Finding God's Signature: Evangelical Interpretations

of the Bible and the Apocalyptic Spirituality of

Grant Jeffrey

by

Jacqueline Klassen

A thesis

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FINDING GOD'S SIGNATURE:

EVANGELICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BIBLE

AND THE APOCALYPTIC SPIRITUALITY OF GRANT JEFFREY

BY

JACQUELINE KLASSEN

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

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MASTER OF ARTS

Jacqueline Klassen ©1998

PREFACE

Having finally brought this project to a close, certain people must be acknowledged as the end might still not be in sight had it not been for them. Thank-you to Dr. John Stackhouse. Jr.. for his initial guidance. The classes I took under him and the conversations that were generated as a result formed a great many of the ideas present in this thesis. His suggestion of my particular topic, knowing of my sometimes peculiar interests. must also be noted. Recognition must also go to Dr. Gordon Harland for his determined efforts in seeing the completion of the project as well as in providing a more holistic framework from which to view the thesis. He was a true advocate and was able to accomplish what at times seemed impossible. My thanks also go to my committee- Dr. Don Burke and Dr. Glen Klassen - who were willing to read and critique the entire project on short notice during their busy summer schedules. I am also grateful to Cameron McKenzie whose willingness and able computer skills played an essential role throughout the last few months as the tangible link in a long distance project. Thank-you to all of my other friends who have listened to five years of grousing and end-times stuff; their tolerance and perseverance is not only admirable. but much appreciated. I am also indebted to my family - both my parents and my parents-in-law - who have borne with me and supported my efforts as a student. Thank-you Juanita and Nathan for your encouragement and your belief in my abilities. Finally. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to Todd, Eli and Effi. The kitties provided their furry bodies as entertainment and comfort while I was imprisoned in my work chair. And as for Todd. I cannot adequately even begin to acknowledge his immense efforts on my behalf, especially in so short a space. Not

only did he listen to miles worth of words and ideas, but he fed me and provided a measure of

sanity in the midst of my end-times focussed chaos.

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INTRODUCTION

North American evangelicalism is a complex and diverse phenomenon. The diversity

has been dealt with most often on the denominational level where the specific theological

distinctions provide content for the discussion.[1] Although some believe that the number of

denominations muddies the attempt to concisely define "evangelicalism," it is exactly this

"something-for-everyone" quality that characterizes its North American manifestation.[2] This

thesis recognizes denominational diversity as indicative of North American evangelicalism, but

raises yet another division characteristic: popularism.

Although dismissed by many as a degeneration of "true" evangelicalism (or a more

mainline and often Reformed intellectual formulation), popularism is endemic to North

American evangelicalism.[3] In its attempt to make the central Christian message of the cross

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[1] In Mark A. Noll's A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992) evangelical diversity is most often discussed in regards to denomination and its development. Populist democracy is mentioned, but is related to the emergence of less ecclesiastically authoritative churches in North America (152). This is the same for Mark Ellingson, who in his book The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy, Dialog (Minneapolis: Augsberg Publishing House, 1988), outlines the shape of evangelicalism in terms of its denominations, traditions of expression, and institutions. These writers take their lead from earlier studies such as the ones by Sidney E. Mead (The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963]) and Andrew M. Greely (The Denominational Society: A Sociological Approach to Religion in America [Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1972]) which characterized American religion by its denominationalism.

[2] See Donald Dayton's essay at the conclusion of The Variety of American Evangelicalism (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991) where he raises the question whether these denominations can even be accurately identified by the one label "evangelicalism" (245-251).

[3] The individualism so inherent to North American evangelicalism is explored by Nathan O. Hatch in The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). He traces the democratic emphasis and the concomitant popularism through American religious history from its inception to the contemporary situation. Mark A. Noll acknowledges

and the resurrection real to everyone including "the anxious New York cabby." as a well

known evangelical wrote in reply to a critic of Billy Graham, evangelicalism relies on popular

methods created through its revivalist and democratically oriented history.[4] This populist

character became entrenched in North American evangelicalism through the religious and

political events in the two Great Awakenings and the subsequent revivals. the Revolution and

the Civil War, and the intellectual. social and religious crisis at the end of the nineteenth

century. The various expressions of evangelicalism today show that this populism took firm

root. The existence of the snake handling churches in the Appalachians. the Toronto Airport

laughing revivals. the Vineyard movement are not evidence of fringe movements. but rather

are testimony to the grass-roots character of evangelicalism.[5] Including evangelicalism's

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Evangelical Mind (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995). but Noll believes that early twentieth century fundamentalism and its anti-intellectual reaction to crisis is to blame for the plight evangelicalism finds itself in. David Wells recognizes same evangelical democratic and popular tendency in No Place for Truth OR Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993) but he attributes evangelical popularism to an invasion of popular culture as opposed to Noll and Hatch who see popularism as an inherent evangelical trait (193).

[4] Alistair McGrath (Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995], 76-7) quotes E.J. Carnell, a well known neo-evangelical. in his reply to Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr had written a review of Billy Graham's 1954 speaking engagement at Union Theological Seminary which not only compared Billy Graham to the earlier revivalist firebrand. Billy Sunday, but he called Graham's message "demagogic." and "obscurantist." E.J. Carnell defended Graham's popular presentation of Christianity by stating that Niebuhr's message was "beyond the tether of a dime store clerk or hod carrier" and that a symbolic cross and resurrection meant nothing "to an anxious New York cabby." E.J. Carnell reflects the North American evangelical focus on making the Christian message understandable to everyone. In doing so, evangelicalism opened itself up to the democratic forces of the American populace.

[5] This is not to say that all evangelical expressions are popular, nor that evangelicalism is itself an entirely popular movement. Rather, a discussion of evangelical diversity must INCLUDE the characteristic of popularism alongside the other uniquely evangelical characteristics.

popular nature as a legitimate characteristic requires that revivals. seeker services. snake

handlers, the signs and wonders movement as well as contemporary apocalyptic spirituality be

taken seriously not only as movements in and of themselves but as part of the evangelical

family. Although divergent from more mainline expressions of evangelicalism. the existence

of what Randall Balmer calls "an evangelical subculture" needs to be explored in its connection

to evangelical theology. history and institutions.[6] This thesis will look at the popular nature of

evangelicalism using an example. An analysis of contemporary apocalyptic spirituality will

function as a case study for evangelical popularism.

This project's dual interests - evangelicalism and popular apocalyptic spirituality - are

clarified by being brought into conjunction with one another. The conversion appeal to

"everyperson" in North American evangelicalism. communicated in an uncomplicated fashion.

has propelled evangelicalism into a dominant force within the nation. Apocalyptic spirituality

is a full inheritor of this evangelical emphasis: using the Bible. it speaks to the contemporary

concerns of the American individual providing a "Christian" answer to the anxiety of a fast-

paced world. In keeping with its evangelically inherited mandate. apocalyptic spirituality is an

earnest attempt to make Christianity applicable and understandable in contemporary society.

Using Grant Jeffrey. a popular end times author. as representative for the movement. this

thesis will study the apocalyptic spirituality movement seriously. treating it as a legitimate

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[6] Randall Balmer's book. Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) was an impetus for this project. Although he does not provide critical discussion of the evangelical groups he visits. he describes an evangelicalism that rarely appears in discussions of the nature or definition of evangelicalism. Balmer does not address what exactly he means by "subculture." but the groups he presents in his discussion are less "sub" to evangelicalism itself and more normative than he presents in his book.

contemporary movement and elucidating its tenets in order to illustrate how and why it holds influence.

This project consists of three chapters, each building on the previous chapter's discussion. This order not only follows historical progression, but it also mirrors the argument set up in the first chapter regarding evangelicalism's movement towards popular expression. The model is represented in the three chapters where dispensationalism is a more popular reformulation of classic evangelicalism and apocalyptic spirituality is a popular interpretation of dispensationalism. As well, the specific hermeneutical and theological concerns highlighted in the first two chapters culminate in the third, which demonstrates how these are actually used and reinterpreted by one type of American religious construction.

The first chapter is a survey of North American evangelicalism's theological concerns, history, and institutional structure clarifying the general outlines of what is often thought of as an undefinable and varied movement. North American evangelicalism is an interesting phenomenon because of its creative efforts to uphold orthodoxy; it used nontraditional and uniquely New World methods to communicate the traditional Reformation concerns of *sola scriptura* and *sola fidei*. From its beginnings in the revivals of the Great Awakenings, its concern was on individual faith commitment and the centrality of the Bible. These two concerns - Bible and individual - have given evangelicalism a unique shape especially as experienced and reimagined through evangelicalism's historical high-points and crises. The two concerns often countered each other in evangelical history as out of one developed a democratic popularism and out of the other a concern for serious theological study. These dual concerns held in tandem within North American evangelicalism result in a vibrant as well as a

contentious character. This dynamic but combative quality generated many different groups all sharing similar ideas on how Bible and individual worked within Christian theology, yet all divided by their own distinct interpretations of the exact nature of the Bible and the individual. Apocalyptic spirituality is only one of many groups which inherited and continues to share in the evangelical diversity originating out of popularism. Dictated by this evangelical heritage, apocalyptic spirituality provides its own unique rendition of biblical applicability for the individual living in contemporary North American society.

The second chapter examines dispensationalism which evolved out of a particular moment within evangelicalism's history focussed on upholding and proving biblical integrity and legitimacy. Dispensationalism came to North America in the late nineteenth century when evangelicalism felt increasing pressure to provide a rational argument for biblical legitimacy. Dispensationalism offered a simple formula for biblical interpretation constructed out of a literal reading of the biblical text. This resulted in an emphasis on prophetic literature and a dichotomy between Israel and the Church. Noteworthy within dispensationalist history is the similar pattern of historical movement from a homogenous and classic formulation to multiform popular expressions also evident in evangelicalism. As with evangelicalism, populist expression became entrenched in dispensationalism where more simplistic interpretations disregarded classic dispensationalist emphases. Not only does the emergence and history of dispensationalism affirm evangelicalism's adaptability in light of democratic concerns and dissatisfactions, but it also provides explanation for apocalyptic spirituality's structure, concerns, and direct content matter. An examination of dispensationalism, the immediate link between evangelicalism and apocalyptic spirituality, provides content and

context for apocalyptic spirituality and its larger religious environment. Popular apocalyptic inherited the belligerent attitude of fundamentalists in crisis. and the dispensationalist methodological focus on prophecy.

The third and final chapter will focus on Grant Jeffrey's works of apocalyptic spirituality. The two previous chapters form the interpretative context for Jeffrey's views on the Bible. its function, the modern world and its direction. The modification of these inherited tenets moves Jeffrey and others like him into connecting with a third tradition of historic apocalyptic spirituality which adds a pessimistic and tragic style to his evangelical and dispensational content. The addition of a discussion of historic apocalyptic spirituality will complete the background study begun with the first two chapters. As a result of this new framework. Jeffrey is able to narrate a drama wherein the Bible and the contemporary world are closely connected. The tragic mode places all of the characters near to an impending catastrophe brought on by world evil. Jeffrey's narration. although tragic. speaks to people's need for meaning. True to its evangelical mandate, it provides in a popular format a structure by which people can evaluate their surroundings and their existence. Yet. in spite of Jeffrey's attention to detail and careful biblical study. his tragic paradigm undermines the classic evangelical pursuit of biblical orthodoxy.

Popular apocalyptic spirituality, although dismissed by many as a shallow blend of American nationalism and fundamentalism. is an important religious movement. It needs to be examined closely and understood because it has such widespread influence in North America. Although looking to the end times to explain the world is certainly not a new endeavor in the Christian community. the emphasis on the proximity of the end times has

increased in the last twenty years. And these contemporary doomsayers have far more wide-ranging effects than their predecessors primarily because many more people are exposed to the message of apocalyptic spirituality. Modern media and printing technology make it possible to spread their version of eschatology far and wide. For instance, Hal Lindsey's book The Late Great Planet Earth sold millions. Television evangelist Jack Van Impe reaches millions of households. The end-times message is as easy to access as the nearest television and local B-Dalton bookstore. The existence of large numbers of people who are influenced by the apocalyptic framework of interpretation require a closer look at the movement itself. Not only does popular apocalyptic create a particular social and political atmosphere within North America by shaping the interpretation of events, but more significantly, it offers answers to the questions of life for those who appropriate its message.

