packaged, and given away are donated and prepared by the congregants themselves. My wife and I

participated in one of these events and donated two turkeys to the effort. This event falls into the category of true charity. Food is given to anyone who shows up without question. The turkey dinner merely provides the medium for exchange. Additionally, the actual act of giving firmly reinforces the church's presence in and commitment to the community where the church is located. There was no active proselytization on that day, but it was clear that the activity itself was a church activity.

In this chapter, I have offered an auto-ethnography of the time I spent attending Cornerstone Ministries of Richmond. As I transition to an examination of the relationship between extremely conservative, dominionist organizations and Latino believers, I consider what my experiences at Cornerstone taught me about the nature of Pentecostalism. I learned to love the people at Cornerstone, and believe that most of them were sincere in their faith. However, I found their behaviors and politics frustrating. Their behaviors frustrated me because as a fellow believer, I understood the characteristics of the God we purported to serve. He is defined in scripture as being omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. By this definition, God is not a man and cannot be deceived. Ruth's mantra, "God knows the condition of your heart," rings forever true in me. So, the juvenile behavior I sometimes saw at Cornerstone left me exasperated and unable to understand whom they thought they were fooling, and that behavior—the unwitting conception that one is *putting one over* on God—is a type of deliberate ignorance. By deliberate ignorance, I mean the way that people consciously choose not to know or choose to ignore truths, fundamental tenets of faith, or obvious political agendas forwarded as religious beliefs. It is this particular aspect of pentecostal/evangelical practice that worries me because the decision follow the leader *because s/he is the leader*

renders the follower both blind to the causes of agendas that work against them and absolves them the responsibility for supporting such agendas. The latter condition is the road I consider most frightening, because it can lead to unwitting support for sociopolitical agendas that allow such “followers [to] avoid dealing with life” (Hedges 81). Also, Hedges notes that it can cause believers to “build an exclusive and intolerant comradeship that subtly or overtly condemns the ‘unsaved’” (88). These aspects of evangelical religio-political beliefs—systems that create an in/out, binary system in which some (believers who share the leaders vision) are *in* while others (those who are unsaved or fail to fully embrace the vision) are *out*—represent the overly simplified political beliefs created by conservative social activists to present believers with *the illusion* of a right and wrong answer, untainted by politics. And because Latinos and Christians are not immune to human nature, sometimes those agendas may be counter to the interests of congregants or even the nation.

Chapter Four

The Dominionist Agenda and Threat

The driving factor behind an individual's decision to follow or advocate for specific agendas or causes is the understanding that the rhetorical appeal employed by the cause triggers a positive or favorable response from the individual. But if two groups with disparate ideas about sociopolitical and/or governmental administration, share a specific literacy, one group might be unwittingly recruited into and thus support causes that actively work against them. And when individuals fail to fully explore the unadvertised or covert agendas of those whom they follow, they have engaged in Hedges' avoidance of life (81). The organization examined in this thesis is the Oak Initiative, a quasi-political, overtly Christian organization led by Rick Joyner. The Oak Initiative is of interest to this research because of the organization's association with the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference through the appointment of the Hispanic organization's President as the Vice-President of the Oak Initiative. Rodriguez calls the Oak Initiative "a multi-ethnic, multi-generational, righteousness, and justice movement committed to the agenda of the Lamb" (*Sam Rodriguez on the Issues*), implying the importance of cultural diversity and equality to the Oak Initiative. Solórzano calls claims of equality and color blindness "a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society" (122). In the following chapters, I will describe Dominionism and dominionist organizations and discuss the subtle ways that dominionist

Christian organizations threaten Latinos. I will also examine specific communications from one dominionist organization and the way the shared literacy of Pentecostalism/Evangelicalism serves to lure Latino believers into organizations that might not hold Latinos' best interests at heart—and our form of government and our nation's history.

Latino Pentecostals' Religious/Faith Literacy renders them susceptible to the appeals of dominionist organizations and movements. After converting to Protestantism in 1997, I quickly noted the social conservatism of many of my fellow congregants. To her credit, Pastor McHugh never espoused particular movements, parties, or candidates from the pulpit and only urged church members to exercise their franchise and vote. This refusal to use the pulpit as a political tool became my standard for pastoral ministry. In short, I viewed any pastor willing to violate the law and advocate for a party or candidate from the pulpit with suspicion. Additionally, having been raised as a social liberal by decidedly Democrat parents, I was leery of the general agenda of social conservatives and Republicans in particular. Understandably, when my wife and I began to attend Cornerstone, I was both surprised and annoyed by the church leadership's decision to advocate openly for the George W. Bush administration during the time we attended the church (2003-2004). First, I was astonished—perhaps still holding a degree of Christian naiveté—that a pastor and a Christian would actively and openly violate the law. I think I still expected Christians to act like Christians and believed the biblical admonition that Christians should agree to follow the law of the land and the legal and governmental authority in place (*New King James Bible*, Romans 13:1-3, 1 Peter 2:13). This transition to an openly politicized faith represents a threat to both American democracy and

American Christian faith.

For the purposes of clarity, I will define some of the concepts involved in the specific theological positioning of Dominionism. Primarily these definitions come from *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* by Sara Diamond, “What is Dominionism? Palin, the Christian Right, & Theocracy” by Chip Berlet, *Religious Fundamentalism: Global, Local, and Personal* by Peter Herriot, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* by Michelle Goldberg, “The Rise of Charismatic Dominionism” by Rachel Tabachnik, and “The Rise of Dominionism: Remaking America as a Christian Nation” by Frederick Clarkson. The Christian theology called “Reconstructionism” is most important to this research due to its “importance...as a catalyst for what is loosely called ‘dominion theology’” (Diamond 138).

Dominion theology is essentially the concept that Christians have the right to “dominion” over all aspects of society according to Genesis 1:26-28. Presuppositionalism is attributed to theologian Cornelius Van Til, who served as Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) from 1929 until his retirement in 1975 (*Presuppositionalism*). Among the “presuppositions” to which Van Til refers is the existence of God, and according to Van Til, “God is the creator of everything...and therefore His [*sic*] existence is the pre-supposition, the starting point, of the Christian world-view” (Herriot 214). In essence, Van Til’s argument “takes Calvinist belief in the sovereign God of the Bible to its extreme logical limits” (214). Postmillennialism is a Christian belief that holds that the second coming of Christ cannot occur until Christians have acquired and maintained dominion over the earth and held it for one thousand years.

Christian Reconstructionism holds “that society should be ‘reconstructed’ to

conform with the laws of the Old Testament” (Diamond 138). This reconstruction includes the application of Old Testament, Biblical law, calling for “capital punishment for homosexuals, adulterers, and incorrigible criminals” (138). There would be no prison system in such a society; convicted criminals would face either death or restitution paid through indentured servitude (138). No taxes would be collected by the reconstructed state, and all social welfare programs would be administered by the church and funded by the ten percent “tithes” collected in place of taxes (138). Christian Reconstructionist ideology was picked up by some on the Christian Right who admired the idea of transforming society by occupying secular positions of power. Michelle Goldberg defines theonomy as “government according to biblical law” (165), referring to the ways that, under a Dominionist U.S. government, all aspects of society would be governed according to Old Testament law.

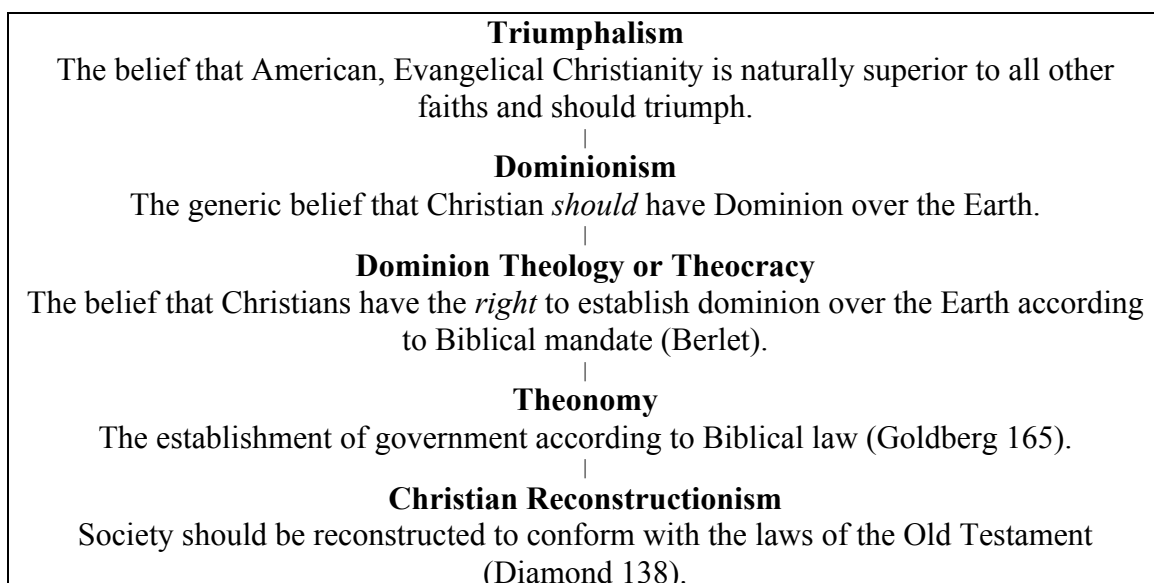
Thus Dominionism was introduced “as a concept into the larger and more diverse social/political movements called the Christian Right” (Berlet) by Christian Reconstruction. The adoption of the dominion theology aspect of Reconstructionism resulted in Dominionism which is “a tendency among Protestant Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists that encourages them to not only be active political participants in civic society, but also seek to dominate the political process as part of a mandate from God” (Berlet). According to Berlet, Dominionists may be “Soft” or “Hard;”

Soft Dominionists are Christian nationalists. They believe that Biblically-defined immorality and sin breed chaos and anarchy. They fear that America’s greatness as God’s chosen land has been undermined by liberal secular humanists, feminists, and homosexuals. Purists want litmus tests

for issues of abortion, tolerance of gays and lesbians, and prayer in schools. Their vision has elements of theocracy, but they stop short of calling for supplanting the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Hard Dominionists believe all of this, but they want the United States to be a Christian theocracy. For them the Constitution and Bill of Rights are merely addendums to Old Testament Biblical law. They claim that Christian men with specific theological beliefs are ordained by God to run society. Christians and others who do not accept their theological beliefs would be second-class citizens. This sector includes Christian Reconstructionists, but it has a growing number of adherents in the leadership of the Christian Right. (Berlet)

Berlet's nested subset chart, modified slightly—arranged vertically to show how Christian Reconstructionism intellectually undergirds the other concepts and how each concept builds on the one below it—is presented below. I have also included simple descriptions of each movement or concept.



