The aff’s performance alienates us in various ways from the most effective modes for liberation to truly happen.

The commitment to ‘survival’ coming out of the aff is a use of classic categories. It enables one to keep by in the world as it is, it sees life as a good and death as a bad with our orientation towards preserving our life. This is a problem, the use of non-inversed values simply perpetuates the ideology of the elites. We must be able to see Christ death as a victory of new life, where we die to this world no and no longer seek to win its game.

**CONE:** James Cone 2 [highly influential black theologian known for his work on black liberation theology]. *The Cross and The Lynching Tree*. Orbis Books. 2011. The paradox of a crucified savior lies at the heart of the Christian story. That paradox was particularly evident in the first century when crucifixion was recognized as the particular form of execution reserved by the Roman Empire for insurrectionists and rebels. It was a public spectacle accompanied by torture and shame—one of the most humiliating and painful deaths ever devised by human beings. That Jesus died this way required special explanation. It made no rational or even spiritual sense to say that hope came out of “a place called Golgotha . . . a place of the skull.” For the Jews of Jesus’ time the punishment of crucifixion held special opprobrium, given their belief that “anyone hung on a tree is under Gods curse” (Deut 21:23). Thus, St. Paul said that the “word of the cross is foolishness” to the intellect and a stumbling block to established religion. The cross is a paradoxical religious symbol because it *inverts* the world’s value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first last. That God could “make a way out of no way” In Jesus’ cross was truly absurd to the intellect, yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk. Enslaved blacks who first heard the gospel message seized on the power of the cross. Christ crucified manifested God’s loving and liberating presence *in* the contradictions of black life—that transcendent presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that *ultimately*, in God’s eschatological future, they would not be defeated by the “troubles of this world,” no matter how great and painful their suffering. Believing this paradox, this absurd claim of faith was only possible through God’s “amazing grace” ad the gift of faith, grounded in humility and repentance. There was no place for the proud and the mighty, for people who think that God called them to rule over others. The cross was God’s critique of power—white power—with powerless love, snatching victory out of defeat.

This also fails, a mere hope to continue surviving in this messed up world does not actually provide the conceptual motivation for anything to ever change. As long as the goal is to live *in this world*. **CONE:** Consumed by a passion to express myself about the liberating power of the black religious experience, I continued to write and speak about this spiritual revolution erupting in the cultural and political contexts of the African American community. This message of liberation was “something like a burning fire shut up in my bones,” to use the language of Jeremiah; “I [was] weary with holding it in, and I [could not]” (Jer. 20:9). All fo m work since that first book has involved an effort to relate the gospel and the black experience-the experience of oppression as well as the struggle to find liberation and meaning. Inevitably, it has led to these reflections on the cross and the lynching tree: the essential symbol of Christianity and the quintessential emblem of black suffering. To live meaningfully, we must see light beyond the darkness. As Micea Eliade put it, “Life is not possible without an opening towards the transcendent.” The lynching era was the Heart of Darkness for the African American community. It was a time when fragments of meaning were hard to find. Some found meaning in the blues and others in collective political resistance, but for many people it was religion that helped them to look beyond their tragic situation to a time when they would “cross the river of Jordan,” “lay down dat heavy load, and “walk in Jerusalem just like John.” The Christian gospel is God’s message of liberation in an unredeemed and tortured world. As such it is a transcendent reality that lifts our spirits to a world far removed from the suffering of this one. It is an eschatological vision, an experience of transfiguration, such as Jesus experienced at his baptism (Mk1:9-11) or on Mt. Tabor (Mk 9:2-8), just because he set out on the road to Jerusalem, the road that led to Calvary. Paul had such a vision—“a light from heaven”—as he traveled the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3). Malcolm X, while in prison, had a vision of God, and so too did Martin King hear God speaking to him in his kitchen at a moment of crisis during the Montgomery bus boycott. For all four, the revelatory moment in their lives helped to prepare them to face their deaths, sustained by the conviction that this was not the end but the beginning of a new life of meaning. To paraphrase Eliade, once contact with the transcendent is found, a new existence in the world becomes possible.

This does not ignore ethical imminence. Instead it places it in dialogical conversation. This creates and allows a dialectic between transcendence and immanence that provides space for ultimate salvation. The exclusively immanent orientation of the aff fails.