Throughout North American evangelicalism's history, one can see that it supplied the Christian gospel directly suited to the particular events of the historical milieu. One can see this in the preaching during the battles of the American Revolution and the Civil War where the biblical message was directly linked to the events in order to define the crisis and motivate people to action. This ability of evangelicalism to tailor itself to the situation at hand in order to cater to the individual's understanding of self, God and the world lends it its popular character. This same character is evinced in contemporary apocalyptic spirituality. As the millennium approaches many people wonder what the world will look like in the future, considering the already rapid changes taking place in society. In a world where computers outwit chess grandmasters, cloning threatens individuality, new diseases challenge established medicine, and cultural taboos are breached daily by those in the arts and media, the familiar

structure seems to be crumbling. The lack of hope generated from the perceived disintegration

of traditional western culture is an indication to some that humanity is coming to a crossroads

and that change in some form is inevitable. American militia groups are preparing for a final

political battle against an allegedly inept and oppressive government. and movies and television

depict future aliens destroying a defenseless world.[7] As a result. religious leaders and their

followers are doing their best to provide a religious framework to answer to the question "what

happens next?".[8] As E.J. Carnell expressed in regards to evangelicalism. contemporary

apocalyptic spirituality has made itself available in a format "that the anxious New York

Cabby" can value and understand. True to its evangelical moorings. contemporary apocalyptic

spirituality has used every available means to communicate its interpretation of self. God and

the world. Its prevalence in American society especially with the second millennium so close

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[7] Some might question whether militia groups and their ideas are truly secular. Many militia groups claim a Christian foundation to their apocalyptic views. but it is secular political works such as The Turner Diaries and Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion which fuel the paranoia. Their extreme political views and racist theories are given substance by evangelical end-time symbolism which is what gives them their Christian veneer. See John L. Moore ("Militia Myths," Books & Culture, November-December 1996, 18-19) who opposes the view that militia groups are based on conservative Christian views. Joe Maxwell and Andres Tapia. "Guns and Bibles: Militia Extremists Blend God and Country into a Potent Mixture." Christianity Today. June 19, 1995, 34-7, 45.

[8] Apocalyptically-minded Christian groups are not the only representations of this explanation of the modern world. There are secular manifestations as well as quasi-biblical groups who hold extreme views on what the future holds, like the California Heaven's Gate community members who "retired" their bodies in order to meet with the space ship they believed was behind the Hale-Bopp comet. The Heaven's Gate group was within the distant range of Christianity as they used the Bible as one of their religious texts within a New Age framework. Others within the fringe might include David Koresh and his followers who died believing that in their fight against the FBI that they were defending themselves against the Beast of Revelation and his aggressors. The Branch Davidians were in closer range to traditional Protestant Christianity, but by claiming messianic status Koresh was outside the boundaries of orthodoxy. See Richard J. Mouw. "Waco Logic," Books & Culture, September-October 1995, 7-8.

at hand, makes it a valuable case study in the examination of popular evangelicalism.

CHAPTER ONE: EVANGELICALISM

The apocalyptic movement in conservative North American Protestantism arises out of

the general structure of evangelicalism. Evangelical theology, history, hermeneutics,

institutional boundaries, and views of the world inform and shape apocalyptic spirituality.

Understanding the complexities of evangelicalism is therefore essential in order to make the

link between the two as well as to provide an explanation of the nature of popular apocalyptic

and why it meets people's needs.

The problem in describing the connection between the two is that evangelicalism cannot

be simply defined by one descriptive statement. In fact, the complications that arise in

constructing an adequate definition lead some to think that there is no such thing as a one

definable entity known as "evangelicalism".[1] Keeping the critiques in view I believe it is

possible to establish certain characteristics which are endemic to those who call themselves

evangelicals. George Marsden states that the movement known as North American

evangelicalism, although comprised of "a coalition of submovements which are strikingly

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[1] Donald Dayton, "Some Doubts about the Usefulness of the Category 'Evangelical'," in The Variety of American Evangelicalism (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 245-251. He states that the range of movements covered under the term "evangelical" is so diverse, that an attempt to define their commonality is meaningless. The term, he believes, cannot be used as a standard as its designation becomes too broad in order to encompass the diversity. Robert K. Johnston and George Marsden among others would not agree although they recognize the point being made. They make an argument that evangelical coherence can be identified by several unifying factors (Johnston, "American Evangelicalism: An Extended Family," The Variety of American Evangelicalism, pp 252-272; Marsden, "Introduction," Evangelicalism and Modern America, viii-x).

diverse and do not always get along," still has a definable style as well as a set of beliefs. [2]

The set of beliefs is the broadest category by which to classify the movement.[3] The ethos that

defines evangelicalism provides a more narrow classification. Here one can trace a particular

historical path from the Reformation through to the development of the Puritan colonies in the

new world and onwards. Distilled from the historical and theological distinctives is an

institutional shape which defines evangelicalism most narrowly. Thus. theology interacting

with history has produced a distinctive and particularly evangelical institution. All three

categories. from broad to narrow. help delineate evangelicalism as a distinct subset within

larger Protestant Christianity.

A. Theology

Evangelicals hold to a historic position on Christian orthodoxy. Although there is

substantial diversity and latitude in the theological emphases. the theological markers of

evangelicalism can be distilled into five basic points: 1) the final authority of Scripture for

knowledge of God and his saving acts in history as well as a guide for Christian living: 2)

eternal salvation for sinful humanity only through personal trust in Christ: 3) the authority of

the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer: 4) the priority of evangelism and missions: and 5)

the need for conversion and a spiritually transformed life.[4] These common characteristics.

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[2] George Marsden, Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 2.

[3] George Marsden, "Introduction: The Evangelical Denomination," in Evangelicalism and Modern America, ed. by George Marsden (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans. 1984). ix.

[4] George Marsden, "Introduction: The Evangelical Denomination." Evangelicalism and

although not distinguishing markers of the diverse groups within evangelicalism, represent the demarcation of conservative Protestant belief in general. Evangelicalism, however, can be distinguished further from this larger conservative Christianity. What adds this distinguishing mark, McGrath writes, is that although evangelicals are generically orthodox in their appropriation of historic Reformed doctrine, they make it distinctive with the addition of the pietist concern for "right living."[5] Therefore evangelical doctrine is expressed existentially in terms of personal relationship with God and his son Jesus Christ. Of these five basic tenets of evangelical faith, there is little doubt that the authority of Scripture is the linchpin. It is this which holds the other tenets together, bringing clarity and unity to the larger theological vision.

Clark Pinnock writes that though "our [the evangelical] concern is with the gospel, not with the Bible per se, we are convinced that the one will not remain pure very long without the

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Modern America, ix-x; Alister McGrath, Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 55-6. McGrath also adds a sixth point to the list of emphases that act as evangelical distinctives: "the importance of the Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship and growth." Robert K. Johnston frames the theological definition in a more historical manner, although the outcome is similar to Marsden and McGrath's definitions: "evangelicals are those who identify with the orthodox faith of the Reformers in their answers to Christianity's two fundamental questions: 1) How is it possible for a sinner to be saved and reconciled to his or her Creator and God? (The answer: *solus Christus; sola gratia; sola fide*); 2) By what authority do I believe what I believe and teach what I teach (The answer: *sola scriptura*). Evangelicals, that is, have a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and a commitment to the Bible as our sole and binding authority" (The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985], 3).

[5] Alister McGrath, Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity, 57. Although this pietism is a theological formulation, it is also expressed in practical terms. One can see examples of how this pietism works itself out during the Civil War for example.

other."[6] Therefore, in all practicality, the central point for evangelicals, out which the other

four theological points emerge, is the acquiescence to the complete and final authority of the

Bible unaffected by creeds and church hierarchy. One can see these four points in the

statement found in Article 2 of the Lausanne Covenant (1974):

> The opportunity to secure one's eternal destiny is open to any individual that reads the book and appropriates its message personally according to evangelicals. There is no need for a mediator to aid in this personal interaction between the individual and God's word. Therefore the declaration of the salvific work of God in history through his son Jesus Christ is all based on the authenticity and authority of the book in which the message is contained. How the Bible is understood and read creates the foundation for the discussion of all the other theological points that differentiate evangelicals from the others. The Bible is thus a focal point and a flash point in evangelicalism.

This focus on the Bible, the most distinguishing theological characteristic of evangelicalism, is

also the area out of which the most dissension arises. The central position - the Bible

unmediated by creeds - gives way to difficulty: there is nothing but the text to guide

interpretation. Questions regarding the nature of its primacy, for instance, are opened up to

the evangelical community to answer as opposed to having the set theological boundaries

offered by the creeds and other traditional formulations. The dissension that develops from the

discussion of the Bible often revolves around the issues of authority and interpretation, since

authority undergirds the trustworthiness of the Bible and interpretation broaches the issue of

the modern appropriation of the authoritative Word of God.

Evangelicals agree that authority and the supporting tenet of inspiration are central

issues when it comes to the Bible. In holding that the Bible contains the revealed and inspired

word of God, Scripture becomes the primary and most tangible authority for the Christian

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[6] Clark Pinnock, The Scripture Principle, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), xi.

community.[7] Benjamin Warfield, a nineteenth-century evangelical whose statements on the

Christian faith continue to wield influence, restated the Westminster Confession when he

wrote:

> Before all else. Protestantism is, in its very essence,an   appeal from all other
> authority to the divine authority of   Holy Scripture...the Scriptures are declared to be
> the word of God in such a sense that God is their author, and they, because
> immediately inspired by God, are of infallible truth and divine authority. and are to be
> believed to be true by the Christian man. in whatsoever is revealed in them, for the
> authority of God himself is speaking therein.[8]

Evangelicals link this correlation between Scripture and the Word of God to the Bible's

inspired and authoritative nature. The logical outcome of this emphasis on authority and

inspiration. as Clark Pinnock writes, is the solidification of the Bible as the final arbiter in

matters of truth:

> ...if the Bible asserts as a fact or truth some fact or truth controverted by some
> scientific theory, the believer would have no other choice than to side with the
> Scriptures against the scientist. Such is the mode of theological thinking in the house of
> authority.[9]

This is not an abstract concept. Not only does it create a tangible authority for the spiritual

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[7] The Bible is the primary external authority, but not the only authority within the evangelical framework. Experience and church tradition are secondary and complementary authorities to that of Scripture. See Donald G. Bloesch, A Theology of Word & Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 191-5.

[8] B.B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Phillipsburg: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), 111.

[9] Clark Pinnock, The Scripture Principle, 69. However he does emphasize that the Bible is not a scientific textbook: "its [the Bible's] purpose [is] to lead us to know and love God in Christ and to grow to maturity in him, not to be a textbook giving scientific particulars that can be found by empirical research. It is a religious classic, operating in a specialized area, and not running competition to the sciences" (69). Pinnock recognizes biblical authority, but he mediates authority with biblical intention. Others attend only to authority and therefore the Bible becomes authority in issues of science and the like. See the creationist movement for an example.

direction of the individual and the community. it is, according to evangelicals, also the first and final authority regarding its own interpretation. Evolving out of the statement of biblical authority is a methodology where credibility and truthfulness are assumed. As Timothy George writes: "its history is historical and its miracles are miraculous. and its theology is God's own truth."[10] The theological statement of biblical authority, for evangelicals, establishes the Bible as the arbitor for interpretation of itself. As final authority the Bible becomes a reliable and entirely trustworthy guide in all the matters to which it pertains.

The issues that evangelicals struggle with arise out of these affirmations of authority, inspiration and complete reliability. Accordingly one British evangelical, J.D.G. Dunn, writes that "there is evangelical unity regarding the Bible's inspiration and authority. Where Evangelicals begin to disagree...is over the implications and corollaries of these basic affirmations."[11] One large difficulty in the discussion of authority, inspiration and reliability is whether and how the text is without error. This debate centers on the conviction that God is infallible and that His Word should also be without error even if the text was written by humans. Although all evangelicals would agree with the statement that the Scriptures are true in everything they intend to affirm, there is widespread disagreement over the boundaries of what the Bible actually intends to affirm. The concept of inerrancy is a difficult one to nuance. For example, when Robert Gundry came out with his commentary on Matthew, arguing that the Gospel writer was using creative midrash to embellish the recording of historical events. he

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[10] Timothy George. "What We Mean When We Say It's True." Christianity Today. October 23, 1995, 19.

[11] James Dunn, "The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture. Part One." Churchman 96 (1982), 112, as quoted in Robert K. Johnston. The Use of the Bible in Theology. 9.

offended the inerrantist sensibilities of many evangelical scholars.[12] They felt he violated

textual innerancy by suggesting that the Bible could deceive the reader with Matthean creativity

being passed off as historical fact. While Gundry believed that the text itself was affirming a

non-historical reading, others felt it was a direct attack on the historical accuracy and,

ultimately, the authority of the text.[13] The problem, for evangelicals, is in the lack of an exact

designation of what constitutes an error in the text and therefore a dent in the truthfulness of

God's word. The debate surrounding the exact nature of inerrancy - the errorlessness in every

aspect of the original text - has abated somewhat, but has still not been resolved satisfactorily

for all evangelicals.[14] It has become difficult to uphold the evangelical concern for the

authority and inspiration of the text without first formulating a complete guideline for the

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[12] Robert H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary of His Literary and Theological Art (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982). This dissension over his commentary eventually led to his having to withdraw from the Evangelical Theological Society in 1983 (for an account and analysis of the event see David L. Turner's article, "Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and Inerrancy: The Debate Continues," Grace Theological Journal 5.1 (1984), 37-45; and Mark Noll, Between Faith and Criticism, 167-170.).