As one moves through the chart from top to bottom, the number of adherents of each concept progressively decreases. A clear explanation of these complex relationships is Chip Berlet's statement that "while all Christian Reconstructionists are Dominionists, not all Dominionists are Christian Reconstructionists" (Berlet).

Frederick Clarkson offers three characteristics of Dominionists that bridge both of Berlet's varieties.

1. Dominionists celebrate *Christian nationalism*, in that they believe that the United States once was, and should once again be, a Christian nation. In this way they deny the Enlightenment roots of American democracy.
2. Dominionists promote *religious supremacy*, insofar as they generally do not respect the equality of other religions, or even other versions of Christianity.
3. Dominionists endorse *theocratic visions*, insofar as they believe that the Ten Commandments, or "biblical law," should be the foundation of American law, and that the U.S. Constitution should be seen as a vehicle for implementing Biblical principles. (Clarkson)

Chris Hedges definitive book *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America* is a detailed study of the historical and current roles and activities of the Dominionist movement. Hedges traces Dominionism's origins to *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973) by R.J. Rushdoony which was in turn based on John Calvin's *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, published in 1536, itself an important work of the Protestant Reformation (Hedges 12). As a foundational Christian Reconstructionist,

Rushdoony advocated for the remaking of American society with biblical law as the driving factor and with American Christians as the new “chosen people” (12). Among other disturbing beliefs, “Rushdoony dismissed the widely accepted estimate of 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust as an inflated figure” (13) and believed that capital punishment should be the consequence “not only for offenses such as rape, kidnapping, and murder, but also for adultery, blasphemy, homosexuality, astrology, incest, striking a parent, incorrigible juvenile delinquency, and, in the case of women, ‘unchastity before marriage’” (13). As a movement, Dominionism “seeks to cloak itself in the mantle of Christian faith and American patriotism [and]...takes its name from Genesis 1:26-31, in which God gives human beings “dominion” over all creation” (10). For most Christians, this passage refers to humans’ responsibilities as stewards of the earth, but for Dominionists, the passage reinforces the idea that “Christians are Biblically mandated to ‘occupy’ all secular institutions” (Diamond 138). Finally, Dominionism “Seeks to redefine traditional democratic and Christian terms and concepts to fit an ideology that calls on the radical church to take political power. Hedges accuses the Dominionist movement of committing “logocide, the killing of words” (14) and states that the Dominionist movement has engaged in a redefinition of common words in which the “code words of the old belief system are deconstructed and assigned diametrically opposed meanings. Words such as ‘truth,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘death,’ ‘liberty,’ ‘life,’ and ‘love’ no longer mean what they mean in the secular world” (14). Each of these words has been “whitewashed” and assigned a new, desired meaning by the Dominionist movement (14). Among the examples Hedges offers are the words “life,” “death,” and “wisdom” (14). He writes “‘life’ and ‘death’ mean life in Christ or death to Christ, and are used to signal

belief or unbelief in the risen Lord. ‘Wisdom’ has little to do with human wisdom but refers to the level of commitment and obedience to the system of belief” (14). Hedges continues to delineate the alternative definitions of the remaining words on the list presented above, and, as expected, the definitions espoused by Dominionists seem to have been lifted from the dictionary of George Orwell’s “newspeak” in that these definitions seem designed “to make all other modes of thought impossible” (Orwell 309-10). Indeed, the logocide being conducted by the Dominionist movement (and conservative Evangelicals) seems to be a calculated maneuver, designed to offer a more palatable and desired definition of key concepts to those subject to the rhetorical appeal of conservative Evangelicals. Conservative Evangelicals and Dominionists view societal and moral decline as one of the primary causes of the current state of the United States. As a general observation, Hedges states that Dominionism has much in common with classical fascist movements (10).

According to Robert O. Paxton, classical fascist movements consist of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by contemporary cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion. (Paxton 218)

Like fascist movements, Dominionism “seeks to politicize faith...has...a belief in magic along with leadership adoration and a strident call for moral and physical supremacy of a

master race, in this case American Christians. It also has...an ill-defined and shifting set of beliefs, some of which contradict one another” (Hedges 11). Such contradiction is evident in the communications of a particular dominionist organization as will be discussed shortly.

If, as Davidson Loehr asserts, “fascism is...a kind of colonization” (Hedges 11), and, as demonstrated by Hedges and Paxton, movements like The Oak Initiative—as Dominionist movements—are fascist because of the behavior they exhibit (Hedges 10, Paxton 218), then the sixteen million Latino Evangelicals affiliated with the NHCLC, have been effectively re-colonized through its association with the Oak Initiative, an organization with an obvious dominionist agenda. Loehr defines Dominionism as a fascist movement in terms of what it does (Hedges 11), and according to Loehr,

Dominionist colonization

takes people’s stories away, and assigns them supportive roles in stories that empower others at their expense [and]...seeks to appropriate not only our religious and patriotic language but also our stories, to deny the validity of stories other than their own, to deny that there are other acceptable ways of living and being. There becomes, in their rhetoric, only one way to be a Christian and only one way to be an American. (Hedges 11)

For Latino Evangelical/Pentecostal Christians, Dominionism becomes the latest method for Americanization and the most recent hurdle they must clear to prove they are real (and therefore good) Americans, and by narrowing the route to acceptable Christian identity, Dominionists hope to dictate the characteristics of good Americans and

Christians as those which adhere to their conservative beliefs. Also, for Latino believers, Dominionism represents an attempt to re-colonize them and assign them to the supportive roles mentioned above by harnessing their voting power.

Latino Evangelicals/Pentecostals in the United States are susceptible to the appeals of dominionist organizations and movements in three specific ways. These are: 1) the literacy that they share with WEA Evangelicals, 2) the redefining of political contests as spiritual battles demanding a “Christian” response, and 3) the Evangelical concept of “submission to authority.” As mentioned earlier, the literacy of Latino Pentecostal/Evangelical church members often mimics that of White European-American (WEA) Evangelicals. To restate, James Paul Gee defines literacy as an “‘identity kit’ which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (18). In the case of Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals, their literacy in WEA Evangelicalism allows them to play the role of “member.” In essence, by mimicking the literacy of White Evangelicals, Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals are saying “we are on your side” and demonstrate it by speaking and acting in just the right way (18). When faced with a Dominionist organization, Latinos may consider the nuanced and sometimes deceptive rhetorical appeals presented as a part of a larger, mainstream set of Evangelical principles. Additionally, traditional and stereotypical views of Latinos as family oriented and patriotic fit nicely with a movement seeking to create a dichotomy based on conservative notions of religious affiliation, historical revisionism, and constitutional interpretation rather than race or ethnicity. Also, Latinos are often still viewed in broad, simplistic, and stereotypical terms by key dominionist activists. While delivering a speech prior to The

Call 2008 (a religious conference), Lou Engle applied such tropes to appeal to Latino Evangelicals and encourage them to help empower dominionist agendas with their voting franchise.

Latino Evangelical voters can serve the agendas of the dominionist movement once they realize their voting power, and Engle seeks to point this fact out to Latinos. The emphasis (all caps) in Mr. Engle's quotes were already present in the transcript of his speech. "We believe that the Latinos are going to be a mighty force to turn America back to God. I am burning with a passion for the Latinos. Cindy Jacobs prophesied that California will be a pro-life state. The only way that will happen is MILLIONS of Latinos begin to understand that they can literally turn elections!" (Wilson). Other comments in Engle's speech highlight his dominionist agenda.

According to Engle, "we [Christians] are the kings of America, not McCain and Obama. [applause] And you will be held accountable, as the kings of America, by how you vote" (Wilson). In other words, if Christians fail to vote the way he is directing them—for anti-abortion, socially conservative candidates—God will hold them accountable for this shortcoming. Throughout his speech, Engle directly compares biblical events to current events. Engle refers to a battle recounted in the Bible (Exodus 17:11-13) between Israel and Amalek in which Israel's victory was contingent on Moses keeping his hands raised, saying "a REAL WAR was won because a guy had his hands... a REAL WAR WAS WON! Come on, we have no IDEA of the power of prayer - WARS can be won! Well, what about elections?" (Wilson). For dominionists, electoral contests are spiritual battles between "the enemy"—a generic term for Satan and anyone who opposes them—and the presupposed righteous cause of Evangelicals (Huckin 7).

The speaker also establishes the relative moral positions of the actors in the political arena in biblical terms. Engle always assures that his position is the righteous one and therefore the only real choice for a true Christian. By Engle's interpretation,

There were four kind [*sic*] of prophets in the days of Elijah. There were the prophets of Asheroth, those are like the Hollywood folks, with their movies perpetrating sexual immorality, there were the prophets of Baal - they're the media that keep perpetrating the ideologies that destroy culture. And then there were the Christian cult prophets... court prophets (you didn't get that) [*sic*]. The Christian court prophets - they were the prophets that hung around Ahab and kept saying 'yes' to Ahab but there was a different kind of prophet that rose up. And they were the Yahweh separatist prophets. The Elijah, stubborn Elijah people. They didn't play politics, they played righteousness and justice. Not Democrat and Republican but truth and compassion together. (Wilson)

The assertion that the "stubborn Elijah people...didn't play politics," and Engle's *insinuation* that he is one of them, qualifies his argument, and transforms it from political message into a common sense, righteous, simplified, and justified response to complex social issues (Huckin 9, Kintz 115). This appeal also seeks to keep his ostensibly religious message religious and righteous, and this strand of Engle's statement places his political beliefs and arguments above the realm of politics. It is ironic and interesting that Engle calls the Elijah people "the Yahweh separatist prophets." This moniker hints at both the separatist agenda of dominionist activists, and because the "Yahweh separatist prophets" actively opposed the political authority in their time, the dominionists'

willingness to oppose and, if possible, replace the current government of the United States. And according to Engle, Latinos, by virtue of their voting power, are a key part of that strategy.

