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# Christian Terror in Europe? The Bible in Anders Behring Breivik's Manifesto

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**Abstract:** In the attempts to understand the ideology underpinning the terror attack in Norway 22nd July 2011, and the growth of far-right extremism in Europe more generally, Christianity and the uses of the Bible are a largely neglected feature. In this article, I examine the way in which the Bible is used in Anders Behring Breivik's manifesto, arguing that this provides an important example of the role of Christianity in far-right discourse. I show that the Bible functions as a legitimating device, glossing violence as defense of a Christian Europe; as a motivational instrument, positing God as a fellow fighter; and, as an origin for Europe. The Bible is situated in a pre-modern state where its signifying powers are policed. At the same time, it is wrenched out of this solidified framework, cut up and pasted into the manifesto hypertext in order to serve as a contemporary ally to an anti-Muslim and anti-multicultural cause.

**Keywords:** Terror; Bible; Christianity; far right; Breivik; Europe.

## 1 Introduction

On 22nd July 2011, Anders Behring Breivik dressed in a fake police uniform, drove to the Government Headquarters (the government office buildings), in Oslo (Regjeringskvartalet) and planted a bomb, which detonated shortly thereafter. He then gained entry to the island of Utøya, where the Norwegian Labour party's youth organization [Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking (AUF)] held their annual political summer camp, and shot indiscriminately at the young people there. Altogether, Breivik killed 77 people – of whom the majority were below the age of 20 – and wounded many more. Amidst the fallout from the event, the widespread assumption voiced by the media and broadcast worldwide over the internet, radio and television, was that the perpetrator of these attacks was a Muslim terrorist, and, it was implied, not an ethnic Norwegian. The general consensus of

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opinion was that very few would have expected the terrorist<sup>1</sup> to be a Caucasian Norwegian, born and raised in the affluent west end area of Oslo – as he was later revealed to be.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it was highly unexpected when it transpired that the terrorist associated his violent acts with Christianity, using biblical texts to encourage and try to justify “warfare” against Muslims and multiculturalism. Despite Mieke Bal’s rather hyperbolic warning that the Bible is the most dangerous of books, “endowed with the power to kill,”<sup>3</sup> the very idea of “Christian,” “biblically” inspired terrorism in Europe was seemingly so unthinkable that it has not been given any serious attention: indeed, once it became clear that the perpetrator was not Muslim, attention to his religious affiliation has vanished from view.

In the aftermath of 22 July 2011, we are left with the manifesto Breivik composed, and distributed electronically shortly before his acts of violence, where he outlines the grounds and reasoning behind his terrorism – a terrorism he called “horrible” but “necessary,” to acquire a platform for his “political project.”<sup>4</sup> In this article, I will examine the biblical references that appear in Breivik’s manifesto. I will argue that even though it is not a central feature of his manifesto, the Bible performs an important peripheral function to the central claims in the text. The Bible functions as a legitimating device for terror, glossing violence as defense of a Christian God and a Christian Europe; as a motivational instrument,

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1 In calling Breivik a terrorist, I am drawing on Bruce Hoffman’s definition of terrorism as the use of violence and the pursuit of power for political ends. For Hoffman, terrorism is ineluctably political in its aims and motives, involves violence or the threat of violence, is intended to invoke long-term psychological effects beyond the particular victims, and is perpetrated “by individuals or a small collection of individuals directly influenced, motivated, or inspired by the ideological aims or example of some existent terrorist movement and/or its leaders. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998), 14–5; 40.

2 Sindre Bangstad conveys the way in which the Norwegian security forces, PST (Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste), predicted that “extreme Islamists” were the main terror threat to Norway in both 2010 and 2011. It was perhaps not surprising that both national and international media featured extensive speculations by terrorism experts as to the identity and motivations of the perpetrator(s), assuming them to be members of al-Qaida or affiliated radical Islamist groups. Bangstad suggests that in the years prior to July 22, 2011, PST intelligence-gathering focused exclusively on sources within these radical Islamist circles – a judgement corroborated by the 22/7 Commission Report. Sindre Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia* (London: Zed Books, 2014), 2, 14–5; NOU (Norges Offentlige Utredninger), “Rapport fra 22. juli-kommisjonen” [22/7 Commission Report], (Oslo: Departementenes Servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning, 2012).

3 Mieke Bal, *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women’s Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 14.

4 Geir Lippestad *Det Kan Vi Stå For* (Oslo: Aschehaug, 2014), 45, 47, 102.

positing God as a fellow fighter; and, finally, as a point of origin for a Christian, mono-cultural Europe. Ultimately, the Bible is a split site in Breivik's manifesto: on the one hand, it is situated sanctimoniously in a pre-modern state where its signifying powers are stabilized through the policing of interpretive activity; on the other hand, it is wrenched out of this solidified framework, cut up like a collage and pasted into the manifesto hypertext in order to serve as a contemporary ally to an anti-Muslim and anti-multicultural cause.

## 2 The Manifesto

The manifesto – entitled “2083: A European Declaration of Independence” – is a 1500-page text, which aims to reveal the “truth” about the state of Western Europe today.<sup>5</sup> Essentially, it is argued that an “Islamic Imperialism” is taking hold in Western Europe and that this is supported by a “totalitarian” political correctness embedded in the dominant forces in European politics, higher education, and media. The manifesto is compiled in the name of a “Western European Resistance,” for all “European patriots,” and “cultural conservatives,”<sup>6</sup> to “prevent the annihilation of our identities, our cultures and traditions and our nation states”<sup>7</sup> and to “win the ongoing Western European cultural war.”<sup>8</sup> Western culture is seen as radically threatened by modern and postmodern attacks on “the bases of Western culture, including Christianity, capitalism, authority, the family, patriarchy, hierarchy, morality, tradition, sexual restraint, loyalty, patriotism,

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<sup>5</sup> It would take up far too much space to give an in-depth exposition on the manifesto's multiple claims and intricacies here. It contains everything from potted histories of Marxism; biographical information about key figures from the Frankfurt School; statistics on the “Islamification” of Europe; information on Pan-European movements and Jihad; critiques of feminism, to detailed instructions for bomb-making, a question and answer session on Breivik, and photos of him clad in various outfits. In my brief synopsis, I recount the key ideological points that run through the manifesto, without assessing the multiple strands of argumentation in the document. When I cite the manifesto I refer to the version that can be found online: Andrew Berwick, “2083: A European Declaration of Independence,” available as a pdf at <https://publicintelligence.net/anders-behring-breiviks-complete-manifesto-2083-a-european-declaration-of-independence/>. Accessed 05/05/17. The page numbers correspond to those found on the PDF. Anders Breivik adopts an Anglicized spelling of his name: Andrew Berwick, for the manifesto. In this article, when referencing the manifesto (hereafter referred to as simply “Manifesto”), Breivik's real name, rather than pseudonym, shall be used.

