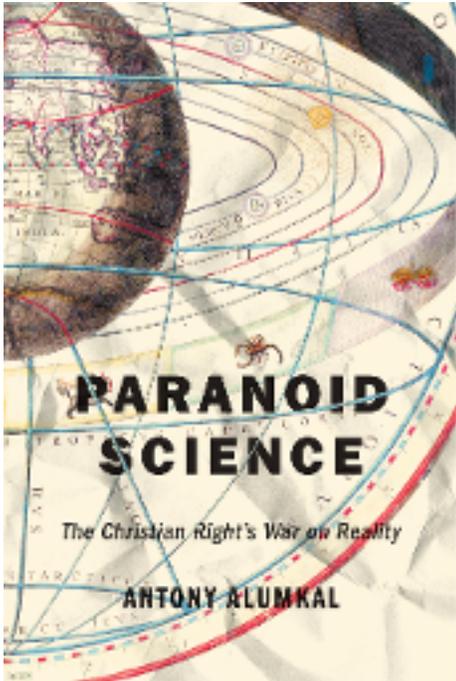


New Book by St. Thomas Member Takes on Christian Right Pseudoscience



By Tony Alummkal

Some of you heard me discuss my book-in-progress during Adult Forum in the fall of 2015. I am pleased to say that it was released on May 23. *Paranoid Science: The Christian Right's War on Reality* (New York University Press) examines the Christian Right's anti-science

agenda. When the work of scientists threatens the theology or politics of Christian Right leaders, these leaders respond by creating paranoid conspiracy theories. They depict scientists as not only peddling false information, but also threatening to undermine the moral foundation of American society. The Christian Right trades science for pseudoscience, and in the process creates its own alternative reality.

The book includes four case study chapters. Chapter 1 examines intelligent design creationism. ID leaders argue that evolutionary biology is not supported by empirical evidence but is instead based on atheistic philosophy. The alleged secret goal of biologists is to undermine belief in God.

Chapter 2 examines the ex-gay movement, which attempt to "cure" same-sex attraction through prayer and psychological counseling. Ex-gay leaders argue that the psychiatric, psychological, and medical guilds are

suppressing the scientific truth that homosexuality is a curable illness as these guilds follow the political agenda of gay activists.

Chapter 3 examines Christian Right leaders' bioethics agenda, which follows from their belief in human exceptionalism. They oppose embryonic stem cell research, cybernetic enhancements of human bodies, germline human genetic engineering, medical aid in dying, and withdrawal of life support. Christian Right leaders argue that ignoring their advice will send American society down a slippery slope to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Chapter 4 examines the split in the Christian Right concerning environmentalism. While the moderate right is willing to accept the existence of anthropogenic climate change, the far right supports the denial efforts of the fossil fuel industry. Environmentalists, the far right argues, are inspired by Satan, anti-human, pro-death, and plotting to create a totalitarian government that will control the world.

As I was finishing *Paranoid Science*, I began planning another book. This next book will critique popular "progressive Christian" writers like Marcus Borg, John Shelby Spong, and John Dominic Crossan. My thesis will be that the popular version of progressive Christianity is a marketing category and not an accurate theological description. I will make at least three specific arguments about these writers: 1) They recycle old liberal Protestant and Unitarian theology and rely on dated scholarship. This makes them "retro-liberal" rather than progressive. 2) They engage in the same kind of binary (either/or) thinking characteristic of fundamentalism. 3) Their project is steeped in white, middle-class privilege and largely ignores the various forms of liberation theology. I plan to present pieces of the next book in Adult Form as the writing comes together.