During his speech, Engle refers to Latino Evangelicals in terms that reinforce the neo-colonization of Latinos in the United States. Latinos are vital and powerful to the political agendas of dominionist evangelicals—provided that they adhere to and in fact enact those agendas through the use of their voting franchise. So, in a move that seems relatively comfortable for them, Latino Evangelicals/Pentecostals are called to “subsume their ethnic identity under the rubric of their religious identity” (Sanchez-Walsh 1), this time for the purposes of advancing a Dominionist political agenda. It is important for those unfamiliar with the nature of Evangelical/Pentecostal religious practice to understand that a *suggestion* issued by Lou Engle—a self proclaimed *general* in the army of the lord—might constitute an order to a practicing Latinos Evangelicals/Pentecostals. Also, “by submitting to the Christian leader, and to a powerful male God...followers avoid dealing with life” (Hedges 81). By writing “avoid dealing with life[,]” Hedges refers to the ways that the construct of fundamentalist, Evangelical Christianity, consists of sets “of binary opposites: God and man, saved and unsaved, the church and the world, Christianity and secular humanism, [and] male and female” (80). These binaries are part of a larger agenda to maintain order and banish disorder by creating “a world that has clear boundaries” (80). Again, these conservative activists engage in a combination of logocide and Kintz’s “ideology of clarity” to redefine and remake American society into something more comfortable to them and their religious beliefs. In such a world, the powerful, masculine, Christian leader commands submission from those beneath him in a

quasi-military, chain-of-command arrangement. Such military analogies fit nicely with this movement, and Dr. James Kennedy, a prominent proponent of the Dominionist movement, “speaks of himself and other pastors as generals or admirals and of evangelists as soldiers” (Hedges 51). Additionally, the experience of converting to Christianity (getting saved) and cleaning up one’s life sounds like the joining the military and adopting the behavioral and submissive behaviors necessary to life in the military (55). For new converts, “the rewards of cleaning up their lives, repairing their damaged self-esteem, and joining an elite and blessed group are worth the cost of submission” (55), and in Dominionist theology, replete with a revised American history that denies separation of church and state, the realm of submission must extend to the voting booth if dominion is to be achieved.

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference’s (NHCLC) alliance with the Oak Initiative speaks to the nature of Latino Pentecostal/Evangelical rhetoric and its valued literacy. Latino Evangelicals and Pentecostals may recreate their realities as they adjust their identities to fit *mainstream* American, Evangelical roles. In essence, as a Latino-American, Evangelical Christian in the workplace, I sought to approximate a discourse that was not my own (Bartholomae 114). In much the same way, churches that are Evangelical or even generic in name may function as Pentecostal, while simultaneously refusing to refer to or label their congregations as Pentecostal (Tabachnik). In this way, Pentecostalism becomes a group of associated sects or denominations, not unlike Protestantism. In the past, I have thought of these hidden Pentecostal churches as the uncontrolled non-denomination, because they are often referred to as “non-denominational” churches. So, despite not carrying an overt

Pentecostal label, Sam Rodriguez's decision to associate himself—and his organization—with MorningStar and Rick Joyner fits with a common practice of minimizing denominational associations and at least, demonstrates his tolerance of Joyner's and MorningStar's faith practices.

Sam Rodriguez, by virtue of his native literacy in U.S. English and despite being a Puerto Rican-American, appears very much like a White, European-American Evangelical pastor while preaching. His church also resembles those of White, European-American Evangelical churches. It features a wide, raised dais area and a choir/band area behind and above the dais. In short, Rodriguez's church features the physical and spatial rhetoric common to White, European-American Evangelical churches. It is therefore, comfortable or palatable for White viewers who should see video of Rodriguez preaching. In contrast, Miguel Rivera's preaching (that I have seen) is conducted in Spanish and the church appearing in videos of his preaching appears to be a low ceiling building with a small dais area from which the church band also leads worship. The building in the videos also features wood paneling and accouterments (lectern/pulpit). Rivera is the President of the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders (CONLAMIC), an organization about half the size of Rodriguez's NHCLC. So, in terms of visual/political rhetoric, it makes sense for The Oak Initiative to recruit Sam Rodriguez and the NHCLC because *they look most like us* (White, European-American Christians). Also, in terms of preparing for the future, it makes sense for the Oak Initiative to make an alliance with an organization that represents a large number of Latino Evangelicals and to appoint the organization's president to an influential, leadership position. Also, the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) has produced a video pointing to Latino

Christian students as the “future of Christian colleges” (Sells). In *Hispanic Students: The Future of Christian Colleges*, the motivation for recruiting young Hispanics to college is made clear. The video treats Latino youth like a commodity that must be harvested, fleeced, and indoctrinated by the Evangelical college industry. Regents University is mentioned in particular, and Sam Rodriguez appears in the video (Sells).

Reverend Samuel Rodriguez was named “the leader of the Hispanic Evangelical movement” (NHCLC “Featured Leaders”). As might be expected, his résumé, as presented on the NHCLC’s website outlines his speaking engagements at the White House, Congress, Princeton University, Yale University, Promise Keepers, and “Pastor Sam” is called “the leading Hispanic Christian on the issue or [*sic*] Comprehensive Immigration Reform” (NHCLC “Featured Leaders”). Rodriguez is a dynamic and articulate speaker. Frequently while speaking, Rodriguez refers to the struggle against “moral relativism” and “apathy.” His presentation style is straightforward and passionate; occasionally he *slips* into Spanish and utters a phrase *in the vernacular*. But he always translates it quickly for the English-only audience. As one trained in rhetoric and its component *delivery*, these *slips* seem deliberate and staged to me, as if inserted to remind the mostly white audience that “Pastor Sam” is legit, a real Hispanic.

Compared to Miguel Rivera, the President of CONLAMIC, Rodriguez seems much more media savvy and comfortable speaking about detailed issues in English. Rivera on the other hand, while articulate and fully literate in English, speaks with a pronounced accent and makes occasional and small syntactic errors in English. He easily made himself understood, but his accent and the fact that he most often appears speaking Spanish in videos seem to be likely reasons why Joyner may have chosen to recruit Sam

Rodriguez rather than Miguel Rivera as the vice president of The Oak Initiative (Suarez).

Considering Gee's definition of literacy as an "identity kit" and the fact that Miguel Rivera and his organization (CONLAMIC) do not share literacy or visual rhetoric with White European-American Evangelicals, it is not surprising that Rick Joyner and his Oak Initiative movement chose to associate with Samuel Rodriguez and his NHCLC over the smaller organization led by Rivera. The fact that Rivera's group is roughly half the size of the NHCLC is also a factor, however, I believe that the more important and deciding factor is the literacy possessed by Rodriguez's group. By already possessing the literacy of WEA Evangelicalism, Rodriguez's organization can immediately adopt, understand, and disseminate statements and missives without the need to translate and possibly explicate them. In other words, Joyner and the Oak Initiative can easily and quickly rally millions of Latino Evangelical voters to respond to causes that further the dominionist agenda.

Samuel Rodriguez was born in the United States, raised in Pennsylvania, and was ordained as a minister in the Assemblies of God denomination at age twenty-three (NHCLC "Featured Leaders"). Miguel Rivera, on the other hand, was born in Puerto Rico, immigrated to the U.S. at nineteen, and has also been working in the ministry from an early age. Although Rivera possesses mastery and full fluency in both Spanish and American English, he speaks with a distinct Spanish accent and occasionally makes small syntactic errors that mark him as a non-native speaker. Rivera was also the Latino religious leader, often unnamed in news stories, who urged American Latinos to refuse to participate in the 2010 Census (Riley). Rodriguez, by virtue of having been raised and educated in the United States, possesses full fluency in both languages, but unlike Rivera,

he speaks English clearly, “sounds” like a the native speaker he is, and more importantly, speaks the language of American Evangelicals. Additionally, Rodriguez urged Latinos to participate in the 2010 Census, while Rodriguez urged his followers not to participate in the census as a form of protest (Riley).

As the leader of National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Rodriguez holds great influence over the Latino congregants in the organization’s member churches. The NHCLC is often referred to as “the Hispanic version of the National Association of Evangelicals,” (Vu) and when one peruses the “Our Leadership” page of the NHCLC website a curious and revealing fact becomes apparent (NHCLC “Our Leadership”). On the Executive Board are ten men, all of whom have Hispanic surnames (NHCLC “Our Leadership”). The NHCLC’s Board of Directors is composed of fifty-three members, eight of whom are females, and one White, European-American male. However, the Board of Advisors is composed of ten members, seven of whom are White, European-American males, two are Hispanic males, and one is a White, European-American female, Cindy Jacobs. I find this significant because by submitting to the advice of a majority WEA board, Rodriguez is guaranteed of producing an organization similar to the National Association of Evangelicals and one that will likely possess and forward the agendas of White Evangelicals. In particular, the choice of Cindy Jacobs—co-founder with her husband Mike of Generals International whose mission is “to reform the nations of the world through ministering in the prophetic and apostolic” (“History of Generals International”)—is significant because Jacobs is a well-known Dominionist. Also, needless to say, Cindy Jacobs is a General in the Army of the Lord.