[13] Gundry's statement was that "all Scripture is God's Word and God's Word is entirely true, but not all of it is equally applicable all the time and every place" which allowed him the use of literary critical tools in order to challenge the traditional viewpoint on the text ("A Theological Postscript," Matthew, 640). His use of the tools, he felt, only brought out what the author of the text had intended.

[14] A twenty-year battle raged between the 1960's and the 1980's over the issue of inerrancy. Academics such as Harold Lindsell in his Battle for the Bible and Norman Geisler argued for a strict and traditional view of inerrancy wherein the Bible was "divinely inspired in its very words, including matters of history and science" (Norman L. Geisler, Decide for Yourself [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982]). Others such as Clark Pinnock advanced a much less narrow definition wherein inerrancy meant that "the Bible can be trusted to teach the truth in all it affirms..." (The Scripture Principle, 225). This represents a shift from the earlier view, brought about by the new emphasis on hermeneutics, where the reader is asked to discern between "what is really being affirmed in the text, as opposed to what is there in a supporting role" (The Scripture Principle, 225).

understanding of biblical intent.

This battle over definition is being fought mostly in the arena of interpretation.[15] The

editor of a recent hermeneutical guidebook writes:

> the problem is that this [the evangelical theological position on the authority of the
> Bible] while essential for a true understanding of Scripture, does not by itself guarantee
> that we will interpret Scripture aright. We have become increasingly aware that the
> interpretation of *any* document is fraught with many and serious difficulties. What,
> then, are those principles that concern *general* hermeneutics. A satisfactory response to
> those questions requires the concerted effort of scholars who are willing to move
> beyond the narrow confines of exegesis as such. Indeed, one is hard-pressed to think of
> an academic discipline that does not have something substantial to contribute to our
> concerns.[16]

The Bible's central and authoritative position within evangelicalism reinforces the importance

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[15] A self-consciously evangelical hermeneutical approach to dealing with biblical difficulties is
a recent phenomenon. Although the previous generation of evangelical theologians and biblical
scholars had a defined method for reading the Bible and therefore were familiar with an
evangelical hermeneutic, it has not been until the last twenty years that evangelicals have
investigated various interpretative methods in hopes of coming to some agreement and conclusion
on how and what the Bible is trying to communicate to its readers. One can see this new concern
reflected in the number of articles published in recent years. A sampling includes the following:
Douglas Jacobsen, "The Rise of Evangelical Pluralism," Christian Scholars Review 16 no.4
(1987), 325-335; Robert K. Johnston, "Biblical Authority and Hermeneutics: The Growing
Evangelical Debate," Covenant Quarterly 50 (January 1994), 6-24; Robert K. Johnston, "Facing
Scriptures Squarely," Christianity Today, April 19, 1980, 24-27; Robert K. Johnston,
"Interpreting Scripture: Literary Criticism and Evangelical Hermeneutics," Christianity and
Literature 32 no.1 (Fall 1982): 33-47; Gordon J. Wenham, "The Place of Biblical Criticism in
Theological Study," Themelios 14 (April 1989), 84-89; Gordon D. Fee, "Issues in Evangelical
Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics and the Nature of Scripture," Crux 26 no.2 (June 1990), 21-26;
Gordon D. Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics Part II: The Crucial Issue - Authorial
Intentionality: A Proposal Regarding New Testament Imperatives," Crux 26 no.3 (September
1990), 35-42; Gordon D. Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics, Part III: The Great
Watershed - Intentionality and Particularity/Eternality: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 as a Test Case," Crux
26 no.4 (December 1990), 31-37; Murray W. Dempster, "Paradigm Shifts and Hermeneutics:
Confronting Issues Old and New," Pneuma 15 no.2 (Fall 1993), 129-135; J. Julius Scott, Jr.,
"Some Problems in Hermeneutics for Contemporary Evangelicals," Journal of the Evangelical
Theological Society 22 no.1 (March 1979), 67-77.

[16] Moises Silva, "Preface," Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, ed., Moises Silva

of agreement, and thus hermeneutics is being looked to in order to help bring about that unanimity.

As stated above, the principles of biblical authority and inspiration inform evangelical hermeneutical methodology. An interpretative framework for the Bible that upholds its authority, integrity and elucidates God's Word for the present age. is the evangelical goal in hermeneutics. This focus on authority is an important distinction. for unlike a liberal agenda wherein the hermeneutical task is directed by external literary critical tools and the modern experiential context, the evangelical labor is guided by the text itself, using interpretive tools only as the text allows. The evangelical framework subjects everything to the theological boundaries that the text provides (authority, inspiration. inerrancy and unity).

This use of the as a hermeneutical guide appears simple. but in actuality the evangelical hermeneutical system is complicated. The problems arise in several areas. First. the universal problem for evangelical and nonevangelical alike. is that the meaning of the biblical text is embedded in historio-cultural forms which are not easily accessed by the modern reader separated from the text by language, culture, time and already preceding layers of interpretation. The added difficulty to this universal problem. for the evangelical. is the apparent diversity of the text: the Bible was written over a period of centuries. in several languages, and by various authors. This diversity demands some sort of resolution for the evangelical interested in a unified conception of divine revelation. In order to access original meaning, literary and historical tools need to be utilized. This creates a second problem in that the use of critical interpretive tools clashes with the evangelical theological tenets of

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(Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1996), 15.

perspicuity and inerrancy.

The problem with textual complexity is compounded by the evangelical democratic emphasis. The ability of each individual to enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ through the reading of God's Word without human mediator - academic or cleric - is a Reformation legacy and evangelical ideal. Mark Noll writes: "Scripture. for evangelicals. belongs pre-eminently to the communion of the saints. While some may have special gifts in understanding the Bible. these gifts do not warrant a self-authenticating magisterium of exegetical science."[17] If the problem of biblical complexity is solved only by the use of academic tools in order to extract meaning then the message of the Bible is limited to those who have access to academia. The Bible. therefore becomes an entirely academic enterprise contradicting the evangelical emphasis of individual interpretive ability. The perspicuity of the biblical message is lost if meaning is found only in the use of critical tools. Inerrancy is also at risk in that critical tools have historically challenged the truth value of the text. The risk of using critical tools is only made more concrete to evangelicals by the examples of their use. For example. older studies highlighted the various snippets of JEDP without paying an attention to the way the elements had been united together by an editor. Although necessary to correct erroneous views and therefore enhance the understanding of Scripture, critical tools can also play a part in destroying the integrity of the text. The lack of a unified understanding on how interpretive tools can function safely within evangelical theological boundaries creates difficulty for their consistent application in evangelical hermeneutics.

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[17] Mark Noll, Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals. Scholarship and the Bible in America (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 153.

A third dilemma within the evangelical hermeneutical discussion is the artificial

direction given to the interpretative process if one begins with the necessary evangelical

theological boundaries. For example. J.D.G. Dunn examined the biblical evidence for an

approach to Scripture interpretation and found the traditional theological principle of inerrancy

wanting.[18] Evangelicals, relying upon traditional formulations of Scripture, have established

theological boundaries of biblical authority, inspiration, inerrancy and unity before the

hermeneutical inquiry is even initiated. This problem has resulted in the formation of two

types of evangelical hermeneutics: the use of critical tools only to bolster traditional orthodoxy

and the use of critical tools to test the strength and validity of traditional formulations of

scripture. The hermeneutical problem for evangelicals is formed out of the use of theological

formulations for interpretation. Although necessary to uphold evangelical orthodoxy, the

theological assumptions also dictate interpretation. The somewhat circular and entangled nature

of the problem becomes evident.

The theological marker of biblical authority defines evangelicalism not only as a

biblically-centered faith, but also as a community struggling to maintain its theological

principles against the difficulties encountered when reading its religious text. As a result, the

Bible is read quite differently by the diverse groups within evangelicalism, each reading being

guided by their respective concerns. Evangelical academics have attempted to locate some

form of unity in the reading of the text through theological and hermeneutical formulations.

They use literary-critical tools within the boundaries of these formulations to help uncover the

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[18] James D.G. Dunn, "The Authority of Scripture According to Scripture, Part One," Churchman 96 (1982), 112, as cited in Mark Noll, Between Faith and Criticism. 174.

universal truths of the authoritative text. While evangelical academics grapple with the

meaning and implications of authority, inspiration and reliability of the biblical text, the rest of

the evangelical population is influenced heavily by more popular readings and concerns.

While evangelical academics struggle with the application and use of critical tools. the popular

generic evangelical hermeneutic remains somewhat static. The strong emphasis on the Bible as

authoritative. inspired. reliable and unified. combined with the lack of emphasis on the

problems generated in the reading of the text. result in a lack of sensitivity to textual variance

and difficulty. The Bible is often subjected to base literalism and crass over-simplification.

The Bible and its concomitant theological and hermeneutical issues are important

distinctives of evangelicalism. One can see these issues reflected in the biblically oriented

prophecy movement which is completely reliant upon the principles of biblical inerrancy and

inspiration. and is confident in the belief that divine truth is simple to access and easy to apply.

B. History

A particular historical path defines North American evangelicals. They are designated

not only by the more generic theological definition. but by an American historical context that

nuanced the orthodox theological stance. Even though they shared their european Reformation

heritage with many other Protestants, the North American evangelical's unique religious

experience was molded by American religious and secular history.[19]

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[19] A number of books are devoted not only to comparing American evangelicalism to the
evangelicalism that manifests itself elsewhere, but also to delving into the particular character of
American evangelicalism as a unique entity shaped by a specific context. See among others.
Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University
Press, 1989); Mark Ellingsen, The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact. Controversy.

1. American Protestant Beginnings

In 1607 English Protestants began settling on the eastern coast of what was later to become the United States. These first groups were soon joined by the conservative Puritans who left England in order to establish "a city upon a hill," as governor James Winthrop of the Massachusetts colony put it.[20] They meant to establish a political structure based on religious principles. George Marsden, a prominent evangelical historian, writes about the Puritans:

> The Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were convinced that they had been commissioned by God to play a major role in world history. Their rule for life was the fundamental Protestant principle that the Bible alone should be their supreme guide. For a model society, they looked to the Old Testament, which described God's governance of Israel. Surely, they reasoned, these God-given principles should apply to nations today.[21]

This sense of destiny lingered on as an American ideal. Radical groups such as the Baptists, as

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Dialog (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988); George Marsden. Religion and American Culture (Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1990); Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); D.G Hart, ed., Reckoning with the Past: Historical Essays on American Evangelicalism from the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995); Mark Noll, ed., Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980's (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mark Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds., Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles and Beyond 1700-1990 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and George Rawlyk and Mark Noll, eds., Amazing Grace: Evangelicals in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); Charles H. Lippy, Being Religious American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994). For an entirely Canadian perspective see John G. Stackhouse Jr.'s book, Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to its Character (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

[20] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny, ed. Conrad Cherry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 43.

[21] Religion and American Culture, 16.

well as those who followed Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, altered the Puritan homogeneity of state-sponsored religion with their emphasis on the separation between religion and secular institutions for the protection of the true spirituality of the individual. In the following years, the colonies became increasingly diverse as the populations grew. Quakers. Pietists. Presbyterians. and slave religion were added to the mixture. As the number of people in the colonies grew, opportunities to create religious status by proselytizing also expanded. Out of this widespread movement initiated by various religious groups a set of revivals known as the Great Awakening was generated.

2. The First Great Awakening (c. 1720-1742)[22]

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[22] Several scholars have expressed their dissatisfaction with the term "Great Awakening." Not only did eighteenth century Americans not use the term. but historians believe it erroneously depict the happenings of the late 1730's to early 1740's as a unified and general movement. Jon Butler rejects the term not only because it was not a label used by the people at the time. but also because he believes, due to the local and sporadic nature of the revivals. the term makes more of the events than was true at the time (Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990], 165). Others have objected to the characterization of the revivals conjured by the use of the term "Great Awakening." Roger Finke and Rodney Stark state that the wave of revivals was not spontaneous. but rather a series of highly planned events (The Churching of America 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992], 87). These and other scholars question the neat compartmentalization of a loosely unified set of events under one term because it both oversimplifies the movement and the genesis of North American evangelicalism as it arose out of Puritanism. Mark A. Noll recognizes this validity of the critique. but defends the usage of the term in that, although the revivals were widely scattered and local. the term must stand as it indicates a point in time when attitudes towards authority and the definition of Christianity changed ("The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism." Journal of Interdisciplinary History 23:3 [Winter 1995]). "Awakening" according to Noll, reflects the understanding of the movement as "a tradition of pietistic popular Calvinism sparked especially by Whitefield and continuing on in widely scattered local revivals...[and was] the result of a general shift from old-world established Protestantism to new-world evangelical Protestantism" (626).

