

KB Journal:

As both a former student of Camille Lewis and a graduate of Bob Jones University, I read her book, *Romancing the Difference: Kenneth Burke, Bob Jones University, and the Rhetoric of Religious Fundamentalism*, as well as her recent article in *KB Journal* Spring 2008, "Publish and Perish?: My Fundamentalist Education from the Inside Out," with great interest.

Lewis remains one of the best teachers I have ever had. She first exposed me to Kenneth Burke. (Who knew that Burke was read at Bob Jones University?) But her recent article is not as productive as it could be. Her rhetoric is, from one perspective, captivating, but it is not Burkean enough, because it is not romantic enough, to use her own frame. Religious sectarians need to be included, but a stridently prophetic voice is not the best means of calling them to the conversation table.

Lewis has been dealt some hard blows, to be sure, and the purpose of this article is not to make an apology for the school. (I do not intend to return to Bob Jones University, nor am I suggesting that Lewis must make nice with the school.) But since I went to college at Bob Jones University, I am quite familiar with its rhetoric and with the type of Protestant Fundamentalism the school represents. Fundamentalists revel in secular denouncement, and calling them narrow-minded, hateful, unethical, or anti-intellectual will only harden them more. Lewis suggests an alternative in Wink and Wallis, but there is an approach more likely to foster conversation and to produce a greater measure of success with religious separatists.

Instead of letting Bob Jones University's dean of students, Jim Berg, become the unorthodox outsider who needs to be refused if the romantic separatist ideal is to succeed, I suggest another alternative: Berg can be reread and incorporated into Lewis' romantic frame. This move is more strategic, not least because the concept of mortification is not as marginal to fundamentalist identity as Lewis would propose. Even more, Scripture, the constitutional document for Protestant fundamentalism, can be employed to engage religious sectarians rather than to drive them away. The resources for such a democratic inclusion (and potential transformation) are actually latent in Lewis's own work.

Thanks for your consideration.

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