According to Chris Hedges, the “radical Christian movement, known as

dominionism,” is composed of a relatively small but influential group that “seeks to redefine traditional democratic and Christian terms to fit an ideology that calls on the radical church to take political power” (Hedges 10). The Oak Initiative fits this definition. By its own definition, outlined on the *Strategy and Objectives* page on the organization’s homepage, the specific strategy is detailed in a series of bullet points. The first three follow:

- 1) The basic strategy of The Oak Initiative is to be a grassroots movement to find and help develop principled and effective Christian leaders who can mobilize and organize a cohesive force of activated Christians.
- 2) These will be called to work on every level where government is found, from the most local to state and national levels.
- 3) Believing our strategy will only be effective to the degree that we have leaders and active members who are the most informed and best trained possible, a basic purpose of The Oak Initiative will be the development and dissemination of resources for the purpose of constantly increasing knowledge and upgrading skills to be effective citizens. (The Oak Initiative)

These three agenda items seem to indicate that The Oak Initiative’s over-arching goal is to develop a theocratic government in the United States by placing its acolytes in positions of authority in all levels of government.

Rodriguez serves as Vice-President of The Oak Initiative. A conservative coalition of evangelical organizations, leaders, and individuals, The Oak Initiative’s

website (www.theoakinitiative.org) offers a clear indication of the initiative's agenda and a number of "special bulletins" are available on the website. The bulletin dated December 14, 2010, begins with following statements:

The message of the 2010 elections not heard by Obama or Congress. If the deal worked out between the Republican leadership in congress and President Obama is an indication of the kind of change that the 2010 elections are going to result in then it appears not to be much. (Joyner *Special Bulletin #4*)

One must take Joyner's bombast with a grain of salt. At the time this missive was posted, the representatives elected to congress had yet to be seated as the 112th United States Congress was not convened until January 3, 2011. Joyner offers an "analysis" of this statement, opening with the following assertion.

Tea Party leaders are already blasting both the President and the Republican leadership for not hearing the people last month. If this bill is any indication of the change so many went to the polls to see, it does not appear that much will come from the effort. (Joyner *Special Bulletin #4*)

The final paragraph in Joyner's "analysis" states:

To extend the "Bush tax cuts" just keeps the economy where we are now without really adding any more stimulus [*sic*]. Obviously to let these tax cuts expire would be a devastating blow to the economy in its presently weakened state, but we can't look at this bill like a stimulus. The way that this has come will likely hurt the economy more than it helps it by revealing even more the knee-jerk anti-business sentiment in the Obama

Administration, and also the ignorance about the economy on the part of the GOP leadership. (Joyner *Special Bulletin #4*)

Following Joyner's "analysis" is his "answer." Predictably, Joyner's "answer" opens with the following statement that sounds as though it might have been lifted from a Tea Party speech.

THE ANSWER: We need to cut taxes even more, and do it in a way that will help create jobs by truly stimulating the economy. How can we do that without running up the deficits even more? By the obvious answer no one seems to have the vision or the courage to address—by cutting our bloated, inefficient and incompetent government. Our federal government should be about 20% of its present size. Our present leaders would call this preposterous, but that only reveals how blind they are to our real problems. (Joyner *Special Bulletin #4*)

Like many conservatives, Joyner seems concerned with the size of government, now that it has become a Democrat administration. Joyner continues his assessment stating that, "if the unnecessary red tape and overregulation were cut out of our government, and the technology available was applied for getting its necessary work done, our federal government could be 20% of its present size" (Joyner *Special Bulletin #4*).

Joyner's suggestion that we "cut taxes even more, and do it in a way that will help create jobs by truly stimulating the economy," demonstrates the kind of statement that adheres to Linda Kintz's conception of the ideology of clarity (115). The pastor recommends a simple sounding solution to an incredibly complex issue, fraught with innumerable variables, and it demonstrates Joyner's true, political agenda. The Bush

administration created the “bloated, inefficient and incompetent government” (Joyner *Special Bulletin #4*) Joyner refers to by the initiation of unfunded combat operations in Afghanistan and later Iraq, but only now, while the country is being led by a Democrat administration, does Joyner consider the ponderous nature of the federal government a problem and appeals to fringe elements by advocating unrealistic reductions in the size of government (Kintz 115) and demonstrating the fascistic preoccupation with societal decline (Paxton 218). Fundamentally, The Oak Initiative looks more like the latest political/governmental maneuvering of Rick Joyner, the media savvy and experienced pastorpreneur-leader of MorningStar Ministries (Twitchell 3). Joyner likely sees the demographic writing on the wall and thus included Sam Rodriguez—the leader of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and sixteen million Hispanic Evangelicals in roughly twenty-five thousand churches across the United States (NHCLC “About Us”). Joyner has been a controversial figure within the Evangelical Christian community for many years, and The Oak Initiative is merely the latest venture of his MorningStar Ministries empire. However, The Oak Initiative is different from previous MorningStar programs in that its platform is blatantly political though Joyner claims it is not a political organization. Joyner has constructed the initiative as a 501(c)(4) organization. These types of organizations (501(c)(4)s are tax-exempt non-profit organizations. More specifically, according to the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), 501(c)(4)s are:

- civic leagues or organizations not organized for profit but operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare,
- or local associations of employees, the membership of which is limited to

the employees of a designated person or persons in a particular municipality,

- and the net earnings of which are devoted exclusively to charitable, educational, or recreational purposes. (United States Internal Revenue Service)

Presumably, Joyner is using the educational definition of his organization's tax designation to promote social welfare. Although, in other statements, Joyner has also shown that he does not think that something like the fear of losing tax exempt status should keep pastors from discussing "the current issues of the times" (Joyner "Prepared for the Times Pt. 47") in church. He continues to say "first, nothing should ever cause us to not 'declare the whole council of this life.' Second, the only thing that you can't do, according to the IRS, is endorse specific candidates from the pulpit or campaign against specific candidates" (Joyner "Prepared for the Times Pt. 47"). Joyner specifically addresses pastors when he makes the statement referring to tax-exempt status. Joyner, like Sam Rodriguez, makes thinly veiled appeals for the Republican Party, revealing his real agenda.

In a video entitled *Isaiah 61*, Rodriguez offers a quasi-sermon on the Initiative's website describing the purposes and beliefs of The Oak Initiative (Rodriguez *Isaiah 61*). During his speech, Rodriguez equates certain demonic, spiritual principalities with perceived problems in the nation. The spirit of Pharaoh is defined as the spirit which seeks to impose slavery upon people (Rodriguez *Isaiah 61*). Rodriguez then plainly states that the spirit of Pharaoh is big government (Rodriguez *Isaiah 61*). The spirit of Goliath is described as wearing gowns and sitting on judicial benches (Rodriguez *Isaiah 61*).

Nearing the end of his sermon, Rodriguez states that The Oak Initiative will not serve the donkey or the elephant but the lamb, referring to Jesus (Rodriguez *Isaiah 61*). In another video, posted on Youtube and entitled *OAK Initiative – Sam Rodriguez on the Issues Part I*, Rodriguez states:

I really do believe that we are at a, at a [*sic*] historic precipice in transforming our nation via something that transcends political partisanship. We don't need a new a new Republican movement or a new Democrat movement, we need a new Christian movement in America. That's what we need (applause). That's why The Oak Initiative is so important. It's it's [*sic*] not The Christian Right, it's not the Moral Majority, it's not the Christian Coalition, it is a kingdom culture, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, righteousness, and justice movement committed to the agenda of the Lamb. That's who we are. (Rodriguez *Sam Rodriguez on the Issues*)

However, Rodriguez's statement seems incompatible with Joyner's in the "solution" portion of his statement described below.

First, in place of the GOP we need a GNP, or instead of a Grand Ole Party we need a Grand New Party. This is not a call for a third party, but a renewal and transformation of the GOP into the GNP. There is not enough time to build the infrastructure of a new party, and the Democratic Party has swung too far to the left to be used until it has a major reformation of its own. There is a foundation in the GOP that can still be used, but it is in desperate need of new leadership, new vision, and new direction. We must

put leaders in Washington, not politicians, and this is the best and fastest platform to use. (Joyner “Special Bulletin #4”)

This incompatibility is common to the Dominionist movement and has been described by Chris Hedges, but such disagreement is rarely a problem for them and as anti-intellectuals what else should we expect from Dominionists.

Chapter Five

The Problem of Self Appointment/Ordination

In the previous chapter, I examined the Oak Initiative and its association with the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. I also described and cited statements by other Dominionists to demonstrate both the ways their appeals might lure unwitting Latino Christians into their organizations and how dominionist adherents view Latino believers largely in terms of how they (or their votes) might be used to forward the greater agenda of conservative, dominionist organizations and ministries. In this chapter, I begin by discussing the problem of self-ordination and segue into a short explanation of how prominent members of the dominionist movement view themselves. Then, I conduct a rhetorical analysis of several statements by Oak Initiative leaders, focusing on some statements by William G. Boykin, using other documents examining the same events to position and evaluate Boykin's narrative.

I have an uncle who is a Deacon in the Catholic church. A few years ago, he and I were discussing the ways that Evangelical church leaders seem capable and quite willing to "self-ordain." By this, he meant that among Protestant denomination and non-denominational adherents, it is acceptable for a person who wishes to be a church leader to attend seminary or otherwise obtain certification as an ordained minister and thereby become a church pastor. Prior to my conversion to Protestantism, I viewed the church leaders I saw on television as businessmen whose business just happened to be church.

This model for church leadership does not exist in the text (the Bible) used by Evangelicals and represents a deviation from the text by Evangelicals in the United States. Often, this deviation extends to titles that Evangelical leaders bestow upon themselves. Among my favorite titles used by such leaders is “General in the Army of the Lord.” This title refers to certain “prophetic” individuals, who consider themselves so important to the cause of Evangelical Christianity and so vital in the battle against “the enemy,” that they should be considered “Generals.” Generals, by definition, are leaders. So, it is hardly surprising that the Oak Initiative has chosen to set the development of church leaders as one of its primary goals and has enlisted a controversial, retired General as one of its leaders. However, it remains unclear exactly what qualifications are necessary for leadership in the U.S. Evangelical movement.