The Great Awakening was a movement that spanned two continents. It was a manifestation of a spiritual renewal movement spanning Scotland, England, Wales and North America.[23] In North America the localized New England event expanded from small revivals in the 1720's and 1730's into a larger intense two-year movement (1739-40) that swept the east coast of North America from Georgia to Nova Scotia. It was propelled forward by preachers such as Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) whose sermons began awakenings within their own congregations. Edwards is an especially prominent figure during the revivals as he not only had a powerful ministry in New England, but he was a theologian who produced important works on conversion and religious experience. He was joined by others such as the itinerant preachers George Whitefield (1715-1770), Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764) and Isaac Backus (1724-1806), all of whom brought their sermons to a broad-based audience of rich and poor, rural and urban. Unlike Edwards, these men made religion popular and entertaining in order to revive a Christianity they felt had reached a low ebb within the established churches. Some, like Whitefield, planned extensively to cause this revival not leaving anything as important as the truth of Christianity to chance.[24] These revivalists preached a popular message founded in Reformation theology that added the emphases of individual spirituality and radical piety, both of which have had lasting effects in popular evangelicalism.

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[23] For differences between evangelicals in various countries see: Mark Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds., Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles and Beyond 1700-1990 ; and George Rawlyk and Mark A. Noll, eds., Amazing Grace: Evangelicals in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States.

[24] Roger Finke and Rodney Starke, The Churching of American 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy, 88.

The revivalists stressed that mere church attendance or the appearance of religiosity

was insufficient to guarantee salvation. Jonathan Edwards, for instance, was convinced of the

need for a personal individual spiritual experience:

> this [eternal suffering] is the dismal case of every soul in his congregation that has not
> been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise
> be...And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a
> very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons,
> that sit here in some seats of this meeting-house in health, and quiet and secure, should
> be there before to-morrow morning.[25]

Edwards was certainly not promoting a withdrawing from regular church attendance, but his

emphasis was on the conversion of the inner individual not on the outside structure. And

although the Puritans had valued conversion, as Jerald Brauer affirms, the revivalist emphasis

was new as spiritual regeneration was not connected to membership in the congregation or in

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[25] Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Selected Writings of Jonathan Edwards, ed. Harold P. Simonson (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1985), 112-3. Many have used this sermon of Edward's to characterize him as a preacher fixated on hellfire and damnation. This caricature of Edwards does not take seriously the concern of the sermon itself, and neither does it read the sermon in context with the rest of Edward's works. Simonson states that in order for one to see what Edward's intends, this sermon has to be seen in conjunction with "A Divine and Supernatural Light" which balances the message of human degradation (17). Viewing Edwards as severe on the basis of one sermon alone is further offset in the examination of his other works. John E. Smith writes of another one of Edward's works, A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, that: " One of the clear declarations of the Affections is that religion has to do with the inner nature of a man, with the treasure on which his heart is set and with the love which supplies his life with purpose. There can be no identifying religion with morality or anything else; it is the deepest and most fundamental level of life and it goes to the heart of the matter...In recovering the religious dimension of life and in expressing through the vivid idea of affections, Edwards is a guide. He has given us a means of exposing the pseudo-religions of moralism, sentimentality, and social conformity. For if religion concerns the essential nature of a man and the bent of his will, it cannot be made to coincide with moral rules, with fine sentiment, or with social respectability" (45). This further clarifies Edward's presentation in "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" as his intention is to propel people, regardless of their station and religious affiliation or deeds, into a personal experience with Christ.

the community.[26] According to Edwards, each individual had to respond to God personally without thought of anything but response of the soul to God's command. John E. Smith writes about Edwards:

> Edwards places primary emphasis upon first-person experience; in religion it took the form of the new sense or taste without which faith remains at merely the notional level. A spiritual understanding is not confined to the apprehension of universal concepts but includes within itself a sense which man must experience directly. If such experience is lacking, there is no way in which he can be made to understand the things of religion through general concepts alone...a man must sense or taste for himself the divine love in order to understand what it means.[27]

This "first-person experience" necessary for conversion made every individual important. Edwards writes that even: "persons with but an ordinary degree of knowledge are capable without a long train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of religion."[28] This corresponded to the dominant theme of the larger revivalism that spiritual experience was available to everyone. This new emphasis caused an unintentional shift of focus from the Puritan organized church and social structure to the individual which had enormous impact on American evangelicalism.

American evangelicalism, however, did not immediately become individualistic, instead the change was more gradual. Most significant in this regard during the Great Awakening was

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[26] Jerald C. Brauer, "Puritanism, Revivalism, and the Revolution," in Religion and the American Revolution, edited by Jerald C. Brauer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 20.

[27] John E. Smith, "Editor's Introduction," A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, 46-7.

[28] Jonathan Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light," Selected Writings of Jonathan Edwards, ed. Harold P. Simonson, 86. Despite asserting, however, that each individual was responsible and capable, Edwards feared the lack of emphasis revivalism gave to tradition and the teaching of theology. Edwards especially maintained the necessity of traditional and theological moorings. Nathan Hatch quotes Jonathan Edwards as having written: "the less knowing and considerate sort of people could easily be deceived in the very process of studying the Bible"

lessening authority of the hierarchy in colonial churches. The revivals of the Great Awakening lost connection to the established church in three ways. First, and mentioned above, although the revivals increased church membership with the new converts, the accent was not on strengthening the established church. The goal was to purify the church with spiritually regenerated individuals and therefore the emphasis was on the individual.[29] And although the attempt was to purify the church, what the revivals of the Great Awakening really did, as Brauer writes, was to: "excise the concept of conversion out of Puritanism and cast it loose in a highly individualistic and subjectivisitic fashion."[30] The revivals were about reforming Puritanism, but the idealism resulted in replacing secular and ecclesiastical authority with that of the layperson. This regenerated individual, spiritually reborn and infused with the Holy Spirit, had the authority by which to judge all others and thus the structure was subjugated to the individual.[31] This emerging interest on individual pietism had enormous implications for the eventual rise of popular evangelicalism.

Second, the emphasis on the individual radically changed church structure in the colonies. The religious democracy that developed out of pietism led to an explosive shift in church structure from an established church to a gathering of the purified saints of God. Puritans had revolted against the Church of England because of the contamination they felt arose from the secular involvement of the state churches. But their own experiment in

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(The Democratization of American Christianity, 180).

[29] Edwin Scott Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England, 106.

[30] Jerald C. Brauer, "Puritanism, Revivalism, and the Revolution," 18.

[31] Jerald C. Brauer, "Puritanism, Revivalism, and the Revolution," 26.

ecclessiastical and social regeneration had also led to significant compromises. In New England, for example, Jonathan Edward's grandfather Solomon Stoddard had instituted church membership policies based on the faith of the parents. The revivals seized upon this "unfaithfulness." Edwards limited the giving of communion only to those who had experienced a spiritual awakening, thereby damaging not only a church membership tradition, but also social structure. Edwards did not tolerate church membership attained on the basis of political and social standing in the larger community and rather restricted it to only those who were spiritually regenerated. Not only was class and social influence limited, but ecclesiastical authority was diminished in light of the validity of individual experience. This new democracy, developing out of a theocracy, as Edwin S. Gaustad writes, placed:

> ..the parishioners under less restraint. The emphasis upon a personal religious experience had then, as always, the effect of making converts less dependant upon external authority - scriptural or ecclesiastical. Those to whom religion in the 1740's had suddenly become meaningful knew that the kingdom of God was within them: their private divine vocation, be it called new light, inner light, or sense of the heart, was their ultimate and occasionally their only appeal. To them only one covenant was of pressing significance: the covenant of grace. The church covenant was important, but secondary. Mediation was unnecessary, priesthood was universal. The civil covenant was obsolete, and society was shattered...[32]

As a result of these new revival emphases, there was a massive levelling effect not only in the churches, but between church and state. Churches were formed, reformed or split as a result of the emphasis on the regenerated individual. The Great Awakening underscored by individual pietism gravely weakened the authority of the state in religious enterprises thereby changing church structure irrevocably.

Third, the revivals and their swelling democratic forces obliterated distinguishing

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[32] Edwin Scott Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England, 113.

characteristics existing previously. George Whitefield, an Anglican from England, and Gilbert

Tennent, a colonial Presbyterian. and others preached to anyone who would listen regardless

of their denominational background. This was an innovation, Winthrop Hudson asserts. as

previously revival sermons were preached "in churches and at stated hours of public worship.

And when sermons were delivered to congregations other than one's own it was at the

invitation of the pastor."[33] George Whitefield preached not only in any pulpit offered him. but

at outdoor meetings as well. This lack of restriction applied to theology also. Tennent. during

his pastorate in New Jersey. made the acquaintance of the Dutch Reformed minister Theodorus

Frelinghuysen who placed great emphasis on personal piety. This new emphasis pervaded his

ministry as well and a new style of emotional intensity was introduced into Calvinism. The

converts who had been made in these non-traditional settings through a blend of Calvinism and

pietism also reflected this blurring of boundaries by heading to the more non-traditional

religious settings of the Baptists and Methodists. New priorities and methods created a

plurality and growing diversity. Although these revivalists intended to maintain a certain

amount of church structure and tradition. their words were the beginning of religion run along

democratic lines, resulting in the splintering of the established church structure into many

denominations with individualism becoming a reigning principle.

Fourth. despite men such as Jonathan Edwards who were moderate, the Great

Awakening spawned a new way of presenting Christianity. Itinerant revivalists took their

message to all the villages and towns at which they stopped. They preached a popular message

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[33] Winthrop Hudson, Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1965), 68-9

of the New Birth experience available to all, but often included a barb aimed at the clergy who

they assumed practiced an empty and rigid Christianity. For example, George Whitefield

points his finger at the clergy in his statement:

> Boston is a large, populous place, and very wealthy. It has the form of religion kept
> up, but has lost much of its power. I have not heard of any remarkable stir for many
> years. Ministers and people are obliged to confess, that the love of many is waxed
> cold...Still I fear, many rest in headknowledge, are close to Pharisees, and have only a
> name to live.[34]

This antipathy towards ecclesiastical structure was reflected in their own popular

communication methods. The emphasis on conversion, the public displays of emotion, lay

preaching and expressed sentiments against intellectualism clashed with the traditional and

more reserved emphases of the institutional churches. The importance of doctrine and dogma

were deemphasized and experience and emotion were highlighted. And in order to make the

gospel more appealing, the revival preachers entertained their audiences: they employed

humor, coarse language, used the vernacular to express religious ideas in their often

extemporaneous sermons on sin, salvation and the individual. These new methods, although

ultimately undermining the Great Awakening itself, set up a new model for the communication

of religious ideas within North American evangelicalism.

With all the voices involved touting their various and sometimes extreme positions,

coupled with the criticism by the established religious structure, the revival finally crashed

under its own extremes and even relatively conservative preachers such as Jonathan Edwards

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[34] George Whitefield, Journal, p. 48, as quoted in Roger Finke and Rodney Starke, The
Churching of America 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy.

were discredited.[35] The revival fire died down after the locally established clergy began

lashing back at the revivalists in order to defend themselves, but the Great Awakening had

lasting results that shaped American religion ever after. The Great Awakening embedded

evangelical concerns into the American cultural understanding. The pietistic message of New

Birth melded with existing ideas of the colonies as God's chosen nation, a new Jerusalem for

the new inhabitants.[36] Through the War of Revolution, the Second Great Awakening and the

Civil War, evangelical Christianity only further implanted itself as the unofficial religion of the

nation as it inspired and interpreted these events. The Great Awakening also introduced new

methods, with an emphasis on conversion, lay preaching, popular appealing messages and an

experientially-based spirituality, and all this clashed with the traditional intellectual emphases

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[35] His ideas on individual spiritual experience cost him his pastorate. Jonathan Edwards was dismissed from his Northhampton Church in 1750 because of his convictions that only those who had truly experienced spiritual regeneration could participate in communion. Even though Edwards was by no means excessive and did not condone the "shrieking and deliriums accompanying conversions among some worshippers," liberals such as Charles Chauncey seized on Edward's purist stance and denigrated him along with other revivalists (Harold P. Simonson, "Introduction," Selected Writings of Jonathan Edwards, 19). Despite offering extremely thoughtful insights into the theology of conversion even to the point of being critical of the revival's misleading effects (see his sermon "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God), Edwards was dismissed alongside the more unintellectual and dramatic revivalists such as George Whitefield, Gilbert and William Tennent. This condemnation, together with his unyielding position regarding the administration of communion as well as other incidents created a rift between Edwards and his congregation and he was asked to leave. See also Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 33; Winthrop S. Hudson, Religion in America, 73; and C.C. Goen, "Introduction," The Great Awakening, 76: Edwin Scott Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 80-101.