<sup>6</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Breivik, Manifesto.

<sup>8</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 12.

nationalism, heredity, ethnocentrism, convention and conservatism.”<sup>9</sup> This has supposedly led to a “loss of freedom of expression, thought control, inversion of the traditional social order.”<sup>10</sup> Multiculturalism is presented as profoundly anti-Christian,<sup>11</sup> leading to “the ongoing Islamic colonisation of Europe through demographic warfare (facilitated by our own leaders).”<sup>12</sup> The ultimate aim outlined in the manifesto is to curtail the spread of Islam, along with “the cultural Marxist/multiculturalist hegemony in Western Europe.” The hope is that “Europe will once again be governed by patriots”<sup>13</sup> in “a monocultural Christian Europe.”<sup>14</sup>

Since 2011, attempts have been made to contextualize Breivik within the far-right networks that disseminate and promote Islamophobic views in Norway, and more broadly in Europe, highlighting the “mainstreaming” of such ideas.<sup>15</sup> As many have stated, Breivik’s manifesto is a patchwork composition, made up of a cut-and-paste excerpts from a variety of sources, from extremist far-right books, to websites and blogs. The manifesto thus draws attention to the wider ideological circuits that foster hatred against Muslims and condemn multiculturalism. Two central and often overlapping features of the far-right that Breivik draws on are the Eurabia theory and contra-jihadism. Briefly put, the Eurabia theory consists of the view that political leaders in Europe, and especially the European Union, are part of a conspiracy to turn Europe into an Islamic colony;<sup>16</sup> its central proponents, such as Oriana Fallaci, Bat Ye’or and, Breivik’s favorite,

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**9** Breivik, Manifesto, 23.

**10** Breivik, Manifesto, 24.

**11** Breivik, Manifesto, 692.

**12** Breivik, Manifesto, 16. While America is mentioned and treated somewhat similarly to the fate of Europe in places, the focus is on a particularly European conflict: past, present, and future.

**13** Breivik, Manifesto, 1413.

**14** Breivik, Manifesto, 1404.

**15** See Sindre Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia* (London: Zed Books, 2014); and Øyvind Strømmen, *Det Mørke Nettet: Om Høyreekstremisme, Kontrajihadisme og Terror i Europa* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012) and Øyvind Strømmen, *I Hatets Fotspor* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2014). In the context of the Anglo-American political landscape, James Crossley’s *Jesus in an Age of Terror* makes a similar point about the mainstreaming of Islamophobia. Crossley analyses the role of biblical studies in perpetuating stereotypes of the Middle Eastern and Islamic other. He discusses the ways in which “the use of anthropology in the study of Christian origins has potentially intimate links with the contemporary us-them rhetoric associated with the clash of civilizations rhetoric, the present ‘war on terror’ and the outrageous generalizations about Muslims and Arabs”. James Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century* (London/Oakville: Equinox, 2008), 110, 128.

**16** See for instance Øyvind Strømmen’s chapter on the Eurabia literature, “Eurabialitteraturen,” In Øyvind Strømmen, *Det Mørke Nettet: Om Høyreekstremisme, kontrajihadisme og terror i Europa* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012), 78–101.

the Norwegian blogger known as “Fjordman” (Peder Nøstvold Jensen), are cited multiple times in Breivik’s manifesto. Contra-jihadism can be characterized by the view that Islam and the West are at war, that Islam is not a religion but in fact a totalitarian political ideology, and that the duty of contra-jihadists is to stop the supposed “Islamification”; contain Islam to countries that already have a Muslim majority; cut all subsidies to Muslim countries, and establish an anti-multicultural political network to replace the current political classes that enable the purported Islamic imperialism.<sup>17</sup> Ralf Wiederer describes the way in which individuals such as Breivik become part of “amorphous, slightly structured social entities, or associative and cooperative networks of individual and collective actors” and how, as with Breivik, the internet plays a very important role in fostering such connections.<sup>18</sup> Bruce Hoffman, too, in *Inside Terrorism*, comments on this new type of terrorist organization, suggesting that although there may be a leadership of sorts in such networks, its role is less that of direct command and control and rather has an inspirational and motivational function.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, attending to Breivik’s modes of legitimation and ideological motivation in his manifesto is not an exercise in probing the inner logic of a “lone wolf” terrorist; rather, such an attention can shed light on the broader ideological trends and discourses in which a terrorist such as Breivik is formed.

Reference in the media and scholarship to the Christian elements of Breivik’s ideology varies greatly: from being either non-existent, perfunctory, to brief allusion or denial. Sindre Bangstad, author of *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia*, only comments on this issue once: “Behring Breivik describes himself as a ‘conservative Christian.’ However, as was amply illustrated by his deeds and in his tract, he was not in any respects a practising Christian.”<sup>20</sup> Rasmus Fleischer, in turn, outlines different types of fascism in order to attempt to categorize far-right trends in Europe; Breivik roughly falls into what Fleischer calls “mono-fascism.” According to Fleischer, “[m]

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**17** Strømmen, *I Hatets Fotspor* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2014), 102–3: Strømmen notes that contra-jihadism has no fixed doctrine but the definition that sums up most of its facets can be found in a manifesto published on *Gates of Vienna* by Baron Bodissey, or Ned May, in 2009. Baron Bodissey (Ned May), ‘The Counterjihad Manifesto’, *Gates of Vienna*, 20 November 2009. <http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.no/2009/11/counterjihad-manifesto.html>. This blog post has since been removed.

**18** Ralf Wiederer, “Mapping the Right-Wing Extremist Movement on the Internet – Structural Patterns 2006–2011,” in *In the Tracks of Breivik: Far Right Networks in Northern and Eastern Europe*, eds. Mats Deland, Michael Minkenberg and Christin Mays (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2013), 20.