In a video featuring Joyner and retired General William Boykin entitled *America Needs True Leadership*, the pair discuss an upcoming Oak Initiative Seminar on Leadership. The video serves as an appeal to potential leaders and possible students in the Institute. Specifically, Joyner says “if you feel you have a calling to leadership, to be a part of the answer, and that [*sic*] you’re not looking for a place to run and hide, we’re not looking for those who have it in their DNA where do we go hide. We’re looking, warriors run to the sound of battle not away from it. We’re looking for the warriors. Spiritual warriors” (Joyner *America*).

Rick Joyner repeatedly states that Christianity has been in retreat for two generations despite the fact that researchers—Sara Diamond, Chris Hedges, Justin Watson, and Peter Herriot among others—have noted the precipitous rise of the Christian Right since the late 1970s. The movement initiated its potential and demonstrated its

electoral value in the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and the Christian Right's influence has been instrumental in most successful elections of conservative candidates since the late 1970s. Also, because, according to Joyner, "God and anybody can make a majority," (Joyner *America*) Joyner feels justified in doing whatever he wants or believes is necessary to assert his vision for the American future. The video discussion goes on for over an hour and has been obviously edited. It also functions as a sort of preview for a Seminar on Leadership the Oak Initiative was promoting at the time the video was recorded.

Speaking in superlatives, Joyner and Boykin describe the seminar as the "best leadership training ever heard of" (Joyner *America*), and within a few minutes they are speaking of a "military, martial...move that's coming upon the church" (Joyner *America*). Among the most disturbing statements made during the discussion are a series of comments, made by both men, beginning forty minutes into the video and lasting roughly three and a half minutes. During this brief exchange, the two men use military analogies to describe their vision for the leadership and organization of the church and building to advocating for war (Joyner *America*).

The two men begin by detailing the hierarchical structure needed within the church saying when it is clear that all participants recognize the head (leadership in church) "we can start to recognize where everybody else fits. You're a General, you're a Colonel" (Joyner *America*). It is virtually impossible not to notice that there is only one true "General" in the room (Boykin), but as mentioned above, because this is a theocratic army, General could refer to a "General in the Army of the Lord," in which case, Joyner would also qualify as a General. But General William Boykin is no ordinary officer, and

a clear understanding of the nature of his service, is vital to a full comprehension of the threats represented by Dominionist groups.

General Boykin's achievement of the rank of Lieutenant General is indeed a testament to his service. As a rule, the vast majority of officers do not reach even the minimum General officer's rank (Brigadier General), and of those who do reach such ranks, many, if not most, are graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. William Boykin did not graduate from West Point but rather, is a graduate of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute's Reserve Officer Training Corps class of 1970 and was immediately thereafter sworn into the U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant and infantryman (Joyner *America*). According to the brief description of his military career that he offers in the *America Needs True Leadership* video, Boykin served a short stint in Vietnam and eventually worked his way into the U.S. Army's special operations community eventually becoming a founding member—and later commander—of the U.S. Army's Delta Force. En route to his command of the Delta Force, Boykin served as an officer in the U.S. Special Forces (The Green Berets) and claims to have also commanded that organization.

As commander of the Delta Force, then Colonel Boykin commanded the Delta Force element of Task Force Ranger in Mogadishu, Somalia. The events of this operation were documented in Mark Bowden's book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* and the film *Black Hawk Down*. In one scene from the film *Black Hawk Down*, the insertion of Delta Force snipers Randy Shughart and Gary Gordon is discussed between the commanding officer of Task Force Ranger (General William Garrison), the Delta Force Commander (Lieutenant Colonel Gary Harrel), and Lieutenant Colonel Tom

Matthews (Coordinator of the Task Force's aviation asset). The story, depicted in the film, seems like a modification of the story recounted by the participants in Mark Bowden's book, and was likely altered to enhance its dramatic effect. In the film version, Super Six-Two's (the call-sign of the helicopter Shughart and Gordon were in) pilot, Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Mike Goffena, relays the Delta Force snipers' request to be inserted near the crash site to provide support and coverage to the downed aircraft to the Delta Force Commander (Harrel) who, in turn, relays them to the Task Force Commander (Garrison). The exchange between Harrel, the snipers, and Garrison sounds very much like the story told by retired General Boykin at a church some time prior to February 2010 ([Boykin](#) *Black Hawk*).

In Boykin's story, he places himself in the action in real time and claims that he spoke to Shughart and Gordon paraphrasing a line from the movie saying, "I said, 'Do you understand what you're asking for?'" (Boykin *Black Hawk*). In the film version, General Garrison tells the Delta snipers, "This is Garrison. I want to make sure that y'all understand what you're asking for so say it out loud and clear" (*Black Hawk Down*). Boykin was the Commander of the U.S. Army's Delta Force, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, during operations in Mogadishu, so in a sense, when Boykin says that he was the commander of the Delta Force in Somalia, he is telling the truth. He *was* the commander of the Delta Force operators assigned to Task Force Ranger and all other Delta operators, but the way he tells the story to the congregation, Boykin makes it seem as though he was on the scene. He makes the statements "The third of October [1993] we were in a place called Mogadishu, Somalia. I was the commander of the Delta Force," "as we fought our way through the streets of Mogadishu," and "We fought our way to that

crash” (Boykin *Black Hawk*). These statements are made in the first person plural and insinuate that the speaker was very close to the action (Huckin 9). However, as a veteran and student of military history, I find it hard to believe that the commander of the Delta Force would be allowed to be on the ground, leading a small detachment—as Boykin implies he was—in a warzone as unpredictable and deadly as that in Mogadishu in the early 1990s. Unsubstantiated references state that Boykin was injured during a mortar attack in Somalia, and Bowden mentions an attack that killed one and wounded at least one other soldier (322). But again, Boykin is not mentioned. I do not doubt that Boykin had been to Mogadishu and met and knew the soldiers stationed there with Task Force Ranger but wonder whether he was there on October 3, 1993. In short, Boykin’s statements are misleading, and they fit into a category of discourse known to every veteran as “story” or “war story.” When one has served in the military, left, and met enough other veterans, one finds that vets often pad their military résumés.

In their stories, veterans might describe themselves as *more* than all they can be, sometimes claiming to have been places and done things that can be read about in books, literally. I have previously found myself in conversations with veterans who were telling me stories about *their* military exploits that I had read as biography or military history. For a time, just after I left the army, I read about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam extensively and often met veterans who claimed to have been “in country.” Having read enough history to know which units were stationed where, I used this information to determine the validity of the “stories” I was hearing. By knowing the history of the Vietnam War, I could begin to determine whether the storyteller was being honest or not. But Boykin’s case is unique, and if he is being deceptive, I cannot figure out why.

Someone with a military résumé like Boykin's doesn't need to lie. His service record alone places him among the most elite soldiers ever to serve the U.S. in the military. Also, both Northern Virginia Community College Online's web site *Operation Restore Hope/Battle of Mogadishu* and Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, list the ground commander of Task Force Ranger as William Garrison (Snyder, Bowden 5). Finally, considering Boykin's position as commander of the Delta Force, the military reality is that he would not be risked in so dangerous an environment, and had he been in Somalia, he (like Garrison) would have directed the action from a position of safety and allowed unit level commanders to lead troops in the field. Finally, the nature of Boykin's service, mostly in Special Operations, makes him a dangerous man. As Boykin states in an Oak Initiative video (Boykin *Marxism*), he was a member of the U.S. Army Special Forces, the Green Berets. The Special Forces were formed during the 1950s as a counter-insurgency unit. The nature of the Special Forces mission is one of organizing, training, and directing native forces to oppose insurgents—originally Communists. When the U.S. government states that “advisors” are being sent to assist a foreign military or movement, the advisors are probably Green Berets. Turned on its head, the mission of the Green Berets could easily be redirected at the United States, and a man like Gerry Boykin would be just the man to lead such an insurgency.

According to the Oak Initiative video *Marxism in America*, America stands on the precipice of disaster in the form of a Marxist insurgency. Boykin ignores the assaults on freedom conducted under the Bush administration to obliquely attack the Obama administration and its presumed socialist agenda (Huckin 9). Continuing with well-worn conservative themes holding that the Obama administration has a socialist agenda and

that the “mainstream media” is decidedly liberal, Boykin details how he believes the Obama administration has begun a Marxist insurgency (Boykin *Marxism*). In a question and answer format—where Boykin both asks and answers the questions—the specific tactics used by Marxist insurgencies are outlined and Boykin asserts that these very actions are being carried out now in the United States (Boykin *Marxism*). Boykin details the steps or controls that a Marxist insurgency must carry out and alleges that the Obama administration has already begun these operations in the United States (Boykin *Marxism*). He states that all gun ownership and resale will be regulated by a United Nations Small Arms Treaty, which he alleges the President will sign (Boykin *Marxism*). Such a treaty has not been signed by the administration, but this argument appeals directly to National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America members. According to Boykin, the Obama administration is using the healthcare reform bill—which “by the way, no one in Washington has read” (Boykin *Marxism*)—to create a “constabulary force,” which he associates with Hitler’s “brown shirts.” Boykin takes particular issue with the 2009 Department of Homeland Security Report entitled: *Right-Wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence and Radicalization in Recruitment*, which he states made him quite angry because it names “right-wing Christian groups, pro-life groups, second Amendment groups, and returning veterans” (Boykin *Marxism*) as potential threats and identifies this report as yet another step in the Marxist insurgency being undertaken by the Obama administration (discrediting the opposition). However, Boykin fails to mention that the study that produced the report he cites was initiated by the George W. Bush administration. Also, according to Boykin, the recently passed hate crimes legislation is in fact directed at pastors to keep them from discussing controversial

issues such as homosexuality, same-sex marriage; and the realities and dangers of Islam (Obama Signs Hate Crimes Bill). Boykin's association with an overtly Dominionist organization, a group with the goal of replacing all leaders at all levels in the United States with Evangelical Christians of their own choosing, is what makes him, the Oak Initiative, and Dominionism in general so dangerous.