[36] Will Herberg, "America's Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence it Comes," in American Civil Religion, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 76-88; Robert N. Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Religion in Time of Trial (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975).

of the hierarchical institutional churches. These new patterns of fervency have remained with

North American evangelicalism ever since. The revivals were the genesis of something

uniquely American from their impulse to reorganize the church along a more democratic

structure, to the introduction of a transdenominational character. to an emphasis on

personalized faith and Bible reading.

3. The American Revolution (1775-1783)

The individualism and idealism accentuated in the religious Great Awakening were

significant for the political arena. The crisis with the British Empire ended in the replacement

of colonial government with a newly created fully American republican government. The

American Revolution. where the people united for the sole purpose of throwing off the

constraints of British rule in the American colonies. was a turbulent starting point for a nation.

Although a segment of the population either resisted or remained indifferent. a good majority

of Protestants supported the War for Independence.[37] George Marsden links the political

revolutionary war with the religious awakening that preceded it:

> [There was] a direct link between the Revolution and an older tradition of Protestant
> dissent which the Awakening helped reinforce. This tradition went back to Oliver
> Cromwell's Puritan Commonwealth in the 1650's. The American colonies were
> populated largely with people - especially New England Congregationalists and Scotch-

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[37] Calvinists of various denominations were the supporters of the war (Congregationalists.
Presbyterians, Baptists). Others such as Quakers, Anabaptists, Moravians. Dunkers, Anglicans
and other non-Calvinists were either neutral or Loyalists. Those Loyalists who did not move to
Canada were persecuted. See George Marsden, Understanding Fundamentalism and
Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1991),127; Ruth H.
Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the Revolution," Religion and American Politics:
From the Colonial Period to the 1980's, 46; and George Marsden, Religion and American
Culture, 29-30.

Irish Presbyterians - who thought of themselves as heirs to that heritage. They were dissenters rather than part of the powerful Anglican establishment. The Awakening, without itself involving any direct political program. intensified the dissenting traditions in America and increased their numbers. When the Revolution came, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists were almost invariably on its side.[38]

The revivalism of the early eighteenth-century and the Revolution were both impulses for communal renewal.

The interchange between the political world and the religious realm was founded on the Puritan theocratic idea of God's covenant with the people. They carried with them the notion that religion should impact tangibly and passionately the world that they lived in. The Great Awakening only accentuated this adding a democratic twist as well: morality and the goal of righteousness were no longer the concern only of community authorities but everyone shared in the responsibility. Jerald Brauer credits these revival emphases of "new man, new age, and the centrality of the Holy Spirit" with the growth of revolutionary spirit.[39] The Puritan religious-social concerns for covenant and liberty were only heightened by the revivalist sentiments of spiritual regeneration both in the individual ("the new man") and in the nation ("the new age"). The yearning for purity and God's grace had been made even stronger in the Puritan communities through the revivals. The threat to this "new man and new age" and therefore also the covenant was the spark that lit the revolutionary fire.[40] In 1763, after several petitions to the Church of England by the legally-established Anglicans for a bishop in order to strengthen their position, the dissenters took offense at the perceived tyranny. Together with

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[38] George Marsden, Religion and American Culture, 29-30.

[39] Jerald C. Brauer, "Puritanism, Revivalism, and the Revolution," 19-27.

[40] Jerald C. Brauer, "Puritanism, Revivalism, and the Revolution," 7-10.

the dissatisfaction with taxes and the attempt to increase English political authority in the

colonies, the establishing of a British religious authority created a furor. The Quebec Act of

1774 made in British Canada only solidified this perception. For the Protestant colonists. the

acceptance of Catholicism in Quebec by the Crown indicated that British authority was tainted

with corruption and willing to align itself with the powers of darkness. As Anglicanism and

the Crown were allied. both were vilified from the pulpits of colonial America.[41] This

intrusion of English authority into the Puritan communities was perceived as a threat to the

covenant and to the people living under its divine status. Revivalism's effect within the

colonies fostered revolt: the authority given to each individual. empowered not by class or

station but by the Holy Spirit. to maintain God's esteem upon the community revolted against

what was perceived to be illegitimate authority and a corrupted religious structure.

The covenant. combining the revivalist "new age" to the larger political quest for

liberty and "the new man" was obligated to act by God's standards. placed political vigilance

into the religious goals. One can see that many ministers. supporting the revolution from their

pulpit, directly connected political action with religious purity: only when the people repented

of their sins in order to achieve the God given state of holiness could the enemy be defeated.[42]

Nicholas Street, a pastor of East Haven Church during the Revolution. connected the

oppression of being a colonial state under Britain with the state of the sinful people of Israel

[41] See Ruth Bloch, "Religion and Ideological Change in the American Revolution." 46-7: and Mark A. Noll, "Revival, Enlightenment, Civic Humanism. and the Evolution of Calvinism in Scotland and America, 1735-1843," Amazing Grace, 79.

[42] Conrad Cherry, "Revolution. Constitution, and a New Nation's Destiny." God's New Israel, 62.

during their wilderness wanderings:

> We see that God kept the children of Israel in the wilderness for many years after he
> had delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh, on account of their wickedness. He led
> them so long in the wilderness to humble and prove them that they might know what
> there was in their hearts: and one trial after another brought it out. And so our trials in
> this wilderness state are bringing out our corruptions one after another, that we and
> others may know what there is in our hearts: what pride, what selfishness, what
> covetousness, what ingratitude, rebellion, impatience and distrust of God and his
> providence, all these come flowing forth from the midst of us under our trials, in as
> conspicuous a manner as they did from the children of Israel in the wilderness. Which
> if it had not been for our trials, that have discovered them, we should not have
> imagined to have been in such a privileged, gospelized land as this.[43]

The Puritan "city on a hill" was broadened to include the notion of a nation directed by God.

Evangelicalism found it easy to align itself with republicanism not only because of the

parallels that existed, but also because there was also a direct sharing of ideas and functions.[44]

Most importantly, evangelicalism and republicanism shared ideology. One can see this

commonality expressed in the interchange of shared symbols and language. The Revolution

was given a religious vitality when it was framed as a struggle between good and evil. As

well, the egalitarian ideals of liberty and equality espoused in the revivals and afterwards were

also championed by civil leaders of the revolution and of the fledgling nation that arose out of

the war. Whereas evangelicalism provided a social structure for the fragmented and chaotic

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[43] Nicholas Street, "The American States Acting Over the Part of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness and Thereby Impeding Their Entrance into Canaan's Rest," God's New Israel, 78.

[44] Noll compares the similar characteristics between the two (A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada, 116-7). The Puritan mindset linked closely to the values of republicanism. Noll states that "with similar views on virtue, freedom and social well-being, it is not surprising that republican and Christian points of view began to merge during the Revolution." (118) The sharing between politics and religion resulted in forms of both that closely resembled each other. Noll continues the comparison "the political rally was more than a secular counterpart to camp meetings....evangelical values also deeply influenced the formal political parties...All of them were direct products of evangelical worldviews, apprehensions, and

aftermath of the war, republicanism in turn gave evangelicalism a new common sense

structural mode that bolstered Christianity while diminishing reliance on tradition.

The architects of republicanism adopted Scottish Moral and Common Sense philosophy

to assert public authority and create an ethical and moral structure without the appeal to

tradition. They appealed to the common sense principles of self-evident and universal laws

known to everyone in order to create a necessary foundation for the building up of a nation.

This allowed them to abrogate authoritarian and traditional societal and political structures

without society degenerating into anarchy. This had a great effect on evangelicalism.

Common Sense philosophy opened up the idea that all humanity was able to discern reality and

therefore universal truths which complimented the revivalist idea that the Bible itself would not

express any truth that was not readily comprehendible to all who read it. Men such as Barton

Stone (1772-1844) and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) began preaching an austere

Christianity based solely on the Bible. doing away with any authority that might corrupt and

tyrannize its singular authoritative status. Traditional creeds and doctrines could be dismissed

in favor of more applicable individual readings and interpretations of the biblical text.

Common Sense philosophy strengthened the belief that each person was fully capable of

understanding reality and truth. This freedom given to the individual to authoritatively act and

think resulted in the proliferation of new religious groups.[45]

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aspirations."(242)

[45] The principle of individual liberty, both political and religious, was contrary to the idea of churches with regional boundaries. Voluntaryism allowed people church membership in churches where they felt most inclined to attend. Churches were forced to gather members not on the basis of region, but on the basis what the churches had to offer. This radical notion was the beginning of American denominationalism. The competition for members created not only

The political, societal, and religious independence offered by the Revolution's reliance on the individual's common sense permeated popular culture. During the time of the Revolution evangelicals used a secular philosophy to buttress their own democratic interests generated during the revivals. But in turn, revolution-steeped evangelicals preached a political message from their non-Loyalist pulpits. Both aspects, the lasting legacy of the Revolution, can be seen within contemporary evangelicalism. The same confidence in the individual's ability to discern truth and the uncritical fusion of politics and religion are evident within certain segments of evangelicalism today.[46]

4. The Second Great Awakening (c.1795-1835)

As with the First Great Awakening of the previous century, the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth-century consisted of waves of revivals and preaching efforts.[47] Heightened by the democratic urge of the revolution, groups set out to define the

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new churches, but a variety of new religious groups.

[46] The Christian Coalition is one of the more prominent examples of this. Former leader Ralph Reed's goal in establishing this agency (together with the help of Pat Robertson) was to influence the political process in order to bring back a Christian moral focus to the nation. See his book, Politically Incorrect: The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994).

[47] Historians place the awakening around the beginning of the nineteenth-century. Martin E. Marty, narrowing the definition of the Great Awakening to only the actual revival period, dates it between 1800-1802 (Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America [New York: Dial Press, 1970], 121). Others such as Nathan Hatch place the inception during the time of Timothy Dwight and his protege Lyman Beecher in 1814 and following (The Democratization of American Christianity, 17), while still others such as Jon Butler emphasize the importance of viewing the religious impulse as extending from the Revolution and onwards (Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People, 221). Although a specific date is not agreed upon, it can be stated that a religious movement grew stronger as the nineteenth-century approached. The

new nation as a Christian one. Gordon Harland, in his remarks about this era in American

religious history. writes:

> the vision, assurance, and dedication of the old Puritans had been maintained but
> profoundly transformed...The old Puritan sense of divine calling and mission was now
> thoroughly fused with a dynamic nationalism...That which would provide the model for
> the world was no longer a covenanted company sent on an errand into the wilderness.
> but a new nation rising rapidly to her own place in the sun.[48]

The idea of a new "Nation under God" was the optimistic motto forged out of the religious

ideals of Puritanism and the revivals and the political actions of revolution and nation building.

This heritage has continued to gather strength down to the present day. One can see the union

of spiritual and political vision in many of the speeches given during that time. For example.

Lyman Beecher (1775-1863). the first president of Lane Theological Seminary. stated in an

1835 speech that if:

> this nation is, in the providence of God. destined to lead the way in the moral and
> political emancipation of the world. it is time she understood her high calling. and were
> harnessed for the work. For mighty causes. like floods from distant mountains. are
> rushing with accumulating power. to their consummation of good or evil. and soon our
> character and destiny will be stereotyped forever.[49]

The intensity of this nation building-Christianizing goal was only heightened by the challenge

of anti-Christian sentiments expressed by popular deism. A comet and an earthquake were

additional reminders functioning as alarming signs to those at the time that the end of the world

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nineteenth century saw the movement intensify and diversify until the mid-century mark.

[48] Gordon Harland, "American Religious Heritage and the Tragic Dimension." Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion II 4 (1973): 280,281.