**19** Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998), 39.

**20** Sindre Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia* (London: Zed Books, 2014), 3.

ono-fascism does indeed insist on a 'Christian' identity, but this identity is cultural rather than religious," apparently lacking in "theology."<sup>21</sup> In a *Guardian* article written two days after the attacks in Oslo and Utøya, Andrew Brown dismisses any relationship between Christianity and Breivik, as his title makes abundantly clear: "Breivik is not a Christian but anti-Islam."<sup>22</sup> Brown states that Breivik should not be labelled a "fundamentalist Christian," and maintains that his views "had nothing to do with Christianity but [were] based on an atavistic horror of Muslims and a loathing of 'Marxists.'"<sup>23</sup> Øyvind Strømmen refers to Breivik's "Christian identity," as one of the characteristics of his ideological proclivities, although has yet to discuss this identity in any detail.<sup>24</sup> In a publication produced by academics in Norway, *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli* [Academic Perspectives on 22nd July], in 2012, discussions of Christianity are more forthcoming, with articles by Jone Salomonsen on paganism, misogyny and Christianity; Jorunn Økland on feminism and Christian tradition, and Øyvind Sørensen more generally on the ideology of the manifesto.<sup>25</sup> However, none are focused on Christianity in any sustained manner, nor do any focus on uses of the Bible.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Rasmus Fleischer, "Two Fascisms in Contemporary Europe? Understanding the Ideological Split of the Radical Right", in *In the Tracks of Breivik: Far Right Networks in Northern and Eastern Europe*, eds. Mats Deland, Michael Minkenberg, Christin Mays (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2013), 60.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Brown, "Breivik is not a Christian but anti-Islam," *Guardian* newspaper, July 24 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Brown, "Breivik is not a Christian but anti-Islam," *Guardian* newspaper, July 24 2011.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance his reference to Christian identity in Øyvind Strømmen, *Det Mørke Nettet: Om Høyreekstremisme, kontrajihadisme og terror i Europa* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012), 23.

<sup>25</sup> Jone Salomonsen, "Kristendom, paganisme og kvinnefiendskap," in *Akademiske Perspektiver På 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 74–89; Øystein Sørensen, "En totalitær mentalitet: det ideologiske tankegodset i Anders Behring Breiviks manifest", in *Akademiske Perspektiver På 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012): 103–14; Jorunn Økland, "Feminismen, tradisjonen og forventning", in *Akademiske Perspektiver På 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012): 115–27.

<sup>26</sup> Jone Salomonsen discusses the way Christianity and paganism interrelate in Breivik's views, and points to the way the use of religion is less as a form of belief, more a strategic form of power for particular political goals: Jone Salomonsen, "Kristendom, paganisme og kvinnefiendskap," in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 76–8. She suggests that Breivik's terror emerges as a quasi-religious act of sacrifice with conspiratorial and occult undertones: Jone Salomonsen, "Kristendom, paganisme og kvinnefiendskap," in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 83 [author's own translation]. But there is arguably more to Breivik's Christianity, that can be gleaned by examining his uses of biblical material. Jorunn Økland focuses on Breivik's understanding of tradition, rather than specific interpretations and uses of biblical texts. Øystein Sørensen discusses Breivik's vision of the church but without attention to the Bible.

Admittedly, Breivik describes himself as not an “excessively religious man,” although at the same time as “a supporter of a monocultural Christian Europe.”<sup>27</sup> It is emphasized in the manifesto that “we” “believe in Christianity as a cultural, social, identity and moral platform.”<sup>28</sup> It is insistently stated that: “This makes us Christian.”<sup>29</sup> However, what is and what is not “cultural Christianity”? What is deserving of the label “theology” or “practicing Christian,” and according to whose authority? What if Islamophobia is inextricably caught up in a fealty to Christianity, at least rhetorically, in some circles? And how can we be so sure that Breivik's ideology has nothing to do with Christianity without acknowledging and then examining more closely how, why and in what ways Christianity is used in the manifesto? What assumptions about Christianity underlie the dismissal of Breivik as a far-right Christian terrorist? While I cannot answer all these questions in this article, my aim is to begin addressing them through close attention to the references to, and uses of, the Bible in the manifesto.

Biblical reception history, I suggest, provides a promising disciplinary perspective for teasing out the inner logic of the far-right ideological currents in contemporary Europe. In *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli* [Academic Perspectives on 22. July], Jorunn Økland describes how reception history traces the ways in which “cultural (canonical) texts are recycled, and how they change meaning by being used in new contexts or are interpreted in new ways.”<sup>30</sup> The critical reader is not looking for, or emphasizing, “the author's unique thoughts or articulations, but rather for what is selected or discarded, elaborated or criticized amongst the included sources.”<sup>31</sup> If we want to understand Breivik's manifesto, Økland argues, it is worth asking critical questions about the material he uses, cites, and reinterprets.<sup>32</sup> The collection *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. juli*, aims to generate debate on the multiple factors that are relevant to frame Breivik's acts of violence, by bringing together a number of interdisciplinary viewpoints.<sup>33</sup> Building on this

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<sup>27</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1404.

<sup>28</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1308.

<sup>29</sup> Breivik, Manifesto.

<sup>30</sup> Jorunn Økland, “Feminismen, Tradisjonen og Forventning,” in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 120. Author's own translation.

<sup>31</sup> Jorunn Økland, “Feminismen, tradisjonen og forventning,” in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås & Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 121.

<sup>32</sup> Jorunn Økland, “Feminismen, tradisjonen og forventning,” in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 120. Økland's focus is on the attitude to gender in relation to the Christian tradition.

<sup>33</sup> Anders Ravik Jupskås, “Et forsøk på å begripe det ubegripelige: tolv perspektiver på 22.juli”, in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 13.



attempt to widen the parameters of the debate, I follow Økland's pointer about the use of particular sources, and thus at the same time seek to hone in on one particular question that requires further attention, namely: How is the biblical material used in Breivik's manifesto?

### 3 Biblical References in the Manifesto

The references to the Bible do not form a major part of the manifesto.<sup>34</sup> They are, however, by no means negligible, with at least 62 explicit references to biblical texts, along with exegetical comments, as well as 27 references to "the Bible" more generally. These are drawn from across the biblical corpus.<sup>35</sup> The majority of the biblical references can be found in a section under the heading "The Bible and Self-Defence."<sup>36</sup> This section is situated within a larger part entitled "Christian Justification of the Struggle,"<sup>37</sup> in Book 3 of the manifesto ("A Declaration of Pre-Emptive War.")<sup>38</sup>

Breivik begins with an allusion to Popes Urban II and Innocent III granting favor to "martyrs of the church, those men and women who, by virtue of their suffering, assists in the intercession for all Christians" [sic], stating that in the twelfth century such favor was extended beyond crusaders of a particular context, to

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**34** I am focusing here on the role of the biblical references; throughout the manifesto there are larger themes of Christianity, particularly with attention to the Crusades (1.11–1.14; 1.22) and to tales of persecution of Christians by Muslims (2.31–2.34).

**35** References are made to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, Maccabees, Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, James, Revelation.