During his presentation, *Introduction to the Oak Initiative*, Joyner is careful to point out that the Oak Initiative "is an unapologetically Christian movement, Christian organization" (Joyner *Introduction*). He also goes on to clarify the initiative's agenda by stating that the Oak Initiative "will be addressing current events, will be addressing political issues" (Joyner *Introduction*) and had "filed as a 501 (c) (4) organization, so we're free to address all of these things" (Joyner *Introduction*). Suddenly, after eight years of constant degradation of rights enacted by the previous presidential administration, Joyner declares that "we are on the verge right now of possibly losing some of our most vital, most precious liberties" (Joyner *Introduction*). Considering Hedges' assertion that Dominionists engage in logocide and reassign value to certain terms, Joyner's meaning when he uses the word "liberty" is uncertain (14). Further, Joyner asserts that one goal of the Oak Initiative is to

help defend our brothers. When certain parts of the body of Christ comes under attack, where [*sic*] the whole rest of the body rallies to their aid, and you know there were only two basic things that Israel was commanded to be in unity about. The nation of Israel, biblical nation of Israel, that was worship. They were required to worship Jehovah in the place and the way that he wanted to be worshipped. And then they were required to be in

unity with warfare, in warfare. If one tribe was attacked all the other tribes were required to mobilize and defend their brothers. (Joyner *Introduction*)

The last statement seems to indicate that the Oak Initiative intends to function in part as a legal aid society for Christians and causes advocated by Christians. An analog of such an organization already exists and is called the American Center for Law and Justice, but Joyner's conception may be of an organization that serves to forward Dominionist causes through litigation and legislation.

Chapter Six

The Meaning of an Association Between the NHCLC and The Oak Initiative

In the last chapter, I conducted a rhetorical analysis of statements made by Oak Initiative leaders and closely analyzed statements by William G. Boykin about the Battle of Mogadishu and evaluated Boykin's narrative in comparison to a book and a website examining the event and using Huckin's theory of critical discourse analysis to label and elucidate the significance of certain aspects of Boykin's speech. In this chapter, I study the importance of the relationship between the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and the Oak Initiative, using Robert O. Paxton's definition of classical fascisms and employing theory related to the history and colonization of mestizo presented by Walter Mignolo in *The Idea of Latin America*. In the first of two following chapter subsections I hypothesize the need for Dominionists to create a new, Christian denomination to legitimize their movement. In the second subsection, I discuss the "seven mountains" ideology using Mignolo's theories again and adding those of Jim Maffie to describe the position created and occupied by Dominionism.

The association of NHCLC with the Oak Initiative is important because, in light of the Christian concepts of "authority and submission," NHCLC President Sam Rodriguez has essentially "submitted" to the "authority," Oak Initiative President Rick Joyner. These concepts are basic to Christian theology and refer to ways that Christians

agree to submit to authority placed over them. This submission can be to a ministry; pastor or leader, or a government. By choosing to affiliate with The Oak Initiative, Rodriguez has made a rhetorical statement, which is, in effect: the Latino Evangelicals who are affiliated with the NHCLC will support Dominionist, Christian candidates for political office in all areas of the country to effect what Rodriguez has described as “a new Christian movement in America” (Rodriguez *Sam Rodriguez on the Issues*). Also, in recent interviews on nationally televised news/talk programs, Rodriguez has called Hispanics “natural social conservatives” citing their strong devotion to family as evidence (Rodriguez *Sam Rodriguez on the Issues*). By defining Latinos in the United States as “natural social conservatives” Rodriguez both engages in a classic fascist move and offers comfort to Christians who might question the motives of dominionist causes. Chris Hedges quotes Reverend Davidson Loehr who asserts that “fascism is... a kind of colonization” (11), and, as demonstrated by Hedges and Paxton, movements like The Oak Initiative—as Dominionist movements—are fascist because of the behavior they exhibit (Hedges 10; Paxton 218), then the sixteen million Latino Evangelicals affiliated with the NHCLC, have been effectively re-colonized by a fascist organization. Loehr defines fascism in terms of what it does (Hedges 11). Quoted by Hedges, Loehr states that colonization “takes people’s stories away, and assigns them supportive roles in stories that empower others at their expense” (Hedges 11).

Inasmuch as the Dominionist movement seeks to subsume others under its aegis, it is analogous to the European, colonial powers that subjugated and “civilized” the native civilizations and peoples of the Americas. Because of the overtly religious nature of the Dominionist movement, there can be no argument for acceptance of Latino, mestizo, or

native religio-cultural concepts or traditions, because they fail to fit into both the hegemonic discourse forwarded by conservative, White, European-American evangelicals and their asserted orthodoxy of their evangelical faith. Indeed, the Dominionist movement forwards a version of Evangelical Christianity known as “Christian Reconstruction” and according to Cornelius Van Til—the virtual patron saint of Christian Reconstruction—some points of faith are to be presupposed. By presuppositionalist, these Christians mean to start any and all disputations from a point of power by refusing to debate certain conceptions and topics, such as the existence of God (Herriot 214). Van Til held that Christian believers know and love God while asserting simultaneously that non-believers also know God but hate him (214). So, these certain points will not be argued but rather will be “presupposed” to be true and presuppositionalism functions in argument as a way of forcing an opponent to accept aspects of an appeal. In this way, Dominionists can avoid arguing about topics that are problematic to their movement. Additionally, such an argument essentially relieves Christians of having to follow the dictates of the “great commission” issued in Matthew 28:19-20 (*New King James Bible*). In other words, Christians are relieved from trying to reach those who disagree with them, which effectively relieves them from *acting* like Christians. This tactic is akin to *The Requerimiento* that conquistadors were required to read aloud prior to subjugating natives in the Americas. I feel that this version of Christian belief explains why conservative politicians, who claim to be Christians, so easily dismiss the suffering of their fellow U.S. citizens and ignore the systemic and institutional problems that cause such suffering.

The decision of Rick Joyner and the Oak Initiative to invite Sam Rodriguez, the

president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, to serve within the organization as vice-president, was analogous to Hernán Cortés's decision to enlist the local, Mexican natives to serve his cause and help him conquer the Aztec confederation. By this I mean that Joyner's appointment of Sam Rodriguez as vice-president was an effective enlistment of some sixteen million Latino Christians for the sole purpose of forwarding the dominionist agenda of the Oak Initiative. In essence, Joyner needs Latino votes, and seeing and acknowledging demographic trends in the U.S. population, knows that Latinos—and their voting power—are a vital key to the success of his political agenda.

As colonized people, Hispanics in the U.S. must conform to their European history in order to fit into the WEA, Evangelical version of the United States (Mignolo xii). According to Walter Mignolo, Latinos have no history without their colonization by Europeans (xii). The WEA Evangelical church serves as an analog for the European colonizers in this new round of colonization. By naming Rodriguez as its vice-president, the Oak Initiative offers the members of the NHCLC a tempting place at the table in a future United States reconstructed by dominionists. However, Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals, like the conservative populists described by Thomas Frank in *What's Wrong with Kansas: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, believe in capitalism so much that they cannot see how capitalist ideals damage their lives (Frank 7-8; Crowley 12) and seem incapable of seeing the threat that dominionist organizations like the Oak Initiative present to them. In part, I attribute this fact to Gee's literacy theory in action; Latino Pentecostals/Evangelicals believe that, because they share the language and literacy of modern, Evangelical, American Christianity with WEA Dominionists,

those Dominionists share their interests and more importantly, wish to share Latino, Evangelical, Christian literacy (Mignolo 9). Rather, the Oak Initiative offers the Latino members of the NHCLC a chance at modernity and an opportunity to share in a major move of God (11). But to establish true religious legitimacy, Dominionism must be fashioned into a denomination which can then operate from a position of orthodoxy.

Dominionism Created: A New Christian Denomination

Dominionism is an inherently Christian and American conception. In fact, the modern permutation of this version of Christian Reconstructionism can trace its theological genealogy to one man, Cornelius Van Til, an obscure professor of theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. Van Til and the other founders of Westminster Theological Seminary left Princeton Theological Seminary to establish a more conservative seminary that better fit their interpretation of scripture. Rousas John (R.J.) Rushdoony was an influential proponent of Van Til's conservative theology. Rushdoony advocated for the application of biblical law in modern society and is considered the founder of the Christian Reconstruction movement. As its name implies, Christian Reconstruction seeks to *reconstruct* society using Old Testament Biblical Law as the source for all laws and punitive measures. So, in a reconstructed United States, Rushdoony and his followers would call "for the death penalty for gay people, blasphemers, and unchaste women" (Goldberg 37).

As an American invention, its proponents seek to establish the "historical" nature of their movement by revising colonial American history and the religious beliefs of the

founders. Using the shoddy and often refuted revisionist history of David Barton, Dominionists have attacked the separation of church and state—the “Establishment Clause”—as an invention of twentieth-century, judicial legislation. The movement also espouses the “Seven Mountain” or “Seven Spheres” theology, which holds that, in order to impact the United States or any nation, Christians must control the seven spheres of influence that control societies. If Dominionism is like a new denomination or faith then it too has its foundational myths; faith movements *must* possess such stories in order to become faiths or denominations. Adherents fashion Dominionism into a new Christian denomination, and it may have been required that Dominionists establish a level of denominational unity prior to attempting to enact the change they see as necessary to the survival of the United States.

In 1975, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With A Mission, met for lunch and shared what each believed God had told them (Hillman *Reclaiming*). Both men stated that they had been given a list of seven spheres of influence that Christians must affect in order to effect change in any nation. The seven spheres of influence are business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family and religion. Francis Schaeffer, a prominent Evangelical theologian, also received the same message around the same time (Hillman *Reclaiming*). The Dominionist movement is replete with discussions of the need to reclaim these seven aspects of society, and such reclamation is considered a vital necessity to the success of the movement.