[49] Lyman Beecher, "A Plea for the West, God's New Israel. 120. His particular concern was to save the west from being affected by Catholic European immigrants whom he perceived to be a threat to the Christianizing of the nation. This anti-Catholic rhetoric is part of the american religious landscape and it crops up in various writings from early on up until the present. Grant

was close at hand.[50]

Although referred to as a single entity, the Second Great Awakening was a disunified

movement of various groups and methods striving towards the common goal developing

Christianity within the nation. The disparity is quite evident from an overview of the principal

characters in the revival effort. Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), a Congregationalist who

worked out of an urban setting together with his students, valued education as important for

true religious knowledge. He wished to combat the:

> occupancy of Ignorance...[an occupancy in which people assume that] the system of
> Providence, together with the numerous, and frequently abstruse, doctrines and
> precepts, contained in the Scriptures, may all be comprehended without learning labor,
> or time.[51]

The complete opposite was seen in Francis Asbury (1745-1816), a Methodist who guided

ministers into the American frontier as circuit riders. His concern was not for building a

learned defense against anti-Christian philosophy as was Dwight's, but for advancing the

gospel in the quickest manner possible to the greatest number of people. His rural based

ministry was complemented, but also overshadowed, by Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). Both

Asbury and Finney catered to the common person and used the camp meeting format as a

means to target this audience. The massive venture created by these men and others changed

the religious landscape of America: the number of church attenders exploded, division rocked

the congregations, new religious groups emerged, and societies catering to various social needs

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Jeffrey, the subject of the third chapter, also indulges in this disposition.

[50] Martin E. Marty, Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America, 61.

[51] Timothy Dwight, "A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Theological Institution in Andover," 7-8, as quoted in Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity.

arose out of the moral teachings of the revival sermons.

The effects of the Second Great Awakening were fourfold. First, the revivals created a

plethora of religious organizations. These included both the numerous social organizations and

the organizations of the churches themselves into denominations. As traditional churches and

the new denominations stabilized themselves, their concerns for the moral reform of society

became stronger and social organizations were established on the various moral issues of the

day. Organizations built around anti-Catholicism, suffrage, abolition, temperance, opposition

to capital punishment and a host of other issues grew out of the continuing revivalist emphases

on the "new man and the new age". Denominations arose out of the same pietistic concerns

for the regenerated individual. Where previously there were only established "churches" and

"sects," churches now united with like-minded churches in establishing their version of

Christianity necessary for the new nation's well-being.[52] The established churches lost their

authority to dynamic new movements such as the "Christians" (circa 1804) and the "Disciples"

(circa 1811) both of which arose out of the desire to reestablish the plain truth of the gospel

believed to be hidden under centuries of church doctrine and tradition.[53] Other groups such as

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[52] See Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 134-155. This denominational structure has become completely ingrained into the American way of doing religion. As James G. Moseley in A Cultural History of Religion in America comments "that even 'strangers' could become, in a sense, Protestants. About a century after the Second Great Awakening, and after considerable internal debate, Roman Catholics accepted their 'Americanization,' as one, rather than the, church in America. Roman Catholics in America have a revival tradition, and some Jews have Sunday schools. Zionism might be interpreted as a Jewish mission enterprise. These three faiths are now referred to as the major denominations" (64).

[53] The "Disciples" founded by Alexander Campbell, and the "Christians" founded by Barton

the Methodists broke away from their original role as reforming bodies of the established

churches and became formal organizations in their own right. The Awakening formed the

denominational structure which was to become so indicative of evangelical Christianity.

A second outcome of the Great Awakening extending out of denominationalism was the

disintegration of solid theological structure among the denominations. Although democracy

was a political vision, it was realized also within evangelicalism with the close linking of

nation and God. Democracy was also working in tandem with the revivalist heritage where the

competing Christian visions were tailored to meeting the needs of the individual. Although

churches and denominations were united by their common goal of Christianizing the nation,

competition arose out of the inability to separate the political emphasis on democracy from

revival triumphalism. Democracy and its resultant competing interpretations of how

Christianity was to manifest itself in the nation led to, as Sidney Mead believes, an erosion of

theological emphases.[54] The rivaling religious visions did not allow a focus on a unified

spiritual position, rather, as Mead writes, the revivalistic denominations became preoccupied:

> ...with salvation and perfection of the individual....tending to focus their attention on the personal vices and morals of individuals, until such personal habits as smoking. drinking. dancing and Sunday observance became the outstanding criteria of Christian character.[55]

The competition and its focus on the individual and the corresponding loss of important

theological boundaries caused American evangelicalism to lose much of its former Puritan

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Stone, merged in 1832 to form "The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." Both groups found commonality in their desire to emulate exactly the church practice described in the New Testament book of Acts.

[54] Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment. 136.

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religious understanding. Not only was Christianity personalized but it was simplified and

diluted. In the same vein as Mead. G. Harland asserts that:

> in the very period when American Christianity acquired its greatest energy to build.
> spread its message, to educate and be a civilizing agent. it lost its sense of mystery and
> judgement: covenantal promise gave way to contractual convenience. the church as a
> 'people of God' became an institution which one joined in order to promote worthy
> goals. the moral became moralistic, the evangelical was reduced to the evangelistic. In
> short. there was a real. if at the time imperceptible. loss of the sense of transcendence
> in the corporate life.[56]

This lack of spiritual dimension developed much of what was to plague evangelicalism over the

next century. The personalization allowed evangelicalism to be overcome with a continuing

identification with the nation and its structures. The evangelical adoption of democracy and

competition within a national free-enterprise vision eroded essential emphases and set

evangelicalism up for the disaster at the end of the century.

A third outcome. and hinging on the first two. was the democratic urge opened up by

the revival preaching. which destroyed the monopoly of trained clergy and weakened the

traditional positions on orthodoxy. Charles Finney. a moderate revivalist compared to some

others of his time, rejected the Westminster Confession as an illegitimate religious authority on

the basis of the claim that one needed only the Bible.[57] New groups were able to demolish the

authority of the church in favor of the individual and their own popular understandings of

Scripture. The profusion of new groups that sprang up is an indication of this religious

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[55] Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment. 137.

[56] Gordon Harland, "American Religious Heritage and the Tragic Dimension." Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion II 4 (1973): 281.

[57] Nathan O. Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum." The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History, 75.

freedom.

A fourth result of the Great Awakening was the further fusion of evangelical

Christianity with extrinsic structural elements. Having united the cause of Christianity with

nation building and democracy, certain other philosophies extended their way into the

expression and interpretation of American evangelicalism. The Enlightenment ideal of

humanity's ability to discern truth through reason had become popularized within American

society in the revolution. Revivalists now integrated this Enlightenment ideal within their

expression of Christianity in order to champion the individual's competence in understanding

biblical truth unencumbered by traditional interpretations. Charles G. Finney stated about his

Bible study: "I had nowhere to go but directly to the Bible and to the philosophy or workings

of my own mind."[58] Biblical truth was in all its aspects credited with perspicuity and

immutability as it was reasoned that universal truth from God was given to humanity, and

therefore all people should have the capabilities to readily understand it. The Enlightenment

confidence in reason and in the scientific nature of truth was readily incorporated into

nineteenth-century evangelicalism. From its popular expression to the more academic forms,

people viewed the Bible as a receptacle of objective truths discernable through study and

human understanding.

A final consequence of the Second Great Awakening was the proliferation of the pattern

of division and unity still inherent within present evangelicalism. Evangelicalism by its very

nature of catering to the individual is divisive. Although this divisive nature is often levelled

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[58] Charles G. Finney, Memoirs, 42-46, as quoted in Nathan O. Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," 75.

as an accusation. division was a sign of health. The dissension indicated that people were still deeply interested in Christianity: their vision was taken seriously enough to separate from all those who did not agree. Indeed. this division was the key element in the mass success of the Second Great Awakening. The revivals were an academic and reserved eastern urban phenomenon as well as being a boisterous experientially-based western rural camp meeting event. They were northern, outward, and socially-oriented crusades as well as being southern. inward, and spiritually-focussed ones. Each group. divided by race. region. and education. held up the Bible as a guideline for their respective position on the gospel truth. Yet. within all the division. there was also an overall unity. Baptists and Methodists preached at the same camp meetings. Presbyterians and Congregationalists were involved in the same voluntary societies. This emphasis on coming together outside denominational and ideological boundaries remains within evangelicalism despite the strong diversity.

5. The Civil War (1861-65)

The four year war between the states, although a conflict between the industrial concern of the North and the more agricultural focus of the South. can also be described as a religious event. The Civil War was viewed as a holy war by those involved. Despite having resulted from deep economic. political and ideological tensions, the conflict was given a religious framework in order to aid in the understanding of a severe tragedy that split a nation apart.

The Second Great Awakening had invigorated a moral sense. especially among northern evangelicals. Fueled by a millennialist optimism. evangelicals pursued moral and social

improvement in their nation.[59] Unprecedented numbers of people were devoted to rooting out

sin, whether social or spiritual. One of their concerns, which became prominent in the

rhetoric of the Revolutionary War, was the issue of enslaving Africans while purporting to

uphold the freedom of all humans. Evangelicals of the North argued for abolition. Although

preaching against slave holding was successful in the North, it only proved to harden the

position for maintaining slavery in the South. The conservative churches in the South

perceived the Northern reprimands as unbiblical and tyrannical. A literal reading of the text

could not detect any biblical condemnation for the institution of slavery. The persistence of the

literal reading in the South was augmented by the revivalist emphasis on *sola scriptura*, which

valued the American emphasis on the individual interpretation of the Bible. And the Northern

social emphasis, also an outgrowth of evangelical theological concerns, had no leverage over

the South when it came to the slavery issue. After tensions increased during the 1830's.

church leaders in the South condemning the Northern censure as infidelity to Christianity.

prepared a biblical defense of slavery . The evangelical impulse that had formerly provided a

measure of unity to the nation now forced division.[60] The religious breach created between

North and South by church division and competing moral positions did not directly cause the

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[59] To use the organizational pattern of the third chapter as explanation, evangelicals after the Great Awakening were working on a comic model of millennialism. This is the converse of apocalypticism's tragic version, which manifested itself in the late nineteenth century and onwards. Northrop Frye explains that "the moral effect of literature is normally bound up with its assumption that we prefer to identify ourselves with the happy world and detach ourselves from the wretched one" (The Great Code: The Bible and Literature [New York: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, Publishers, 1982], 73).

[60] Three of the major denominations - Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists- split either directly or indirectly over the issue of slavery. These denominational breaches paralleled the national disunity.

Civil War, but they were instrumental in the tensions which led to it.

The Bible played a large part in aiding people's understanding of these hostilities. Its language was used to infuse the war with meaning greater than simple political ideology. Although this could be understood as mere propaganda, it is significant that the explanation of the meaning of the event was communicated in biblical terms. This religious rhetoric indicates the fusion that had taken place, after the Revolution and during the Second Great Awakening especially, between American evangelicalism and nationalism. The nature of the communication also demonstrates the strong Christian consensus that existed in America in the early nineteenth-century. This golden age of American evangelicalism, furthermore, is fundamental to understanding the difficulties experienced in the years to follow when evangelicals lost their dominance in society. Their assumptions of unified national vision and prominence within society left them unable to explain the changes that were about to take place.

6. The Difficulties to Follow: Princetonians and Fundamentalists

Having weathered what seemed the worst of times with the Civil War, evangelicals did not perceive anything out of the ordinary in the introduction of upheavals at the outset in the mid and late nineteenth-century. But there was cause for concern, however, as the social landscape was altering at a drastic rate. Fragmentation, both racial and regional, had resulted from the Civil War. As well, immigration, urbanization, emancipation and industrialization led to a whole host of new problems inconsistent with the older vision of a Christian nation. Evangelicals attempted to keep the problems at bay through their efforts. D.L. Moody's

revivals and the social gospel movement were several attempts made to rectify the social ills."[61]

But alongside these societal changes, new theories in science. history and sociology from Europe made their way into American universities. These had a profound and devastating effect on the shaping of evangelicalism.

The notion that Christianity was essential for the health of the nation had been developed through the Great Awakenings. the Revolution. and the resulting early nineteenth-century evangelical consensus. Many in the nineteenth-century thought the ideal would be reached within their lifetime. The new challenges to traditional Christianity from Darwinism and historical criticism were not immediately recognized as serious breaches in the growing idealism. Sidney Mead states that in the uncritical linking of national and revivalist vision many: "American Protestants had lost their sense of estrangement from society. [and] began to argue that it was profoundly Christian."[62] Those in this party were sustained. as Harland suggests. "by the great American myth which saw life as just beginning."[63] These people. of which the Unitarian movement is an example, were confident that the intellectual challenges would dissipate and that traditional Christianity would triumph. Others realized the futility of this hope and attempted to integrate the prevailing concepts with Christianity. Yet another segment, neither confident in their certainty of an existing Christian commonwealth nor conciliatory to the new philosophies, withdrew from society to form new groups.

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[61] See George Marsden. Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism: and William McGuire King. "The Biblical Base of the Social Gospel," The Bible and Social Reform. ed. Ernest Sandeen (Philadelphia" Fortress Press; and Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 59-84.