**36** Breivik, Manifesto, Section 3.149, 1328–34.

**37** Breivik, Manifesto, 1325.

**38** Breivik, Manifesto, 776. Øystein Sørensen suggests that it is in Book 3 that Breivik's totalitarian ideas fully come to the fore; he points to the way in which this coincides with the vision for a new era where the conservative church will uphold the structure of European society. Sørensen goes on to compare Breivik's notions of a culturally and politically Christian Europe with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ironically, Sørensen suggests, Breivik's views on religion mirror those of his worst enemies. But, arguably, there is no irony here; while there is hatred expressed for Islam and its adherents, there is also a palpable envy and imitation of what is seen as a "Muslim" capacity to take the Islamic religious and cultural heritage seriously, and, particularly, for taking Scripture seriously. Øystein Sørensen, "En totalitær mentalitet: det ideologiske tankegodset i Anders Behring Breiviks manifest," In *Akademiske Perspektiver På 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 106, 112–3.



all.<sup>39</sup> Moving to Pope Benedict XVI, the question is raised as to whether he would condone a new crusade. Answered in the negative, Breivik concludes that Christianity in Europe has been abandoned. It is then for “we, the cultural conservatives of Europe” to initiate “coups against the given multiculturalist European regimes and contribute to repel Islam from Europe for a third time.”[sic]<sup>40</sup> The biblical references that follow are situated within the framework of religiously motivated warfare. The hermeneutical assumption is that the Bible is not antimilitaristic, but can in fact furnish motivation, legitimation and encouragement to fight for the cause, a hermeneutical move that can also be seen in interpretations of the Bible in World Wars I and II.

The biblical references are plucked from the pages of the Bible and generously scattered in the relevant section in such a way so as to suggest a wide and thereby representative biblical scope. Individual verses are ripped out of their chapter, book, their surrounding narrative, logic and context, from Genesis to Revelation. Methods of sustained reflection, interpretation and commentary on the meaning of a biblical passage are waived in favor of a raw exhibition of biblical verses paraded one after another, seemingly haphazardly. Despite this ostensibly raw exhibition, Breivik's Bible emerges with a clear message: God is not a pacifist, the Bible encourages violence as self-defense of the Christian God and his seemingly exclusively European people; additionally, proponents of an anti-multiculturalist and anti-Muslim position are effectively soldiers of Christ, following a biblical tradition of righteous warfare. I will first discuss the use of the Bible to legitimate violence as self-defense, then the motivational powers of the Bible appropriated to fuel the contra-jihadist cause, followed by the claims that God is a fellow fighter, before commenting on the assumptions towards, and treatment of, the Bible more broadly.

### 3.1 A Self-Defense Bible

The section entitled “The Bible and Self-defence” begins: “Many Christians claim that acts of self-defense are unbiblical, unscriptural and ungodly. However, they are un-doubtfully wrong. The Bible could not be clearer on the right, even the duty we have as Christians to self-defense.”<sup>41</sup> Already at the outset, then, the tension between the Bible as war-mongering and the Bible as peace-fostering is brought

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<sup>39</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1327.

<sup>40</sup> Breivik, Manifesto.

<sup>41</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1328.

to the fore. In his article on biblical legitimations of violence, John J. Collins notes this ambiguity, commenting that while “terrorist hermeneutics can be seen as a case of the devil citing Scripture for his purpose, it is also true that the devil does not have to work very hard to find biblical precedents for the legitimation of violence.”<sup>42</sup> Multiple verses are cited in the manifesto to show it “is not a pacifist God we serve.”<sup>43</sup> It is stated that over and over again, “throughout the Old Testament,” God’s people are “commanded to fight with the best weapons available to them at that time.”<sup>44</sup> However, a glorification of violence for its own sake is evaded: although Luke 22:36 is quoted in order to show that Jesus commands his disciples to buy a sword, Matthew 26:52–54 is cited directly afterwards to demonstrate that Jesus advises Peter to put away his sword: this was not the right time to fight.<sup>45</sup> The function of the select biblical passages is to gloss violence as self-defense as well as a necessary means to an end, that of a “pure” and “protected” Europe free of Muslims. Exodus 22:2–3, for instance, is cited to show that if a thief breaks into your home, you “have the right to protect your home, your family and your property, the Bible says.”<sup>46</sup>

In the context of cultural conservative Europeans current war against the cultural Marxist/multiculturalist elites and the ongoing Islamic invasion through Islamic demographic warfare against Europe, every military action against our enemies is considered self-defence. There will be much suffering and destruction but eventually we will succeed and may be able to start rebuilding.<sup>47</sup>

The implicit message gleaned from what “the Bible” supposedly “says” is that Europe and European culture is a form of property and a home that is being invaded by Muslims coming to Europe, aided by multiculturalists within Europe. What Breivik’s ideology does, as Arne Johan Vetlesen outlines, is to supply Breivik’s role and mission with the martyr’s self-righteousness, played out in a drama of antithetical forces framed by a larger historical-political situation;<sup>48</sup> the

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<sup>42</sup> John J. Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas: The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1328.

<sup>44</sup> Breivik, Manifesto.

<sup>45</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1329.

<sup>46</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1328. Recalling Nehemiah building the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah 4:17–18 similarly serves to highlight the necessity of defense against the perceived threat of invasion.

<sup>47</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1329.

<sup>48</sup> Arne Johan Vetlesen, “Ondskap som perspektiv på hendelsene 22. Juli,” In *Akademiske Perspektiver På 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Juppskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 96.

biblical material lends a particularly effective tone of “righteousness,” and, as I will go on to discuss, both a “tradition” to fight for and the terminology to construct a triumphant self against the enemy “other.”

In *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Mark Jurgensmeyer points to a common feature amongst groups labelled as terrorist, namely the perception or construction of a position under attack whereby, “their acts are therefore simply response to the violence they have experienced.”<sup>49</sup> This is a common feature also in the Eurabia literature Breivik draws upon so heavily. The contemporary moment is configured as a “war zone.”<sup>50</sup> A choice is given based on biblical verses selected, to *either* “rise up in the power of your Lord and Saviour and learn how to become a true warrior in the Lord, or you can continue to keep your head in the sand.”<sup>51</sup> While the possibility of keeping “your head in the sand” is presented as a choice, the manifesto simultaneously emphasizes that *all* are “called to be soldiers of Jesus Christ, not just a select few.”<sup>52</sup> As Jone Salomonsen remarks, Breivik presents himself as a warrior and the manifesto is inviting its readers to be fellow warriors:<sup>53</sup> “He is expecting each and every one of us to learn how to war against any enemy or challenge that could come our way.”<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, the Bible is used to justify a form of aggressive, militant self-defense that alludes to the allegedly pious heroism of the crusades,<sup>55</sup> “we are now all good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>56</sup> To remove authority from contemporary European leaders who are seen as “traitors,” Acts 5:29 is referenced to make the claim that we “must obey God rather than men.”<sup>57</sup>

Within the logic of Breivik's ideological world-view, the Christian God is under attack due to multiculturalism and the purported increase of Muslims in Europe; therefore, the human powers that are responsible for such a process are branded an unequivocal threat. As a justification of acts of violence, then, Breivik's manifesto posits “self-defense” as a legitimized category of violence with recourse to

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49 Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2000), 12.