Dominionism and the Seven Mountains

Despite Os Hillman's statement that "the 7 mountains initiative is not an initiative to establish dominion over all the earth or in governments[,]" (Hillman *Reclaiming*) a movement that overtly seeks to control these seven aspects of society and culture *is* an initiative that seeks to gain control and dominion over at least the nation. This disingenuousness, perhaps better described as an inability to perceive the threats and dichotomies of Dominionist agendas, is common throughout both dominionist organizations and American Evangelicalism. I am reminded of a line from a song by the band Rush that says "those who know what's best for us must rise and save us from ourselves" (Peart), and I think this idea is one of the primary driving attitudes behind Dominionism. Understanding this attitude requires that one suspend logic and feel the bewilderment that Dominionists seem to reflect when confronted by opposition to their movement. It is as though Dominionists cannot conceive why anyone would oppose the naturally just and God-ordered theocracy for which they advocate.

Dominionism serves as an Evangelical version of the pachakuti concept Mignolo mentions, defining it as "a total disruption of space and time" (xiv). As a metaphorical example, Mignolo says "that a Pachakuti has been taking in Iraq since March of 2003" (xiv). While the NHCLC's association with the Oak Initiative may not represent a pachakuti event, it does bear resemblance to the meso-American concept of nepantla often simplified and defined as "in the middle" or "liminal" (Maffie 1). As described by James Maffie, nepantla is actually a "metaphysical condition: one that defines...the nature of reality, the cosmos and human existence" (Maffie 2). Nepantla is a constant wavering between two points or extremes and is both creative and destructive, male and

female (2). Dominionism functions like Mignolo's pachakuti by disrupting the state of American Evangelicalism and also as a nepantla state by virtue of its desire to both destroy and create (Mignolo xiv; Maffie 2). The movement seeks to destroy the current U.S. governmental system and create a theocracy based on biblical law, and such a movement can only be successful if it is installed at the grass-roots level in the local church. Also, Dominionists believe they can effect political change through the power of prayer.

Clarice Fluitt, the apostle who presides over Cornerstone appears in a video, posted on the internet and recorded in Washington, D.C. during fall of 2008. Taking place just before the 2008 election, the introduction to this video features driving music that sounds like the soundtrack of a modern crime film or thriller. Before the actual video of the event begins, text scrolls up the screen reading "receiving a mandate from God, Bishop Clarice Fluitt & intercessory team traveled to our Nation's Capital, [sic] Washington, D.C., to pray for the "state of the union" (Fluitt). The video goes on to show Fluitt and a group composed mostly of women praying in a chaotic and noisome manner. Some women are praying in tongues, while others sing and the video features a transition that I interpret as showing the passage of time. Fluitt quiets the cacophony by quoting from First John 5:4-5, which says "for whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God [sic]" (Fluitt). Images are interspersed throughout the video depicting such scenes as the landing at Plymouth Rock, the Capital building, Arlington National Cemetery, and the Lincoln Memorial, while the prayer continues in the background. At one point, Fluitt says

Father we just go in as spiritual terrorists and I just take buckets of the blood of the Lamb of God, Lord where the enemy has kept his computers Lord, where connections for thousands of years have been made, just waiting, just waiting in this time in history. Lord, we just go ahead and take the mother board out right now, just take the mother board out.

(Fluitt)

Cornerstone's apostle continues to say "where there have been connections made, diabolical connections, we hold the October surprise" (Fluitt) and continues her statement with a common conservative reference to supposed voter fraud praying that "Lord we just go into the voting booth, Lord the people that are dead and Mickey Mouse and all these other guys that have registered, I take their registration away" (Fluitt). While Fluitt presents a bewildering set of images throughout her prayer, it is a short series of photographs that appear late in the video that firmly establishes her true agenda. After the apostle prays "we vote with God, we vote with God, whatever you want is what we want" and those praying have begun chanting in unison while some stomping to the rhythm of the chanting, the music from the introduction starts up again and a startling series of highly militaristic photos appear in sequence on the screen alternating with video of the stomping. (Fluitt). The chaotic prayer, which by this point in the video has developed into chanting and yells that sound at once like stereotypical, Native American war yells and the *gritos* of encouragement one hears during Mexican, mariachi music, provides accompaniment to the driving score. While the music builds and the chanting and clapping continues, images of a rocket launcher firing, a tank firing, fighter jets flying in formation, a group of tanks with their commanders in their cupolas saluting, an attack

helicopter, and soldiers in battle dress running in formation pass across the screen. These images are followed by more photos of soldiers marching in formation and a photo of a naval combat vessel.

This array of both verbal and visual images is packed with political information that's tells the observer a great deal about Fluitt's political agenda. The quote she uses near the beginning of the video, with its repeating theme of overcoming the world, is a clear dominionist reference. It rings out like a justification of the things the apostle is about to say. Fluitt refers to herself and her fellow intercessors as "spiritual terrorists" and mentioned connections made in the enemy's computer ("enemy" is a generic term for Satan or anyone or thing that opposes Christians). She declares that she removes the mother board from the enemy's computer and continues to declare that, in spite of the connections which she labels diabolical, "we hold the October surprise" (Fluitt). The minister's use of such an overtly and specifically political term in reference to what is ostensibly a spiritual event belies her political agenda. Taken in context, if an October surprise is going to occur in 2008, it is surely going to be a move in favor of the candidate Fluitt supports, and with her next statement echoes a common, conservative theme. She addresses the supposed problem of voter fraud vowing to remove the registration of these fraudulent voters. In doing so, Fluitt reveals a common behavior among Dominionists, the inability to conceive of failure of their agendas except through deception and illegal activities. Also, because "October surprise" is a political term and is the solution to the aforementioned diabolical connections, Fluitt is implying that the Democrat party is the source of the diabolical connections, again repeating themes common in conservative Christian and Dominionist circles. Finally, because these statements are largely encoded,

they amount to “dog-whistle” terms. Simply put, these terms mean one thing to society in general and a very different thing to insiders who are fluent in the literacy and serve as ways to rally support for causes without alerting opponents (Landman).

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

On August 6, 2011, Governor Rick Perry of Texas convened a day of fasting and prayer he named “The Response.” Among those who attended and participated were a number of self-appointed prophets and apostles, and the list reads like a “who’s who” of the Dominionist movement. The original websites have all been removed from the internet or have been locked, but *The Texas Observer* published an article about the rally on August 3, 2011, that lists some of the supporters and speakers (Wilder). Among those mentioned as supporters or speakers were three people mentioned herein: Lou Engle, Cindy Jacobs, and David Barton. Additionally, the founder of the “New Apostolic Reformation” (and coiner of this title), C. Peter Wagner attended the event, though only as a participant. In an interview on National Public Radio’s *Fresh Air*, Wagner rather disingenuously claimed he had no idea that other members of his movement would be in attendance and claims to have been surprised to see them there (Gross *A Leading Figure*). I call his response disingenuous because he later offers an explanation of how Perry asked one of the organizers—whom Wagner knows well—to help organize the event (Gross *A Leading Figure*). This deceptiveness and the relative obscurity of the Dominionist movement in general is a significant part of the danger the movement presents to our nation. Also, Wagner says “my suspicion is that when Rick Perry arrived at The Response, he had never heard of the New Apostolic Reformation” (Gross *A*

Leading Figure), and this ignorance of the Dominionist movement and its stated purposes is both probably where most followers of the pastors, “prophets,” and “apostles” involved in the movement find themselves and the very essence of the danger the movement represents to our government. Finally, the speed with which the website and information about the event’s supporters and speakers disappeared from the web so quickly as news of the event and its participants’ associations spread is, at best, dubious. However, there may be hope for Latinos unwittingly recruited into the Dominionist movement.

On September 9, 2011, Reverend Samuel Rodriguez issued the following statement:

I repudiate all vestiges of Islamophobia or any other platform that engages in fear-mongering . . . We must stay vigilant in order to protect the sanctity of compassionate and grace-filled outreach. My commitment stands without compromise. I will continue to advocate and engage a generation committed to sanctification and service, covenant and community, truth with love. (Metzger)

By issuing this statement, Rodriguez resigned from his position as Vice-President of the Oak Initiative. The degree to which Rodriguez’s separation from the Oak Initiative will effectively stop the Latin Pentecostal/Evangelical recolonization process underway remains unclear, and Rodriguez’s reputation and status will likely be unaffected even within his organization. Should another Latino Christian leader (like Miguel Rivera) be recruited by Dominionists, the action would serve as a clear signal that there is indeed a concerted effort underway to re-colonize Latino believers and harness their voting power. Rodriguez did not resign by his own volition, rather, he resigned after being confronted

with the agenda and religious extremism obvious in the Oak Initiative revealed in article by Rachel Tabachnick and presented to Rodriguez by Greg Metzger (Metzger).

Tabachnick is an independent researcher who has studied the Dominionist movement extensively and is a regular contributor to the website *Talk to Action*, which along with other journalistic and legal sites (*Right Wing Watch*, *YuricaReport*, *Theocracy Watch*) covers the development of the Dominionist movement. In her article “The Rise of Charismatic Dominionism,” Tabachnick asserts that Dominionists have conflated the charismatic practice of Pentecostalism and the Dominion theology spawned by Christian Reconstruction into a new denomination she names Charismatic Dominionism (Tabachnick). The author traces this change to “a shift from an originally passive theology in which believers are waiting to be Raptured from the earth prior and escape imminent apocalyptic horrors, to a politicized theology in which believers must take control over society and government” (Tabachnick). The active and spiritually potent notion of Pentecostal practice—unshackled from its sometimes stifling dogma—and combined with a politically charged ideology in Christian Reconstructionism has produced a dangerously powerful and largely covert, anti-government movement in the United States. While Dominionists rail against the degradation of our Constitutional rights, they simultaneously advocate for the removal of Constitutional institutions and strive for a theocracy in which there would be no public school (all children would be home schooled), no courts (the local church pastor would serve as judge), no prisons (the only penalties for crimes would be death and indentured servitude), and no real religious liberty. Tabachnick’s assessment and naming of the Dominionists as “Charismatic Dominionists” seems perfectly appropriate to me, considering the ways that its adherents

engage in Pentecostal style religious practice and how they adopt the politico-religious beliefs of Christian Reconstructionism (Tabachnick). As a believer living in the United States, I am heartened by the fact that some commentators and writers have cited other Evangelicals as the most dangerous threat to Dominionism. Attacking and dismantling the arguments of Dominionists requires that its opponents know the text (the Bible) and understand the nature of the covenant established in the New Testament. In effect, the Dominionists represent what I will call the “new Judaizers,” a group of Jewish Christians in first-century Palestine who asserted that converts to Christianity must follow the Old Testament laws presented in the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Among the laws the Judaizers believed were necessary for “true” salvation was circumcision for adult, gentile males.

