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Professor Lackey’s literary study defines Adolf Hitler’s version of Christianity

Summary: Lackey, assistant professor of English, has illuminated numerous literary works that specifically allude to Hitler’s Christian conception of the political.

(July 21, 2009)-Michael Lackey, assistant professor of English at the University of Minnesota, Morris, offers a new interpretation of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. A recipient of an inaugural University of Minnesota Imagine Fund Award, Lackey will use his award to continue research of the writings of Hitler and the Nazis for his new book, Modernist God States: A Literary Study of the Theological Origins of Totalitarianism.

By clearly defining Hitler’s unique version of Christianity, Lackey has illuminated numerous literary works that specifically allude to Hitler’s Christian conception of the political. Contra the prevailing view that Western civilization began a move towards secularization in the 18th century, Lackey believes that religion didn’t start dying out rather, he claims that it assumed a new form in relation to the modern nation-state. Hitler, who consistently claimed to be Christian in his speeches and writings, formulated a religious-based politics, which he and many Nazis believed to be based on “true Christianity.”

Lackey first became interested in his research topic while reading black writers, such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright, who claimed that the Holocaust was fueled by the Nazis’ Christian conception of the legitimate political order. He will use his Imagine Fund Award to visit libraries at Yale University and the University of Florida to examine original manuscripts from prominent writers. Mike McBride ’11, Forest Lake, an English and political science major, assists Lackey by reading Hitler’s speeches and other written works in order to determine whether there are passages that either support or contradict Lackey’s arguments.

Beginning his third year at the University of Minnesota, Morris, Lackey teaches courses in 20th century African-American literature and multicultural literature. He earned a doctorate in English from the University of Kentucky, as well as master’s degrees in English, German, and philosophy. He is one of thirteen Morris faculty recipients of the inaugural University of Minnesota Imagine Fund Awards. The competitive program, funded in part by a generous McKnight Foundation grant, supports scholarship and artistic endeavors in the arts, design, and humanities.

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