50 Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 12.

51 Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 12.

52 Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 12; Breivik, Manifesto, 1332.

53 Jone Salomonsen, “Kristendom, paganisme og kvinnefiendskap,” in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, ed. Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 78, 84.

54 Salomonsen, “Kristendom”, 78, 84.

55 The Crusades are a topic frequently alluded to in connection with the current “battle” against Islam.

56 Breivik, Manifesto, 1330.

57 Breivik, Manifesto, 1334.

the Bible as an authoritative source. This recourse to the Bible could be understood in light of attitudes to the Bible during the First World War. A.J. Hoover discusses how preachers during the First World War grappled with biblical principles and passages.<sup>58</sup> He argues that generally both German and British preachers, for instance, posited “love of enemy” as an ethical principle that should be evaluated before applying it absolutely;<sup>59</sup> defense of “family, nation, truth, Christ, or God” could trump such a principle.<sup>60</sup> Hence, the preachers were performing a hermeneutical move whereby biblical passages that seem to endorse militant self-defense or the status of the soldier are elevated to justify war, while other passages become relativized or inapplicable in the context of warfare.<sup>61</sup> Building on Anglican and Lutheran statements about the lawfulness of Christian soldiers,<sup>62</sup> clergy also argued that the Bible is “free of any antimilitarism,” and identified New Testament passages that seemed to endorse, or at least not critique, soldiers.<sup>63</sup> In fact, praise of the soldier by British and German preachers was enhanced by reference to Christ, Paul and biblical precepts that encouraged sacrifice and duty (for example, John 15:13).<sup>64</sup> As Hoover relates, sermons during the First World War firmly established theories of just war<sup>65</sup> – theories that could be seen as implicitly drawn on by Breivik. Breivik’s notion of a Bible that promotes self-defense and that legitimates violence, then, can be understood in a larger hermeneutical tradition of viewing Scripture as endorsing violence for a particular cause and encouraging acts of self-sacrifice and duty framed within Christian, biblical rhetoric. The common hermeneutical step here involves de-literalizing or relativizing biblical passages that could be taken as critical of violence, whilst elevating, and in places literalizing, passages that justify the use of militant and militaristic defense. Such a move is seen as justified by the public nature of the

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**58** A.J. Hoover, *God, Germany, and Britain in the Great War* (London/New York: Praeger, 1989), 106.

**59** Hoover, *God*, 106.

**60** Hoover, *God*, 106.

**61** Hoover mentions, for instance, the reference in Matthew 27:54 where a Roman soldier recognizes the greatness of Christ and is called a “true son of God.” He further explains how lines in the Sermon on the Mount about peacemakers came to be seen as inapplicable to war between nations: Hoover, *God*, 104–7.

**62** Such as Article 37 of The Anglican Articles of Religion; the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (1550); the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), and the Congregationalist Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order (1658); Hoover, *God*, 106.

**63** Hoover, *God*, 106–7.

**64** Hoover, *God*, 108.

**65** Hoover, *God*, 103.

cause (rather than private violence) and because the “essence of Christianity” is assumed to be, as Hoover puts it, “heroism, love, sacrifice, devotion to duty.”<sup>66</sup> Breivik constructs a narrative of heroism, duty and sacrifice, then, in which he situates himself within a European ‘fellowship’ where “the sword he wields is the sword of community justice, not a private sword.”<sup>67</sup>

## 3.2 A Motivational Bible

To bolster motivation in the face of a majority that does not accept the world-view of Breivik and his fellow contra-jihadists, the story of David slaying Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 is mentioned several times as an example of the victory of the “under-dog.”<sup>68</sup> Økland suggests that the synchronic context (contemporary Europe) motivates for action, and the diachronic context (tradition, here religious tradition) authorizes the action.<sup>69</sup> But the biblical archive seems to double conveniently as both a motivating and an authorizing corpus, folding the synchronic and diachronic by treating the biblical references as isolated fragments that can be cited to evoke the authority of tradition *and* simultaneously “speak” to a present in a motivating manner. In other words, not much exegesis is presented – as if the passages speak unproblematically to the present – nor is any attention paid to the larger stories these references are taken from. Isaiah 54:17 is cited to affirm that no weapon against them will succeed; Daniel 11:32 highlights the promise of “great exploits” and strength “for the people who know their God.” Psalm 18:34 is cited to confirm the idea of God’s support for battle and an affirmation of violent victory: “He teaches my hands to make war,” which continues, in verses 37–39:

I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them;  
Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.  
I have wounded them,  
So that they could not rise;  
They have fallen under my feet.  
For You have armed me with strength for the battle;  
You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. (Ps 18:37–39)<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Hoover, *God*, 108.

<sup>67</sup> Hoover, *God*, 107.

<sup>68</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 33, 1158, 1329.

<sup>69</sup> Jorunn Økland, “Feminismen, Tradisjonen og Forventning,” in *Akademiske Perspektiver på 22. Juli*, eds. Anders Ravik Jupskås & Anders Ravik Jupskås (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2012), 126.

<sup>70</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1331.

1 Corinthians 4:20 supplies the claim that “the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power.”<sup>71</sup> The exegetical conclusion drawn is that “God can anoint you with His supernatural power to defeat any enemy that may come your way.”<sup>72</sup> It is emphatically stated: “All of the above Scripture verses are definitely telling you that God can anoint you with His power whenever that power is going to be needed to take on any kind of enemy or challenge.”<sup>73</sup> There is, then, a sense of comfort infused in the motivational verses derived from the biblical corpus. A supplementary note is added, lest the reader mistakenly think this will simply occur without any personal effort; the need for mental strength and courage is of the utmost necessity, in order “to step out with His power to use it to directly engage with your enemy.”<sup>74</sup> It is a matter of impetus as much as comfort, Breivik states: “God is telling you that He does not want you to be a wimp.”<sup>75</sup> Proverbs 24:10 is cited to back up this point, showing that, “[i]f you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”<sup>76</sup> To re-emphasize the divine aid given to warriors of the cause, a reference to Acts 12:23 presents angels as protective beings, “for the purpose of helping you out with something,” just as the “angel of the Lord” strikes Herod and he is “eaten by worms and died.”<sup>77</sup>

Again, parallels to this use of the Bible can be found in the two World Wars. Amongst British soldiers, Bibles proliferated in both wars,<sup>78</sup> as Scripture quickly became a source of comfort.<sup>79</sup> However, such religious rhetoric could also be readily used as a motivating “force for morale” and to incite “righteous enthusiasm” for the cause.<sup>80</sup> The Bible provides a divine agent on the side of the vulnerable soldier, such as the verse Michael Snape cites from Exodus 14:14, read by two English soldiers before an attack in November 1917: “The Lord will fight for you.”<sup>81</sup> Breivik embraces this hermeneutic too, but by positing God as an active fellow fighter in the struggle against multiculturalism and Islam.