**CONE**: And so the transcendent and the immanent, heaven and earth, must be held together in critical, dialectical tension, each one correcting the limits of the other. The gospel is *in* the world, but it is not *of* the world; that is, it can be seen in the black freedom movement, but it is much more than what we see in our struggles for justice. God’s word is paradoxical, or ,as the old untutored black preacher used to say, “inscrutable,” a mystery that one can nether control nor fully understand. It is here and not here, revealed and hidden at the same time. “Turuly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Isa 45:15). Nowhere is that paradox, that “inscrutability,” more evident than in the cross. A symbol of death and defeat, God turned it into a sign of liberation and new life. The cross is the most empowering symbol of God’s loving solidarity with the “least of these,” the unwanted in society who suffer daily form great injustices. Christians must face the cross as the terrible tragedy it was and discover in it, through faith and repentance, the liberating joy of eternal salvation.

Thus, we cannot simply be oriented towards modes of survival which reintenches in mere immanence. Instead the Role of the Ballot is providing the best liberatory orientation towards the transcendent.

A Christian theology of liberation locates our orientation towards the transcendent via a paradoxical reversal of salvation by way of the cross. In which we come ot resurrected life through not in spite of social and physical death.

**CONE:** One has to have a powerful religious imagination to see redemption in the cross, to discover life in death and hope in tragedy. What kind of salvation is that? No human language can fully describe what salvation through the cross means. Salvation through the cross is a mystery and can only be apprehended through faith, repentance, and humility. The cross is an “opening to the transcendent” for the poor who have nowhere else to turn—that transcendence of the spirit that no one can take away, no matter what they do. Salvation is broken spirits being healed, voiceless people speaking out, and black people empowered to love their own blackness.

Off heaven rhetoric

The notion of “heavenly departed” is a problematic portrayal of death further linking you into the K. The Christian notion of heaven is not the salvific locus. The notion of heaven entrenches the idea that salvation occurs by separating soul from flesh, as though we can be who we are absent our fleshly existence. Christianity instead treats us as fleshly creatures who need our flesh to be rendered into a redeemed body. Thus the heaven orientation alienates us from our flesh, rather than seeing it as something essentially good which will be perfected by Christ.

Second, heaven language perceptually renders this world fleeting and insignificant, which precludes real development.

N.T. Wright [leading New Testament scholar and retired Anglican bishop]. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. Harper Collins. 2008.

