



Creating an Archive of American Religious Groups

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to create an archive of American religious groups' views on social issues between 1918-1965. Topics covered include: segregation, World War II, the Cold War, civil rights, feminism, the Vietnam War, global missions, race, eugenics and the population explosion.

During the summer, we have focused on various religious groups' views on Hitler and the American racial hierarchy. Groups surveyed include the Norwegian Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church in the United States, Southern Baptist Convention, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, United Presbyterian Church of North America, Assemblies of God, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists, Congregational Christian Churches, Protestant Episcopal Church, Reformed Church in America, Evangelical and Reformed Church, Methodist Church, United Lutheran Church in America, American Unitarian Association, Society of Friends, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Reformed Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic Church, Universalist General Convention, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., and Disciples of Christ.

RESULTS

We found the sympathizers to Hitler to be the most white supremacist and largely in support of the contemporary U.S. racial hierarchy, as well as segregation, slavery, the Ku Klux Klan, and lynching.

The distant groups tended to focus much less on racial issues within the United States, as they tended to focus primarily on the Second Coming. Nevertheless, some groups, particularly the Mormons, continued to justify racial prejudice and segregation.

The groups that held ambivalent views about Hitler, on the other hand, generally opposed racism and white supremacy in the United States. Many of these groups supported civil rights and criticized race prejudice.

Critics of Hitler were similarly opposed to racism as it manifested in the United States, and these groups tended to be the most vocal supporters of civil rights by the 1960s.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

We requested articles from denominational periodicals in the form of PDFs through the Inter-Library Loan service and transcribed and coded them for further analysis.

We categorized the surveyed denominations into four groups: sympathizers with Hitler, Distant from Hitler, Ambivalent about Hitler, and Critics of Hitler.

Table 1. Stance on Hitler by persecution risk level and views on the U.S. racial hierarchy

	<i>Accepted U.S. Racial Hierarchy</i>	<i>Critical of U.S. Racial Hierarchy</i>
<i>No t at Ris k</i>	Sympathizers with Hitler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norwegian Lutheran Church • Presbyterian Church in the United States • Southern Baptist Convention • Presbyterian Church in the United States of America • United Presbyterian Church of North America 	Ambivalent about Hitler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational Christian Churches • Protestant Episcopal Church • Reformed Church in America • Evangelical and Reformed Church • Methodist Church • United Lutheran Church in America • American Unitarian Association • Society of Friends • Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
<i>At Ris k</i>	Distant from Hitler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemblies of God • Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints • Seventh Day Adventists 	Critics of Hitler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed Judaism • Orthodox Judaism • Conservative Judaism • Jehovah's Witness • Roman Catholic Church • Universalist General Convention • National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. • Disciples of Christ