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71 Breivik, *Manifesto*, 1331.

72 Breivik, *Manifesto*.

73 Breivik, *Manifesto*.

74 Breivik, *Manifesto*.

75 Breivik, *Manifesto*, 1332.

76 Proverbs 24:10, cited in Breivik, *Manifesto*, 1331.

77 Acts 12: 23, cited in Breivik, *Manifesto*, 1334.

78 Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 233–6.

79 Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, 236.

80 Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, 245.

81 Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, 245.

### 3.3 A Biblical Fellow Fighter

The legitimating role of the Bible for self-defense and the motivational stimulus to fight for the cause goes further.<sup>82</sup> Self-defense and motivational rallying is merely the starting point, the citations of biblical verses function cumulatively to make another point, namely that God will assist in the fight and that God is a man of war. In addition to sometimes running “a protective shield around you where nothing can get through to attack you,” God is depicted as stepping in himself: “This is where God will literally take your enemy head on and do battle with it.”<sup>83</sup> Isaiah 41:13, for example, is used to promise the Lord's help: “For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’” Other verses, such as Exodus 15:3 and 15:6 are cited to portray the Lord as a warrior and the Lord shattering the enemy; a reference to Isaiah 42:13 emphasizes this point: “The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.”<sup>84</sup> God is wheeled out as a hyper-masculine, ferocious icon of war, lending fervor and divine credence to the cause. Accordingly, Breivik's manifesto makes use of what Collins identifies as the Deuteronomic and Apocalyptic fashioning of “identity by constructing absolute, incompatible contrasts” that can be gleaned in some biblical texts in regard to self and other.<sup>85</sup> The “absoluteness of

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<sup>82</sup> For these motivational elements and their relationship to biblical texts, a parallel could be drawn to the “Spiritual Manual” of the 9/11 attackers. Tilman Seidensticker analyzes the document and concludes that the vast majority of the document is “concerned with internal religious preparation for the different phases of the mission,” involving quotes and calls for recitations mostly from Koranic verses. Tilman Seidensticker, “The Instructions Given in the *Spiritual Manual* and their Particular Interpretation of Islam,” in *The 9/11 Handbook, Annotated Translation and Interpretation of the Attacker's Spiritual Manual* (Equinox Publishing, 2006), 20–1. While Breivik's manifesto does not include suggestions for recitations of biblical verses in the imminent lead-up to the violent acts, there is a section entitled “Battle verses,” followed by biblical verses, and the explications of these verses are directed at the necessity to take up arms and fight, in the knowledge that God will be present and provide power and strength. The “Spiritual Manual” of the 9/11 hijackers was clearly intended for their own use in preparation and prayer before the attacks, while Breivik's manifesto is a document intended for educational purposes (“study these verses very carefully – as they will show you the incredible supernatural power that God can channel through you” [1330]) and a broad distribution; at the same time, the hope may well be, as appears to be implied in the section of “Battle verses,” that such biblical passages *will* come to function as motivational recitations in preparation for acts of “resistance” to Muslims and multiculturalism.

<sup>83</sup> Breivik, Manifesto, 1332.

<sup>84</sup> Breivik, Manifesto.

<sup>85</sup> Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas”: 18.



the categories is guaranteed by divine revelation and is therefore not subject to negotiation or compromise.”<sup>86</sup> In this way, violence is justified, even mandated, by a higher power that cannot be questioned.

### 3.4 A European Book/Base

Furthermore, “the Bible” comes to stand as a “foundation” for European cultural identity and a bastion for far-right ideology. One of the proposed aims in the manifesto is to reconfigure the academic discipline of sociology in order to replace, “the Marxist ideological view with a conservative/anti-Marxist” ideology. The Bible features at the top of the list of “textbooks” for this reconfiguration, followed by a rather eclectic list of authors such as Nicolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Edmund Burke and William James.<sup>87</sup> The function of the Bible is not for personal piety, worship or individual and communal faith but to provide the possibility for wider societal reform on a political and cultural level. In that spirit, the idea that reading the Bible might foster a “personal relationship with Jesus or God” is seen as trivial.<sup>88</sup> Rather in Section 3.151, “European Christendom” is portrayed as “identity, moral, laws and codexes which has produced the greatest civilization the world has ever witnessed.”<sup>89</sup> Lamenting the contemporary state of Europe, with the words of the blogger “Vanishing American,” contemporary society is accused of being biblically “illiterate”: unknowledgable about the Bible and unable or unwilling to read biblical texts;<sup>90</sup> it is proposed that “we today” are generally:

more ignorant than our ancestors where the Bible and the faith are concerned. If anybody is wrongly handling the word of God, it is likely to be us, not our forefathers. Their brains were at least not addled by nonsense and Political Correctness, and I trust the consensus of our forefathers through the centuries rather than the consensus among today’s compromised generation.<sup>91</sup>

In this way, the Bible becomes a desired foundation tied to a nebulous and nostalgic past; the Bible is something “we today” have become alienated from. The

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**86** Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas”: 18.

**87** Breivik, Manifesto, 380.

**88** Breivik, Manifesto, 1341. See also, 1308.

**89** Breivik, Manifesto, 1341.

**90** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**91** Breivik, Manifesto, 685. The view that biblical literacy is at an all-time low is voiced across different fields and camps, as discussed by many of the authors in *Rethinking Biblical Literacy*, ed. Katie Edwards (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

“threats” of a politically correct multiculturalism become an urgent call to reacquaint readers with a perceived “authentic” Bible elusively tied to the perception of a patriarchal past of “our forefathers.”