The fifth scene is a graveyard of a different sort. If you go to the historic village of Easington in County Durham, England, and walk down the hill toward the sea, you come to the town called Easington Colliery. The town still bears that name, but there is no colliery there anymore. Where the pit head once stood, with thousands of people working to produce more coal faster and more efficiently than at most other pits, there is smooth and level grass. Empty to the eye, but pregnant with bereavement. All around, despite the heroic efforts of local leaders, there are the signs of postindustrial blight, with all the human fallout of other people’s power games. And that sight stands in my mind as a symbol, or rather a symbolic question, every bit as relevant to similar communities in America and elsewhere in the world as they are to my home territory. What hope is there for communities that have lost their way, their way of life, their coherence, their hope? 1 This book addresses two questions that have often been dealt with entirely separately but that, I passionately believe, belong tightly together. First, what is the ultimate Christian hope? Second, what hope is there for change, rescue, transformation, new possibilities within the world in the present? And the main answer can be put like this. As long as we see Christian hope in terms of “going to heaven,” of a salvation that is essentially away from this world, the two questions are bound to appear as unrelated. Indeed, some insist angrily that to ask the second one at all is to ignore the first one, which is the really important one. This in turn makes some others get angry when people talk of resurrection, as if this might draw attention away from the really important and pressing matters of contemporary social concern. But if the Christian hope is for God’s new creation, for “new heavens and new earth,” and if that hope has already come to life in Jesus of Nazareth, then there is every reason to join the two questions together. And if that is so, we find that answering the one is also answering the other. I find that to many—not least, many Christians—all this comes as a surprise: both that the Christian hope is surprisingly different from what they had assumed and that this same hope offers a coherent and energizing basis for work in today’s world. In this first chapter I want to set the scene and open up the questions by looking at the contemporary confusion in our world—the wider world, beyond the churches—about life after death. Then, in the second chapter, I shall look at the churches themselves, where there seems to me a worryingly similar uncertainty. This will highlight the key questions that have to be asked and suggest a framework for how we go about answering them. I am convinced that most people, including most practicing Christians, are muddled and misguided on this topic and that this muddle produces quite serious mistakes in our thinking, our praying, our liturgies, our practice, and perhaps particularly our mission to the world. What’s more, as the examples at the start of this chapter indicate, the non-Christian world, not least within the contemporary West, is confused about what to believe on its own account, and it is confused too about what Christians are supposed to believe. Often people assume that Christians are simply committed to a belief in “life after death” in the most general terms and have no idea how the more specific notions of resurrection, judgment, the second coming of Jesus, and so on fit together and make any sense—let alone how they relate to the urgent concerns of today’s real world. Nor is this a matter simply of sorting out what to believe about someone who has died or about one’s own probable postmortem destiny, important though both of those are. It’s a matter of thinking straight about God and his purposes for the cosmos and about what God is doing right now, already, as part of those purposes. From Plato to Hegel and beyond, some of the greatest philosophers declared that what you think about death, and life beyond it, is the key to thinking seriously about everything else—and, indeed, that it provides one of the main reasons for thinking seriously about anything at all. This is something a Christian theologian should heartily endorse. Second, do we have immortal souls, and if so, what are they? Again, much Christian and sub-Christian tradition has assumed that we all do indeed have souls that need saving and that the soul, if saved, will be the part of us that goes to heaven when we die. All this, however, finds minimal support in the New Testament, including the teaching of Jesus, where the word soul, though rare, reflects when it does occur underlying Hebrew or Aramaic words referring not to a disembodied entity hidden within the outer shell of the disposable body but rather to what we would call the whole person or personality, seen as being confronted by God. As to immortality, 1 Timothy 6:16 declares that only God himself has immortality, and 2 Timothy 1:10 declares that immortality has only come to light, and hence is presumably only available, through the gospel. In other words, the idea that every human possesses an immortal soul, which is the “real” part of them, finds little support in the Bible. In Genesis, and indeed for much of the Old Testament, the controlling image for death is exile. Adam and Eve were told that they would die on the day they ate the fruit; what actually happened was that they were expelled from the garden. Turning away from the worship of the living God is turning toward that which has no life in itself. Worship that which is transient, and it can only give you death. But when you do commit that idolatry, evil is unleashed into the world, setting off chain reactions with incalculable consequences. And now we see at last why the Enlightenment world was determined to make the ascension appear ridiculous, using the weapons of rationalism and skepticism to do so: if the ascension is true, then the whole project of human self-aggrandizement represented by eighteenth-century European and American thought is rebuked and brought to heel. To embrace the ascension is to heave a sigh of relief, to give up the struggle to be God (and with it the inevitable despair at our constant failure), and to enjoy our status as creatures: image-bearing creatures, but creatures nonetheless.

On the role of the judge.

Attempting to control the choices of the judge based on what is asked of you links into the K, also a reason not to exclude my offense.

1. The attempt to decide for ourselves on what grounds we should be judged is rooted in the same logic by which we don’t ultimately need to conform our standards to God as the true judge.
2. The idea that the judge can just do what is asked of him by the debaters is the same logic by which Pilate claims to wash his hands of the lynching of Jesus.

The world is anti-black but the assumption that we must thus carve out a place for us to live in it ultimately fails to satisfy. Only Christianity allows us to both say we don’t fit into the world and yet not fall into mere Skepticism.

Gilbert K Chesterton. *Orthodoxy*. 1908. http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/130/pg130.html

But the important matter was this, that it entirely reversed the reason for optimism. And the instant the reversal was made it felt like the abrupt ease when a bone is put back in the socket. I had often called myself an optimist, to avoid the too evident blasphemy of pessimism. But all the optimism of the age had been false and disheartening for this reason, that it had always been trying to prove that we fit in to the world. The Christian optimism is based on the fact that we do NOT fit in to the world. I had tried to be happy by telling myself that man is an animal, like any other which sought its meat from God. But now I really was happy, for I had learnt that man is a monstrosity. I had been right in feeling all things as odd, for I myself was at once worse and better than all things. The optimist's pleasure was prosaic, for it dwelt on the naturalness of everything; the Christian pleasure was poetic, for it dwelt on the unnaturalness of everything in the light of the supernatural. The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the WRONG place, and my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring. The knowledge found out and illuminated forgotten chambers in the dark house of infancy. I knew now why grass had always seemed to me as queer as the green beard of a giant, and why I could feel homesick at home.