

THE PREACHER, THE CONGRESSMAN, AND THE NEO-CONFEDERACY

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Read "Douglas Wilson's Religious Empire" at
www.class.uidaho.edu/ngier/Wilson.htm

Mr. [Joe] Wilson, never apologize for allowing your
love of truth to overrun your desire to be polite.

-- Sons of Confederate Veterans, Tea Party Website

I have long believed that we should not be embarrassed by anything in the Bible.

--Moscow pastor Douglas Wilson defending the right to own slaves

Moscow's infamous preacher Doug Wilson and South Carolina's Rep. Joe Wilson have more than a last name in common: they both have ties to the neo-Confederate movement.

Joe Wilson's sons claim that the outburst "You lie!" during President Obama's was not typical of their "mild mannered" father. They must have forgotten the times he shouted "America haters!" into the faces of those who opposed the Iraq war.

When Joe Wilson was in the state legislature, he voted against removing the Confederate flag from the top of the state's capitol. By a vote of 34-7 the South Carolina Senate voted to fly it instead on the statehouse grounds.

Wilson has been associated with Richard Quinn, editor-in-chief of *The Southern Partisan*, a neo-Confederate journal that publishes articles critical of

Abraham Lincoln and revisionist views of the Civil War. The journal ran ads for T-shirts with Lincoln's image and "*Sic Semper Tyrannis*," what John Wilkes Booth shouted as he shot the president.

Wilson is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), which used to be an apolitical organization dedicated to maintaining Confederate Army graves and participating in civil war reenactments. Since 2002, however, the SCV has been taken over by extremists, who, according to former SCV chaplain Eric Dean, have a "secessionist and racist agenda." Dean resigned in disgust when he learned of a sermon by another SCV chaplain who claimed that slavery was supported by the Bible.

Since 2002 SCV membership has declined by 36,000 to 27,000, but Kirk Lyons, who has been instrumental in radicalizing the SCV, boasts that "the slackers and the grannies have been purged from our ranks." In 1990 Lyons and another SCV leader were married by Richard Butler at a double-ring ceremony at the now defunct Aryan Nations compound in Northern Idaho. In December 2005 Lyons explained that the SCV's goal was "a modern, 21st century Christian war machine capable of uniting the Confederate community and leading it to ultimate victory."

Yet another Wilson, Ron Wilson, was SCV's "commander in chief" from 2002-2004, and he began the purge of moderate members. Wilson once sold anti-Semitic literature from his home and was a member of Council of Concerned Citizens (CCC), whose website decries "negroes, queers and other retrograde species of humanity." H. Rondel Rumberg, former SCV chaplain-in-chief, was a CCC member.

Senator Trent Lott was forced to resign as Senate Majority Leader when it was learned that he was a CCC member. The SCV, CCC, and neo-Confederate League of the South (LOS) frequently join forces at protests throughout the South.

Outgoing Commander Chris Sullivan was a long time editor of the *The Southern Partisan*. The current Commander Charles McMichael is a member of Free-Mississippi, an LOS off-shoot most famous for its Declaration of Southern Cultural Independence, which declines "to participate in this alien, national culture." Many moderate SCV members blame the LOS for the take-over of their organization.

When I was told that Doug Wilson, pastor of Christ Church (Moscow's second largest), was associated with neo-Confederates, I scoffed at the idea. I knew that he was a far right-winger, but I considered this step inconceivable for my former student.

But in the fall of 2003 the Moscow community learned that Wilson and Steve Wilkins, a Louisiana preacher, had published a booklet entitled "Southern Slavery As It Was." The authors argued that Southerners had a biblical right to own slaves, and that the Ante-Bellum South was the most harmonious multiracial society in history. Wilson withdrew the book from circulation, but only because it was discovered that 20 percent of it was plagiarized.

Wilkins was a LOS founding director and some of us in Moscow are taking some credit for forcing him to resign from the LOS board. Wilkins, however, has not backed off from LOS principles or the contents of the slavery booklet.

The LOS was founded in 1994 by Michael Hill, who proposed that an independent neo-Confederacy of fifteen states would have the duty to protect the values of Anglo-Celtic culture from black Americans, who are "a compliant and deadly underclass." Hill is a regular visitor at Wilkins' church in Monroe, Louisiana, and Wilkins told me that he could not prevent him from attending.

Doug Wilson rejects the term "neo-Confederate," but accepts "paleo-Confederate" and "paleo-Conservative," which mean support for states rights and limiting the vote to propertied males. Yes, Wilson does not believe that women should vote.

Wilson's K-12 school celebrates Robert E. Lee's birthday, but not Lincoln's nor King's. A visitor once saw a Confederate flag in Wilson's office and it was once displayed at a Christ Church picnic. As President of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce, a Christ Church member gave a leadership talk praising Robert E. Lee and concluded his presentation with an image of the Confederate battle flag.

Just like Joe Wilson, Doug Wilson is not known for good manners. During the slavery booklet controversy (1,200 citizens paid for a full page ad declaring "Not in Our Town"), Doug Wilson wrote Idaho's governor and requested that two University of Idaho history professors be fired. Their sin? They had dared to criticize the slavery booklet as an outrageous piece revisionist history.

Also quick with witty replies and epithets, Wilson calls his Moscow critics "intoleristas," and we proudly wear this as a badge of honor. Intolerance is not a vice when one calls out those who are dishonest, deceptive, evasive, and have bad manners.

Doug Wilson has not budged in his extremist views, but Joe Wilson should be given a chance to defend or reject his SCV membership. He certainly cannot say that this is a new development in what used to be one of the most respected Confederate organizations.