In line with the way contemporary Europe is seen as infiltrated by its supposed “other,” Islam, a particular idea of the Bible is used to evoke a pure(r) origin point: “we will have to go back to our roots, to the Vulgate, the Versio Vulgata or the original pre-1611 King James Bible.”<sup>92</sup> This so-called “original,” more authentic, Bible is affiliated with “a Christendom that propagated self-defence against the infidel Muslims.”<sup>93</sup> In contrast, the contemporary Bible is described as “modified,” a piece of propaganda with a supremely modern agenda, a “pacifist, gender neutral Bible” that has lost “what God says.”<sup>94</sup> What has been obscured, according to the manifesto, is God’s encouragement of “the ongoing Crusade (self-defense),”<sup>95</sup> a message that has been blurred by the “political correctness” of the modern world. In the same vein as the conspiracy theory of European governments colluding with Islamic imperialism, the Bible too is presented as a corpus that has been ideologically manipulated: “Our modern Bible perversion was written by men using dynamic equivalence. In other words, they are telling you their interpretation and their doctrine, NOT what the manuscripts really say.”<sup>96</sup>

The contemporary Church is accused of complicity regarding the “perverted” Bible with its “pacifist, fanatically egalitarian and gender inclusive language,” which, it is argued, “wasn’t in the original texts, in the original Bible.”<sup>97</sup> The manifesto advocates salvaging the Bible from the clutches of the contemporary church and mainstream society. The Bible is perceived as a victim in need of saving, to access its more authentic, original meanings and thus recover the “roots” of Christian Europe.<sup>98</sup> “Lack of guide to scripture” is seen as a source of the problematic understanding of the Bible in contemporary society,<sup>99</sup> and the Protestant notion of *sola scriptura* is denounced.<sup>100</sup> A reformed Catholic church is envisioned as the

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**92** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**93** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**94** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**95** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**96** Breivik, Manifesto. Emphasis in the original. Ironically, a new Norwegian translation of the Bible was released in October 2011, a result of the collaborative work of biblical scholars, as well as Norwegian poets and authors, with the aim to offer a more readable and up-to-date Bible, changing, for instance, the highly-debated designation of Mary as a “virgin” to a “young woman.” This Bible became a best-seller in Norway in 2012.

**97** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**98** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140.

**99** Breivik, Manifesto, 1140, 1135.

**100** Breivik, Manifesto, 1135.

“necessary guide to the meaning of Scripture.”<sup>101</sup> The importance of the Bible as an authentic origin point to Europe that must be authoritatively safeguarded and explicated by “a united, strong and appealing ‘Traditional Church’” is found under the heading, “European Political Solutions for the Future,”<sup>102</sup> showcasing its crucial place within the manifesto’s ideology. Only through such a return to the so-called “original” pre-modern Bible, aided by the policing of biblical interpretation, can a solution be found for Europe to retrieve “traditional religious values akin to the Bible’s injunction to honour thy mother and father.”<sup>103</sup> The English translations of the Bible used in the manifesto are mostly from the New King James Version. The effect is to retrieve biblical verses in the “traditional” language of the King James Version but with a somewhat updated vocabulary and grammar.<sup>104</sup> Although in theory Breivik desires a return to a pre-1611 Bible, the use of the New King James Version reflects the overall attitude to the Bible and its relation to the far-right agenda in the manifesto: what is presented polemically as a *traditional* Bible is used to re-inscribe *today’s* Europe in its so-called original and pure guise. In other words, the use of an “old” translation that is partially updated is a way of calling for a biblical tradition that is embedded in a contemporary rhetoric and for a contemporary cause.

## 4 Pre-Modern-Bible/Post-Modern-Bible

In *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto*, Yvonne Sherwood and Stephen Moore draw attention to the anxiety arising as to what place the Bible has in modernity.<sup>105</sup> The Bible, they write, “epitomized for the secular Western mindset, more than any other single cultural emblem, the irrational, the delusional, the medieval, the morally questionable,” and it symbolized “that which was remote, archaic, and – precisely – behind the times: the time before the modern, the other than the modern.”<sup>106</sup> Moore and Sherwood argue that

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**101** Breivik, Manifesto, 1135.

**102** Breivik, Manifesto, 1133. This section comes with the somewhat absurd proviso that it is not complete “due to the complexity of various aspects relating to solutions for Western Europe.”

**103** Breivik, Manifesto, 1146.

**104** While the New King James Version is by far the most utilized translation in the manifesto, the King James Version also features, as well as, on occasion, the New Revised Standard Version – sometimes mixed together within a single citation.

**105** Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

**106** Moore and Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar*, 123.

biblical studies has contributed to this notion of the Bible by analyzing it primarily as an ancient collection of documents, with the help of modern methods of inquiry and interpretation. This arguably nurtured the view of the Bible as an alien in the modern world, antithetical to modern values and norms.<sup>107</sup> Moore and Sherwood suggest that the Bible is increasingly recognized as a key site on which foundational, but unsustainable, 'modern' separations have been made.<sup>108</sup> For Breivik and the far-right ideology he draws on, the Bible does indeed become strategically antithetical to modern values and norms. Breivik's Bible emerges as a key site for foundational separations – pre-modern and postmodern, self and other, original-traditional Bible and modern-post-modern Bible – that must be sustained in order for the pro-European, anti-Islamic ideological machinery to function. The Bible becomes a split site, occupying on the one hand a position as a pre-modern symbol for an original "Europe," and on the other hand, as a perverted ally of mainstream modern and postmodern perspectives. In the fracture between the ancient and the modern, Breivik's Bible is a Jekyll-and-Hyde body of books that can metamorphose according to whose hands it falls into.

Økland points out that "tradition" in Breivik's manifesto is less a matter of specific content and more a rhetorical locus to pitch a battle against contemporary society;<sup>109</sup> this holds also for the way in which an original Bible and a traditional Europe are conflated. For Breivik, the Bible and the Christian church must, Økland argues, be treated as dead objects whose authority cannot be challenged, rather than facets of a living tradition.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, however, Breivik's use of the Bible performs a collapse of the space between ancient-Bible and modern-Europe. His "dead" unquestionable Bible comes to life to haunt the modern world as an exemplar of a postmodern hypertext. Lamenting the divide between ancient and modern, and feeding on it to inaugurate a shift "back to the Bible" and, in a simultaneous move, back to a pre-modern Europe, Breivik's Bible is simultaneously dragged out of its pre-modern guise to be clad in militaristic uniform and put to the service of a contemporary far-right agenda. Like a postmodern collage, Breivik cuts his Bible irreverently into manifold pieces to be stuck onto a contemporary context and thus play the role of divine justification of, and collaboration in, terrorist violence. In the name of a God of Christian conservative terror, a God of European patriots, a Bible is called for that will be suitably edited to underpin a European culture characterized by a ferocious othering of Muslims. Scattering

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<sup>107</sup> Moore and Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar*, 123.

<sup>108</sup> Moore and Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar*, 128.

<sup>109</sup> Jorunn Økland, "Feminismen", 122.

