that transcended racial boundaries. Some liberal commentators such as Peter Beinart have reached a similar conclusion. In some ways, these commentators echo the white nationalist complaints about Christianity.

I think this argument overstates Christianity's role as a hindrance to racism, both historically and today. Although we can reasonably argue whether Trump supporters were primarily motivated by racial anxieties and animus, Trump's overwhelming support from white evangelicals challenges the thesis that Christianity inoculates against racism. In my own work, I find scant evidence for a strong relationship between religiosity and racial views. Nonetheless, religion was long a massive schism in the American extreme right, and this divide hindered the creation of a united right-wing assault on liberalism.

Many 20th century white nationalists argued that their political goals would remain unattainable as long as whites remained beholden to Christian ideals. Once Christianity's spell is broken, they argued, racial consciousness could fill the breach. As Christianity wanes, we will see if they were right. We should not overstate the current danger, as the extreme right remains small and fractured, but they are closer to a major breakthrough than they were a decade ago.

I enthusiastically recommend *Blood and Faith*. Berry provided an admirable dispassionate analysis of some of the most loathsome ideas ever expressed. It is natural to recoil from expressions of genocidal hatred, but we cannot ignore them. Although most of the figures Berry analyzed are now deceased, imprisoned, or elderly, many of their ideas have experienced an unexpected resurgence, though they are now presented in an updated package. Those who would combat these ideologies need to know what they are up against. Berry's book is an important contribution to that end.

Response to George Hawley

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Damon T. Berry
St. Lawrence University

I am extremely grateful for the insightful and generous comments made by Professor Hawley, as I am for the gracious offer by Professor Lewis to have this exchange take place. I have learned much from it, and in

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particular about the distinctiveness of the Alt-Right from older forms of white nationalism. This experience has reinforced my conviction that multiple approaches to this topic are absolutely essential to further our understanding of organized racism in the U.S. as much as it is beneficial to the developing scholarship on these movements.

To preface my comments I would like to explain a little about how I came to write my book. My initial goal was not to write a book on politics of the far right, but to explore something that Betty Dobratz had noted in an article from 2001, that the dominance of Christian Identity theology among white racial activists was slipping away. She argued that many more white nationalists were opting for alternative racialist religious options, such as Creativity or Odinism. At the same time I encountered this argument, I was reading Michael Barkun's *Religion and The Racist* Right (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994), which is a history of the development of that racist and Anti-Semitic theology that Dobratz argued was losing ground. I immediately became curious as to why white nationalists seemed to reject even the most racist forms of Christianity that Barkun described in his book.

As a scholar of religions, I wanted to find the historical relationships to and ruptures with differing religious perspectives within American white nationalism and to provide some analysis to finally offer a way of perceiving these relationships and ruptures. But initially, I simply wanted to answer a single question—why have so many white nationalists rejected Christianity? In attempting to answer this question it became very clear that I had to consider politics and political movements from the post-WWII era to the present. This was because as I was researching foundational white nationalist thinkers, like Revilo Oliver, the "religious" and the "political" were not separate in their discourses. In fact, I argue that the "religious" considerations in shaping white nationalist ideology were relative to political conditions in the U.S. at the time, and that religious responses, even later ones, were also related to what different white nationalists variously imagined to be the most efficacious means by which to preserve the white race against threats to its future existence. And it was from these findings that other considerations emerged.

One consideration that emerged for me was also noted by Hawley when he remarked in his review that too often the far-right is often overestimated by its opposition, particularly in the unity that its opponents presume to exist among them. This is absolutely true, and in my view a crucial point. One of the main claims that I wanted make clear was that we cannot imagine that religion among the American right is simply a

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Christian affair. I wanted to convey that there was never a great amount of cohesion among early white nationalists, especially concerning the issue of religion. Oliver, for example, was an atheist by the later part of his life, while Pierce and Klassen developed competing new religions; and all of them were at odds with the racialized Paganism developed at almost the same time by Else Christensen. So Hawley's point about the importance of seeing the Alt-Right as a new kind of white nationalism is well received.

Another issue that Hawley notes, which has come up for me in other venues, is the issue of influence. I particularly appreciated when he stated at the end of his review that though many of the figures I discuss in the book are "are now deceased, imprisoned, or elderly, many of their ideas have experienced an unexpected resurgence, though they are now presented in an updated package." When I think about white nationalism, as I remarked above, I think of ruptures and change as much as I think about continuity, especially in the ways white nationalists have rethought what has often been a vocal rejection of Christianity because of the possible impediments such a position would present to mainstreaming their ideas among conservatives who might otherwise agree with them on immigration and opposition to multiculturalism. For me, then, the relevance of studying white nationalist ideologies and activism does not necessarily mean thinking about the ways in which the Alt-Right and other such movements change the minds of white Americans, but rather of the ways in which they play to racism already present in in America. So I think for me the issue of influence goes beyond the numbers of recruits or even the degree that people feel sympathy for the movement, but rather the ways the movement reflects back to America its own racist past and present.

Connected to that perspective was the possible applicability of the Bergsonian inspired framework in my study of white nationalism for situations like the persecution of Rohingyas in Myanmar. The similarities between the religious and racist rhetoric of white nationalists and that of Wirathu, a Buddhist monk and leader of the nationalist 969 movement, once called by *Time* magazine "The Buddhist Bin Laden," deserves attention. Moreover, we have seen very recently the ability of formerly ridiculed nationalist parties in Europe to ride populist and xenophobic anxieties to political influence in open elections. I think, again, the perspective that developed for me in thinking with Bergson about white nationalism can be applied to these circumstances as well. And, finally, when I think about influence regarding these ideas I think of the

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damage that even one person can do, as Anders Brievik, Dylann Roof, and others have demonstrated. I agree that the AR and white nationalism in general will remain marginalized, but I would say that it is equally true that we cannot afford to imagine that the extreme will remain on the margins, or that marginal means unimportant or even nonthreatening.

Response to Damon T. Berry

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George Hawley
University of Alabama

Professor Berry raised many important points in his review, and I am grateful for his thoughtful reading. Studying the extreme right in this disruptive period poses unique challenges. Events develop quickly, and work rapidly becomes out of date. In the case of *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, many of the questions I raised have already been answered. The Alt-Right appears to be finished as a meaningful force in American life. The meaning of the Alt-Right's rise and collapse remains unclear, however.

At the time I was writing the book, just before and after the 2016 presidential election, I noted that the Alt-Right would try to move beyond the Internet and into the real world. It was unknown at the time whether they would be successful. In his review, Berry predicted that the "amorphousness and ludic nature of the movement coupled with the rampant divisions within may in fact keep this from happening." He is almost certainly correct.

The Alt-Right has experienced little but defeat over the last year and a half. After the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA, which resulted in the death of an anti-racist protester, the Alt-Right brand suffered a devastating blow, the movement has been mostly deplatformed from online payment processers, major trolls have been banned from social media, and infighting has turned the movement into a circular firing squad.

In short, the Alt-Right increasing looks like the ineffectual and self-destructive groups that Berry analyzed in his book, groups that the Alt-Right once derisively described as "White Nationalism 1.0." The most notorious figures of the Alt-Right may soon be as little remembered as Ben Klassen and Revilo Oliver. Rather than a permanent fixture of

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