[62] Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment. 139.

[63] Gordon Harland, "American Religious Heritage and the Tragic Dimension." Sciences

Dispensational Premillennialism, the Holiness movement, and Pentecostalism were three movements generated in the late nineteenth-century, which offered negative explanations of the perceived disarray of the social and intellectual realms.[64] This was the period termed as "the Great Reversal" where many evangelicals retreated from their dominant position within American society. And although they did not give up their vision of America as a nation under God, nor did they abandon their secular methods of explaining Christianity, they felt forced out of their positions of optimism and social concern.

Within this context of societal and intellectual chaos, the scholars at Princeton Theological Seminary hoped to construct a superior defense of Christianity which would not only answer to the new challenges of Darwinism and higher criticism, but would further strengthen the evangelical theological position.[65] The Princetonians were the first to develop a concrete and definable evangelical approach to the Bible. While others were bowing to the intellectual pressure or removing themselves from the conflict, these men held firm to their convictions and formulated a defense of traditional biblical views.[66] It has been written that

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Religieuses II4 (1973), 282.

[64] George Marsden, Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism, 39-44.

[65] Marsden contrasts this defensive battle mentality with the situation of evangelicals in Britain. Liberal theology, higher criticism and Darwinism were never perceived as threats there as they were in America. He writes: "the relatively easy acceptance of Darwinism, higher criticism, and liberal theology in England seems to stem from the pre-existence in nineteenth-century England of a concept of history as gradual natural development. Darwinism itself was, of course, a product of this climate. In British church life and especially in English constitutional history there was a deeply rooted awareness of the gradual development of traditions. By contrast, the newness of America seemed to demand written and rational definitions, new departures, and a break with the past" (Fundamentalism and American Culture [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980], 225-6).

[66] Some feel that the Princetonians did exactly the opposite: instead of defending traditional

American Presbyterians were "the self-proclaimed missionaries to the intellect."[67] The

Princetonians, all Presbyterians, were certainly leaders in this "missionary" movement. In

their opinion, piety had to be accompanied by the rigorous and academic study of the Bible

guided by the outlines in the Westminster Confession and other Reformed sources. These men

were committed to the rigorous academic study of the Bible and to its defense against attack.

The pattern they set forth was played out in the twentieth-century.

While the Princetonians, especially Charles Hodge, his son Archibald Alexander Hodge

and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, differed over the correct position to be held regarding

Darwinism and historical criticism, they were unified in their conviction that any teaching

negating the authority of the Bible was inherently flawed. They wedded the theological

principle of biblical inspiration to the belief in biblical inerrancy thereby creating, in their

minds, a completely reliable text. Against "Higher Critical" method, they refuted the view

that the Bible was a natural product. If the allegedly contradictory material in the Bible was

seen as a product of its historical transmission and context, then revelation was compromised

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orthodoxy they broke it down by creating a rationalistic substitute for the traditional Presbyterian
formulation found in the Westminster Confession (Ernest Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism:
British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970;
reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978], 123-130; "The Princeton Theology: One
Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism," Church History 31 [1962]. 310. 314-
17); Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible [full
citation needed]. For a reply to Sandeen see LeRoy Moore, Jr., "Another Look at
Fundamentalism: A Response to Ernest R. Sandeen," Church History 37 (June 1968): 195-202
and Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration," Westminster
Theological Journal 44 (1982), 352-65. Both write that the Princetonians were not at all novel in
their promotion of biblical inerrancy and inspiration, in fact it seems that theirs was a generic and
widely held viewpoint, regardless of denomination (Balmer, 355).

[67] Mark S. Massa, Charles Augustus Briggs and the Crisis of Historical Criticism, Harvard
Dissertations in Religion, 25 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 16.

as it was imprinted by the historical process.[68] Charles Hodge, denying that history and

humanity shaped biblical truths, wrote:

> Happily the belief of the inspiration of the Scriptures is so connected with faith in
> Christ that the latter in a measure necessitates the former. A man can hardly believe
> that Jesus is the Son of God, and worship him as such, without regarding as the word
> of God the volume which reveals his glory; which treats of his person and work from
> its first page to its last sentence; which predicted his advent four thousand years before
> his manifestation in the flesh; which, centuries before his birth, described his glory as
> though it was an object of sight, and his life and death as though they had already
> occurred. To such a believer the assumption that the Scriptures are the work of man is
> as preposterous as the assumption that man made the sun.[69]

Any claim that history compromised the clear communication of God's revelation to the reader

was rejected by the Princetonians. Their foremost concern was in maintaining commitment to

biblical revelation and authority. Under the threat of historical criticism and Darwinism, the

Princetonians hoped to create a hermeneutic that would structure, clarify and resolve the

debate. Although they attempted to provide an organized view of biblical foundations, they

put in writing a method where the Bible could not weather a demonstration of error. They

buttressed their formulations with the belief in the reliability of the individual's ability to sense

truth. For example, B.B. Warfield wrote: "Christians believe that the perspective of biblical

faith enables us to see very clearly and without distortion the biblical facts as they really

are..."[70] This willingness to use Common Sense reasoning and an outdated Baconian view of

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[68] This is not to say that the Princetonians were against using historical and literary critical
tools in helping to elucidate the Bible's meaning, but they were against any attack on the integrity
and authority of the Bible. See B.B. Warfield's paper given at the San Francisco 1915 World's
Bible Congress, The Bible the Book of Mankind (American Bible Society, 1916) where he
mentions the usefulness of critical methods of biblical study.

[69] Charles Hodge, "Inspiration," The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921, ed., Mark A. Noll
(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 220-1.

[70] B.B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (The Presbyterian and Reformed

truth brought them the ridicule of mainstream scholarship and placed them in the midst of

numerous battles.[71] Although these men have been characterized as extremists who led future

conservative Christians into the Dark Ages, they are better described as intellectuals defending

an old way of reading the Bible.[72] The foundations they established formed the basis for what

was to follow.

This academic evangelicalism merged with the more popular strand of American

evangelicalism in the beginning of the twentieth-century. An entire evangelical conglomerate

was formed out of the crisis the Princetonians had hoped to deflect with their efforts. George

Marsden states that this resulting fundamentalist movement was actually a "coalition of rather

diverse co-belligerents" representing pietism, evangelicalism, confessionalism, millenarianism,

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Publishing Company, 1948), 10-11.

[71] See Mark S. Massa, Charles Augustus Briggs and the Crisis of Historical Criticism. Harvard Dissertations in Religion, 25 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). He discusses in full the battle between the Princetonians and the new school of Presbyterian scholars, like C.A. Briggs, who were willing to acknowledge the historical development of the biblical text. Briggs did not endear himself to the conservatives any further by denying the concept of verbal inerrancy which bolstered the Princetonian defense of the authority of the text.

[72] Ernest Sandeen, for example, singles out the Princetonians as the formulators of a new theology that created havoc for the evangelicals who came after (The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930, [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970], 130). He neglects, however, to place them into an American context where most people believed as they did (cf. Mark A. Noll, Between Faith and Criticism, 12). Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim follow a similar thesis to Sandeen's in their book The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979). Timothy Weber provides a more precise explanation of the Princetonians using Thomas Kuhn's model of "paradigm shift." Instead of being innovators or fanatics, they were the last of a breed of scholars dedicated to a particular world view: they were Baconians in an age of Darwinians ("The Two Edged Sword: The Fundamentalist Use of the Bible," The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History, 101-120)

and the Holiness and Pentecostal movements."[73] And like the Princetonians before them, fundamentalists, from their most militant manifestations to their more moderate expressions, were intent on conserving traditional Protestant Christianity and protecting it from the ravaging effects of the European intellectual movements.

The first stirrings of fundamentalism arose in the late nineteenth-century in organized Bible conferences, prophetic symposiums and revival meetings. The demise of the nineteenth-century evangelical hegemony was a large focus of these various gatherings. Not only did they lament the diminished evangelical perspective in society, but they lashed out at those that took a more liberal and optimistic perspective on the change. The break of evangelicalism into liberalism and fundamentalism, accelerated by the many verbal attacks between the two groups, was based on serious differences. The more conservative fundamentalists castigated the confidence of liberals, Gordon Harland asserts, because:

> they believed that many of the grand themes of the Christian heritage receded into the
> background and the 'Drama of Redemption' lost much of its meaning and immediacy.
> Many Christians thought that the liberal attempt to address the new age had been a
> virtual capitulation to the age, resulting in a profound erosion of the message of
> salvation For such people liberal theology was thus a program for the shipwreck of the
> faith. To them, the so-called 'higher criticism' bordered on the blasphemous, the
> progressive view of history meant a denial of Biblical eschatology, and the loss of
> traditional absolutes meant that culture was awash in relativism.[74]

The spiritual, societal and academic disjunction experienced by the conservatives was discussed in terms of a spiritual battle waged for the preservation of traditional forms of

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[73] George Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon," Reckoning with the Past, 303.

[74] Gordon Harland, Christian Faith and Society (Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1988), 33.

Christianity. The continuing revivalism disseminated this defensive posture on a popular level while the conferences gave the fundamentalist movement structure against the modernist direction that secular culture was taking.[75]

These gatherings of conservative evangelicals were important. They assembled the various leaders of the fundamentalist movement, forming a haven for conservative viewpoints which later matured into neo-evangelicalism. It was also an environment wherein diverse perspectives were shared. Dispensational premillennialism introduced at these conferences, for example, gained popularity with a wider audience as a result. The gathering together of all those opposed to the modernist movement protected evangelicalism as well as changed its shape through the circulation of various minority positions.

A series of articles, published between the years of 1910 and 1915, reflects this aggregate nature of early twentieth-century evangelicalism. Written by a loosely-aligned group of conservative scholars, The Fundamentals were sent out to all those involved in Christian ministry. They were designed to proffer a popular, but academically respectable, defense of traditional Christian positions on doctrine and practice. Regarding the Bible, they promoted an inspired, authoritative, infallible and inerrant text, throughout attacking any kind of biblical criticism which was not aligned with these assumptions. Although it was well received in the conservative community, this series went largely unnoticed in the scholarly arena. Alongside

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[75] The decades long revivals of the Great Awakening continued into the twentieth century, but with a different tone and a different audience. The dashed hopes for the kingdom of God in America led to harsh and bitter critiques of society in the continuing revivals. Men such as Billy Sunday took their revivals around the country denouncing social mores, intellectuals and everything else associated with the fundamentalist-modernist split. See Douglas W. Frank, Less than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986).

the fact that this effort was one of the last attempts at conservative Christian scholarship and

dialogue with those in opposition, The Fundamentals are important as they set out a definition

for the more important characteristics of the movement (from biblical inspiration to

infallibility, including the more unpleasant position of anti-Romanism). The lack of reception

for the fundamentalist conservative ideas, combined with their own ambivalent and often

antithetical relationship with modern culture, resulted in large scale withdrawal from secular

culture. Whereas evangelicals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had seen themselves

as prominent figures in directing the direction of secular society, fundamentalist evangelicals of

the early twentieth century viewed themselves as defeated and unwelcome in the popular arena.

The flashpoint was the 1925 Scopes trial in which William Jennings Bryan attempted to rout

the teaching of evolution from a public school curriculum. Although he won the trial, the

fundamentalist-modernist battle was lost: fundamentalist evangelicals were ridiculed by the

media and rejected by society as backward and ignorant. This division of society was also

reflected in the denominations. The rending of American religious society into two camps,

liberal and conservative, had widespread results. The most important being that the

conservatives, feeling persecuted, withdrew and set about creating their own enclaves. The

fundamentalists had their own churches, they created an entire network of Christian education

in the establishment of Bible schools, and they supported their own missionary societies. They

were able to move toward some semblance of independence and unity.

Despite unity in cause, fundamentalism was never a unified monolith.

Fundamentalism, a popular movement buttressed by nineteenth-century Princetonian

theological formulations, incorporated everything from the Holiness traditions to the revivalist

legacy, from Calvinism to Arminianism, from doctrinalists to moralists and so on. Any unity

in the movement dissipated when the threat of modernist intrusion diminished.

Moderate fundamentalists left the fundamentalist name behind and went back to the

term "evangelical" in order to break with the more negative and extreme aspects of

fundamentalism. After the moderates made their exit, fundamentalists remained rigid and

separatist. They maintained their dogmatic and literal view of scripture, whereas evangelicals

developed strategies to deal with the ambiguities of translation and interpretation. Moreover,

those left within the ranks of fundamentalism were more likely to be dispensational

premillennialists, establishing a pattern of belief that was different from evangelicals overall.