The Judaizers were former Pharisees who sought to combine their previous beliefs as practicing and sacrificing Jews with the new doctrine presented in Christianity as a way to maintain the religious control over Jewish society they previously enjoyed. Like their first-century Jewish analog, Dominionists seek to imply that modern Christians must take control over society through the Seven Mountains mandate and force Americans to overthrow the Constitution and replace it with the dictates of Old Testament, Biblical law. The Dominionists represent a threat that is real by virtue of several factors. First, they are “true believers.” By my definition, a true believer is someone who cannot see the faults or weaknesses of the movement for which s/he advocates. This is reflected by the shock many Dominionists display when questioned about their movement. Second, Dominionists seem to be unwilling or unable to discern the truth of a situation. Rick Joyner has demonstrated this clearly by taking in the

disgraced evangelist Todd Bentley after the latter's very public personal meltdown during "The Lakeland, Florida, Revival." Bentley admitted to having an extramarital affair with a staff member during the revival, divorced his wife, and quickly married Jessa, the woman with whom he had the affair. Just before these events, a number of prominent "Apostles" and Dominionists came to Florida in summer of 2008, laid hands on Bentley, and effectively ordained him into their ranks. But, if these people, who claim to be prophets and apostles who presumably hear from God, were unable to discern the problems in Bentley's personal life and by extension his ministry, what does it say for their discernment in other matters. Some of those who laid hands on Bentley have said—after the fact—that they felt something was amiss but proceeded with the ordination anyway. Joyner posted glowing, periodic updates on Bentley's progress and by February of 2009, Bentley was married to Jessa and undergoing "restoration" under Rick Joyner's direction at his MorningStar Ministries campus in South Mills, South Carolina (Gaines). While I agree with concept of restoration, I find it odd that Dominionists, who advocate for the rigid application of Biblical Law, fail to note the clear dictum in scripture that divorced men cannot serve as pastors. Of course, divorce as an evangelical talking point has been all but eliminated from sermons because divorce is so common in our society that to address and call attention to Biblical opinions on the subject would alienate a large percentage of any congregation's members. So, this hypocrisy—the desire on the part of Dominionists to impose Biblical law on the rest of society while seeming unwilling to enforce it among their own—is a dangerous and disturbing fact of Dominionism. Third, in the fall of 2011, prominent Dominionists began to deny the existence of Dominionism or a dominionist movement (Mantyla "If Dominionism"). This represents a desire to

return to the shadows from which the movement has been forced by journalists and the actions of the movement's "celebrity" members. To me, this attempt to convince the rest of us that the Dominionist movement doesn't exist is at best misleading and at worst, an outright deception, a lie. Faced with this information, I ask, "Why lie?" The answer is multifaceted and in all ways damning to the movement. I believe Dominionists lie because they know they are interpreting scripture in a way that denies the social justice for which Jesus advocated, but doing so makes them feel good. It removes their responsibility to their fellow humans and allows them to pursue wealth unencumbered by the admonitions of scripture. Dominionism is assisted in this second aspect by the recent emergence of the "prosperity gospel," which dictates that, just as Christians are to be kings on earth, they should also be wealthy. Advocates of this theology might refer to Christians as sons and daughters of the King and believe that as princes and princesses, Christians should be wealthy. Though even an informal study of "prosperity gospel" churches reveals that the only ones who seem to prosper in a "prosperity gospel church" are the pastor and his family. In short, Dominionists are lying to themselves. They are advocating for something that represents an effective overthrow of the U.S. government and yet want the rest of us to 1) not question them, 2) not oppose them, and 3) believe them when they say they do not desire this overthrow of the U.S. government for their own benefit. This line of thinking is akin to the idea, presented by Justin Watson, that conservative evangelicals not only want their place at the political table, they also want everyone at the table to agree with them (175).

As I conducted this research, I reached a number of conclusions regarding Dominionists and the dangers the movement represents. Dominionists represent a danger

to our democracy because they want to replace it with a theocracy of their own creation. Despite their fervent denials, it is clear that “charismatic dominionists,” to use Rachel Tabachnick’s term, desire to reconstruct the United States and the world as a Christian theocracy. A quick look at the Oak Initiative’s *Strategy and Objectives* document reveals that dominionists consider themselves “a grassroots movement to find and help develop principled and effective Christian leaders who can mobilize and organize a cohesive force of activated Christians” (The Oak Initiative). Additionally, the Oak Initiative’s objectives include calling on these “principled and effective leaders...to work on every level where government is found, from the most local to state and national levels” (The Oak Initiative). The Oak Initiative’s strategy also includes training these acolytes to become “effective leaders for all of the dominant areas of influence in the culture, including: government, business, education, arts and entertainment, family services, media, and the church” (The Oak Initiative), an obvious nod and acknowledgment of the “seven mountains” aspect of the Oak Initiative’s dominionism. As I have stated earlier, gaining control or significant influence in these spheres is tantamount to exerting control over society. It is a form of colonization that defines who will be colonized and who will do the colonizing by using a religious yardstick.

In particular, Dominionists are a threat to Latino believers because the two groups share a literacy that is common with the larger, protestant, church community. Though Rev. Rodriguez claims that the Oak Initiative is a “multi-ethnic, multi-generational, righteousness, and justice movement,” (Rodriguez *Sam Rodriguez on the Issues*) it is dominated by WEA leaders and believers and espouses very conservative social policies similar to those that have proven detrimental to Latinos and other people of color in the

past. The fact of this shared literacy between Latino Evangelicals and Charismatic Dominionists renders Latinos subject to a series of appeals that sound positive and yet hold subtexts that can run counter to the interests of Latinos. As an example, I will offer a statement William Boykin made regarding Islam's protection under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Boykin *Sharia*). Just as Boykin states that Islam does not deserve religious protection, Catholicism might be named similarly. As an analogy, consider that Catholicism is a global faith with a large and well organized infrastructure, comprised of local and regional leadership structures. It is led by an educated elite (priests, bishops, and archbishops) who are led ultimately by one man, the pope. Such an organization could be organized to threaten or even replace the U.S. government. Such a hypothetical statement—one that might not be out of the realm of possibility in today's political climate—would surely mean that Latino Evangelicals, with Catholic family members might find themselves supporting social or political movements or candidates that actively work against the best interests of their families. The true danger here is not the possibility of this happening, rather it is the possibility that some Latino Evangelicals might justify action against Catholics (or Muslims or Mormons) as God's will because their dominionist Pastors advocated *for* the activity. Latino Evangelicals (and many other believers) are often blissfully unaware of the political aspirations of their church leadership and might thus be unwittingly supporting dominionist causes.

At least one dominionist organization—The Oak Initiative—actively courted a leading Latino Evangelical to a leadership role for unknown purposes. Sam Rodriguez serves as the president of The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, an organization that represents over twenty-five thousand churches and some sixteen million

Latino believers. As such, Rodriguez has the potential to wield national, political influence. When Sam Rodriguez was forced to admit knowledge of The Oak Initiative's true agenda he left the organization. Because dominionist organizations fit Paxton's definition of classic, fascist organizations, and combined with an obvious desire to exert influence and thus control over both the "seven mountains" and Latinos, they represent an attempt to quietly re-colonize Latino believers.

Also, Gee's concept of discourse as an identity kit suggests the possibility for the creation of what I will call "fake ids." For example, an unscrupulous con man might learn all the right language and behavior then lead believers with the sole purpose of enacting a specific political agenda. Considering Burke's theory of terministic screens, one must view dominionists as products of their own experiences. Most are white, European-Americans and are operating in a hegemonic system which favors them and those who look like them. But, they see the demographic writing on the wall that I have mentioned before. Latinos are poised to become the majority in this nation in the next few decades. Unless the dominionists can figure a way to effectively harness Latinos, they might find themselves subject to them, a possibility that is unthinkable to the dominant. And, it is so unthinkable, that they will not even mention it, instead speaking about Latinos as the future of Christian colleges in the United States (Sells), the force that will make California a "pro-life" state (Engel), and proponents of "creation care" (Vu). As the future of Christian colleges, Latinos are being harvested for their tuition and for the ideology they will carry forth from institutions like Regent's University and Liberty University. In their perceived role making California a "pro-life" state, the voting power of Latinos is harvested from them. Finally, as proponents of "creation care," Latinos are

saddled with an agenda increasingly dismissed and ignored by conservative Christians, care of the environment.

Finally, justified and empowered by an outrageous philosophy like Dominionism, people with the skill set possessed by Gerry Boykin, become a grave threat to our democracy and in fact, represent the very domestic enemies of the Constitution referred to in the oaths taken by persons entering the military. As much as I honor General Boykin's service, I clearly understand the skills he learned and honed in the military and am forced to name him as a potential domestic enemy of the Constitution, based on the statements he has made in Oak Initiative documents and videos. Boykin has denied the legitimacy of First Amendment protection for Islam (Boykin *Sharia*) and was formally reprimanded by the Army in 2004 (a very big deal for a general) "for making numerous statements casting the war on terror in religious terms when appearing before Christian groups" (Zimmerman 1). If anyone fits the term "Christian Crusader," it is Boykin.

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VITA

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