<sup>110</sup> Jorunn Økland, "Feminismen", 123.

snippets from the biblical archive into his 2011 hypertext instead of attending to the varieties, complexities and contradictions of the Bible, particular biblical words are neatly laid out in the manifesto as if to be snorted like lines of cocaine in order to arouse enthusiasm, motivation and confidence. Breivik's Bible is also, then, a version and view of the Bible that has come back to haunt the "proper" uses of the Bible in the modern, secular West. By critiquing modern society and culture for its divergence from the pre-modern Bible and its "original" meanings, the biblical archive becomes a crucial prop for the reform of Europe as well as a motivating and legitimating device for acts of terror.

## 5 Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to tease out what ideological work the Bible does in Breivik's manifesto. What do the biblical texts *do* in the manifesto? What is the Bible and what function does it play for Breivik and his fellow ideologues?<sup>111</sup> My analysis of the biblical references in the manifesto has shown them to perform the function of legitimating violence glossed as self-defense, and of motivating a violent battle against multiculturalism and Islam as soldiers of Christ, with the aid of a militant God. Additionally, the notion of an "original" Bible is used as a symbol for an original Europe, free from modernity, multiculturalism and Muslims. The retrieval of Europe goes hand in hand with a strong, ecclesial authoritative guide to the so-called "original" pre-modern meaning of Scripture unsullied by modern attitudes and values.<sup>112</sup>

Since 2011, both Bangstad and Strømme have reported on individuals, figures, groups and planned terrorist attacks citing Breivik as an inspiration.<sup>113</sup> Despite the fact that the manifesto could be described dismissively as a "pastiche"<sup>114</sup> or a "cut-and-paste document,"<sup>115</sup> it is undergoing a "canonization" as a

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**111** More work needs to be done to outline the complex ways in which Breivik's sources align or misalign with the argument I have outlined here. I am currently undertaking work that will help identify and analyze some of the most prominent sources Breivik draws on regarding their use of, and attitude to, the Bible, to appear in a forthcoming article.

**112** "Modern" attitudes and values are conceived predominantly as a politics associated with national-cultural treachery, a religion associated with tolerance and weakness, and a feminism associated with promiscuity.

**113** Sindre Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia* (London: Zed Books, 2014), 8. Geir Lippestad too writes of the worrying status increasingly given to Breivik in some circles as a cult figure: Geir Lippestad, *Det Kan Vi Stå For* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2014), 182.

**114** Bangstad, *Anders Breivik*, 71.

**115** Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (London/New York: Verso, 2015), 95.

far-right tract through the endorsement of its message and author in some – not negligible – circles. Mario Borghezio, for example, a representative of the Italian Northern League and member of the European Parliament, expressed praise for the manifesto only a few days after the massacre on Utøya.<sup>116</sup> Franco “Bifo” Berardi recounts how Borghezio, live on Italian state radio “claimed that he shared Breivik’s ‘opposition to Islam,’ including his call for a ‘crusade’ by Christians against Europe’s ‘drift toward Islam.’”<sup>117</sup> Borghezio added that a significant number of Europeans share Breivik’s views. In his work on far-right extremism in Europe, Øyvind Strømme draws attention to the way in which Islamist terror and extremism have been amply highlighted in politics and the media, while far-right extremism has largely been downplayed or ignored.<sup>118</sup> Why is “Islam” so easily appendaged as a label to terrorist forces and figures, while Breivik’s Christian affiliations and their entanglement with far-right extremism are ignored or sidelined? Do we share the contra-jihadist belief in Islam as somehow more political and politicized than Christianity? Are the aspects that link Breivik to Christianity and the Bible not engaged with because they appear exceptional within secular modern Europe? Or, on the contrary, because they appear *unexceptional* within the old debates about “religion and violence” but remain mystified in the complex causal web of politicized violence? Does Breivik’s use of the Bible signal the failure of biblical studies to proselytize appropriate methods and means of understanding the Bible in the modern world, or does it merely convey a reactionary corollary to such trends from the margins of society? And, what happens if those margins gravitate from the periphery and encroach on mainstream culture in order to whip up hatred and mistrust of Muslims, disguising the rhetoric in euphemistic terms such as ‘European cultural identity,’ ‘European norms and values,’ ‘Christian conservatism’ and ‘cultural Christianity’?

Moore and Sherwood conclude *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar* with the suggestion that “by engaging anew with the formative history of our discipline, we can investigate and interrogate the process whereby critical discourse on the Bible became a means for the consolidation of certain antitheses foundational to modernity.”<sup>119</sup> Identifying and challenging foundational antitheses in their

<sup>116</sup> Berardi, *Heroes*, 96–7.

<sup>117</sup> Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (London/New York: Verso, 2015), 97.

<sup>118</sup> See for instance the chapters “Den Ensomme Ulvens Flokk” [The Lone Wolf’s Pack] and “Den Tredje Bølgen” [The Third Wave], in Øyvind Strømme, *Det Mørke Nettet: Om Høyrechts-tremisme, Kontrajihadisme og Terror i Europa* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012).

<sup>119</sup> Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 128.

relationship to the Bible, such as those Breivik and his ideology revel in, is of paramount importance. But this challenge is also necessary as a debate outside the academic operations of biblical studies.<sup>120</sup> How, where, and in what ways the discursive wrestling over public biblical material is played out in relation to the uneasy categories of “religion” and “politics,” are quite possibly some of the most urgent questions today.<sup>121</sup> John J. Collins suggests that there is a need to continuously point to the radical diversity of the biblical archive along with the question of *how* to read and treat its texts<sup>122</sup> – concerns at the heart of reception history. To butt against a monolithic Bible that spawns “certitude that transcends human discussion and argumentation,”<sup>123</sup> as Collins puts it, is to keep demonstrating the ways in which the Bible functions as a cultural chameleon, changing its colors according to its contexts. But the Bible is also a political animal of a less congenially adaptive kind. Taking account of the behavior patterns of biblical texts in extremist ideology might contribute in crucial ways to better understand contemporary far-right discourse, the ever-changing roles of religion in Europe, and the complex, ongoing interactions between culture, politics and the biblical archive.

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**120** There are parallels that need to be outlined further also between Breivik’s uses of the Bible and more politically mainstream hankerings for a “cultural Bible” that will ensure national or European identity, as can be seen for instance in statements made by Joseph Ratzinger on Europe while he was pope, and, British Prime minister David Cameron on the King James Bible signifying English national identity.

**121** I follow here the important work foregrounded on the Bible and politics by scholars such as Halvor Moxnes, Yvonne Sherwood and James Crossley.

**122** Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas”: 19–20.

**123** Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas”: 20–1.



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