Nancy Ammerman, in writing about the fundamentalists, states that:

> Fundamentalists are more likely to insist on dispensational premillennialism as the only
> correct belief about Christ's Second Coming. In fact, fundamentalists are more likely
> to see that belief [dispensationalism] as a key test of whether a person 'really believes
> the Bible.'[76]

Protecting the Bible from modernism continues to be a fundamentalist goal, and separation

from the world and its inhabitants persists as a dominant theme. What is interesting is that,

despite their separation from the world, they maintain a high profile in American politics and

society. Their established infrastructure of schools and institutions have allowed them to

generate a strong political and social presence from the 1960's and onwards. From the ultra-

fundamentalist Bob Jones University to the more moderate Dallas Theological Seminary, from

the 1980's political impulse of the Moral Majority to the Christian Coalition affecting politics

in the present, fundamentalists are a loud voice in society who continue to have great

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[76] Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 5.

influence.

The Princetonians and the fundamentalist-modernist controversy have left a lasting impression on evangelicalism. Not only is evangelicalism now divided into the conservative. dogmatic fundamentalists and the more moderate neo-evangelicals as a result. but several important evangelical characteristics were developed through the difficulties. The effort by the Princetonians to provide a reasoned defense of the Bible remains important for evangelicals and fundamentalists alike. Despite having set the Bible up for a fall by using outdated categories. they created a paradigm for biblical studies that continues up into the present. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy, although inculcating a defensive posture in the fall from the evangelical position of nineteenth-century prominence. was also the stimulus that generated an entire evangelical/fundamentalist subculture. Universities. schools. churches. politics. and entertainment all have an evangelical counterpart as a result. Lastly. the mixture of ideas circulating within the overarching framework of evangelicalism only increased. From the Princetonian reverence for academics to the anti-intellectual bent of the fundamentalist revival preachers. the diversity of opinions and positions was only intensified through the events transpiring on the eve of the twentieth-century.

Popular apocalyptic spirituality. rooted in dispensational premillennial thought. has been directly affected by the divisions within evangelicalism arising out of events of the late nineteenth-century. It was shaped by the controversy and its attitudes reflect the concern fundamentalists had for the coming age. Its allegiance to the Bible can be viewed as part of a larger movement focussed on the same.

The history of evangelicalism in North America is directly related to the evangelical

ethos in the present. The revivals, revolution, civil war and conflict with changing societal and intellectual patterns have given North American evangelicalism a distinct shape. Orthodoxy was reconfigured by the revival focus on individual experience: correct belief was integrated with spiritual experience. Church structure changed as attendance was no longer the standard. Rather the church ideal was the gathering of like-minded individuals. Individuals, empowered with the common sense notion of their own abilities, moved away from a hierarchical way of doing church and used their own rational sensibilities to dictate religious practice. The political parallel found in the Revolution only emphasized this democratic notion within American society. A profusion of new groups arose out of this strong political and religious democratic impulse, each generated by the concerns of the individual regarding the world around them. Evangelicalism was and continues to be, a vibrant and multi-faceted religious phenomenon. Dominated by orthodox theological concerns, it has managed to diversify tradition in as many ways as there are individuals. Consequently, evangelicalism abounds with organizations, denominations and groups and is, as a result, an unusually diverse movement.

C. Institutions

The institutional shape of evangelicalism is an outgrowth of historical events and evangelical theological particulars. Revivals, fueled by evangelistic concerns, took the Bible away from church control and gave it to the people. Historical drama entrenched contextual interpretation where the Bible was made to answer directly to the various events in American history, whether it was the civil war or the fundamentalist-modernist crisis. The

evangelicalism that developed out of this interplay between Bible and history was dynamic and varied. The style of administering evangelical belief can be best described as a mosaic which incorporates all stances rather than as singularly unified. American evangelical institutions organize themselves around the historically shaped dichotomous characteristics of formal/informal expression. individual/hierarchical authority. denominational/parachurch system, and popular/elite emphases.

Evangelicalism is defined by a vast array of institutions. some so different from each other that they cannot coexist peaceably. For example. neo-evangelicals separated from fundamentalism and had to create entirely new associations because their concerns were not welcome. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). founded in 1942. attempted to unify various evangelicals within a more inclusivist policy. creating a larger voice for themselves without giving in to liberalism and modernism. A whole network of new evangelical institutions and leaders followed the organization of the NAE to create an entire new structure outside of the fundamentalist world that had formed in the '20's and '30's. Schools such as Fuller and Wheaton, leaders like Billy Graham, and new organizations such as Youth for Christ. were all outgrowths of incompatibility of the NAE with the older fundamentalist institutions.

Certain institutional characteristics tend to align together. For the most part a denominational system also incorporates an emphasis on hierarchy. with a certain amount of formality and elitism. Likewise, parachurch organizations, individualism. popular and informal expression are often linked together by their similarities. One must be cautious. however, in defining or grouping any characteristic within evangelicalism because of

evangelicalism's fluidity. Always uppermost is the individual's relationship to Christ which colours even the more elite academic expression of evangelicalism. So, for example, even a college educated pastor working within a denominational system is really concerned with individualism.

Denominations are an important part of the evangelical landscape. A denomination is defined as "an association or fellowship of congregations within a religion that [has] the same beliefs or creed, engage in similar practices and cooperate with each other to develop and maintain shared enterprises."[77] Evangelical denominations such as the Presbyterian Church of America and the Southern Baptists order themselves alongside Reformed doctrine.[78] The holiness tradition within evangelicalism provides shape for Free Methodists and the Church of the Nazarene.[79] The Vineyard church and the older Pentecostal Church center themselves around charismatic concerns.[80] These are but a few examples of the various evangelical denominations. In keeping with the character of evangelicalism. denominations. although

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[77] "Denominationalism," Dictionary of Christianity in America, 1990 ed.. As well, note Mark Ellingsen's section on evangelical churches in The Evangelical Movement: Growth. Impact. Controversy, Dialog, 136-178. He lists evangelical churches under their particular tradition and provides several distinctives of each denomination.

[78] For a look at the more generic Baptist distinctives, one of which includes the supreme authority of Scripture, see Eric H. Ohlmann's essay, "Baptists and Evangelicals." in The Variety of American Evangelicalism, 148-160.

[79] See Paul Merritt Bassett's essay, "The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement: Its Understanding of the Nature and Role of the Bible," in The Variety of American Evangelicalism, 72-108.

[80] Although Donald Dayton questions incorporating Pentecostalism under the heading of evangelicalism. his is an informative essay on the distinctives of the Pentecostal denomination. See his essay, "The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition," in The Variety of American Evangelicalism, 36-56.

structured institutions, are scattered along the vast continuum between elite/popular,

formal/informal and individual/hierarchy. Each offers its distinct vision of being Christian to

the individual.

The marketplace of evangelical ideas is only expanded by parachurch organizations.

Unlike denominations, they are not assembled around beliefs and creeds, but are dedicated

towards particular ministries.[81] And although they exist outside denominational authority, they

still take on denominational characteristics. For example. Youth With A Mission, a

nondenominational evangelism enterprise, has charismatic inclinations.[82] Other evangelical

parachurch organizations include Billy Graham Ministries (interested in evangelism). Focus on

the Family (Christian aid for the family), and Promise Keepers (gender-focussed evangelism).

Although parachurch organizations do not compete for members as do denominations, their

emphasis on issues also lends them a distinctly popular nature. Through their focus on

contemporary questions they are able to informally communicate evangelical doctrines. This

informal transmission, intent on ministering to individuals and their concerns, takes place

outside the more hierarchical authority of the denomination and therefore is often translated

into a very popular format. Although very successful in evangelistic enterprises such as the

Billy Graham Ministries where relating to the secular individual in an "unchurch-like" manner

has produced many conversions, parachurch methods can also be problematic for significant

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[81] "Parachurch Groups (Voluntary Societies)," Dictionary of Christianity in America. 1990 ed. Also see Mark Ellingsen's section on parachurch institutions in his book The Evangelical Movement, 179-196. He states that parachurch institutions are integral to North American evangelicals as they as they function like a "second home" outside of the denominational structure.

[82] "Youth With A Mission," Dictionary of Christianity in America, 1990 ed.

evangelical impact on society. The parachurch popular focus results in solutions that are at times simplistic approaches to serious problems. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, for instance, provides an easily accessible but nevertheless one-dimensional answer to the question of homosexual legitimacy.[83] Although the democratic impulse, which gives rise to popularism, is a large part of understanding evangelicalism, there is also a dialectic at work which provides a counterpart. For instance, on the issue of homosexuality, one can see evangelicals who provide more indepth and theologically challenging arguments than those found in the popular realm.[84] The opposite characteristics within institutional evangelicalism, even when weak, provide an "always reforming" action.

"Denomination" and "Parachurch" provide the institutional shape of evangelicalism, but the overarching category dominating both institutions are the divisions between popular and elite. Evangelicalism both struggles with and glories in this division. American evangelicalism's success, as mentioned before, is that it takes *sola scriptura* to heart. The great revivals in evangelicalism's American history have all been about developing the personal relationship of the individual to Christ. And all have emphasized putting the Bible into the individual's hand for him/her to interpret in order to access that personal relationship. So at the core of the democratic emphasis of evangelicalism is the emphasis on individual

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[83] Vera Breedlove, "Once Gay, Always Gay?" Focus on the Family (March 1994), 2-5. Like Dobson, the author of the article takes the slant that an individual's sexual orientation is solely a behavioral problem caused by environment and psychological makeup. Therefore, homosexuality can easily be dismissed as sin, or the result of a sinful state far easier than if it were examined seriously as a genetically programmed state. The solution, as a result, is an easy one as well.

[84] See Thomas E. Schmidt, Straight and Narrow?: Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

authority. The theological problem that has resulted many times over is the variance of

interpretation that results from democracy and individualism. The institution reflects this

difficulty within evangelicalism. Not only is institutional shape characterized by its many

denominations and groups, but by its infighting as well as the extreme and bizarre nature some

of these groups take. In fact, evangelicalism is often typecast by these institutional extremes.

Outsiders to evangelicalism see only the televangelists, militia groups, popular apocalypticists,

and snake handlers. Yet for all the critique evangelicalism has to endure because of its

popularism, it also has an established academic elite.[85]

Early Americans established religious schools. Although these schools later left their

denominational affiliations, this impulse indicates that although popularism defined one aspect

of evangelicalism, intellectual pursuits and academic institutions defined another. The serious

academic study of the Bible was jeopardized for evangelicals during the fundamentalist-

modernist crisis. The Christian framework within which to study was replaced by a more

secular pluralistic European model.[86] After the crisis, evangelicals and fundamentalists

attempted to rebuild their network. At present there are schools which represent almost every

type of biblical scholarship, from conservative ones like Dallas Theological Seminary to the

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[85] The popular success of evangelicalism has not been without its insider critics. See Mark Noll's critique of evangelicalism in The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind and David F. Wells' No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993). Both address the "middling standard" (Wells' term) within evangelicalism (and American society), which tears away at its intellectual coherence. Both warn that evangelicalism is in danger of becoming as shallow as the culture in which it participates.

[86] George Marsden, The Soul of the American University (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 104.

more progressive like Fuller Theological Seminary.[87] These schools are joined by entirely

academic enterprises like biblical societies and publishing houses.[88] Evangelicalism, to

complement its popular bent has a mainline academic enterprise. However, a problem arises.

Mark Noll states that "the separation between the pew and the academy is a broad one for

evangelicals."[89] The ideal of individual appropriation of the Bible is put in jeopardy by

academic authority. Popular traditions of reading Scripture dominate without a conscious need

for challenge by a biblical authority.[90] Individual authority bolstered by common sense

hermeneutics is so entrenched within the evangelical populace, that it sidelines evangelical

higher learning which often remains truly elite.

The divisions within evangelicalism seen in history define the shape of its institutions.

Evangelicalism in its search for truth, has not found a way to reconcile its vision of the Bible

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[87] George M. Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987).

[88] Mark Noll lists evangelical academic achievements in his article, "Evangelicals and the Study of the Bible," in Evangelicalism and Modern America (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 105-9.

[89] Mark Noll, "Evangelicals and the Study of the Bible," in Evangelicalism and Modern America, 116.

[90] David Wells writes in No Place for Truth that "today evangelicalism is seeking to adapt itself to modernized low culture" (115). His comparison of articles from Christianity Today characterizes this popularized shift within evangelicalism. Whereas in 1959 most of the articles explored "the nature of biblical revelation, the nature of God, the person and work of Christ, the nature of the gospel and Christian salvation, human nature and sin...", in 1989 "this column had been replaced by a variety of features that, if they had been published under a single heading might have been called 'Laypeople Look at Themselves.' Here were the success stories of Christian ministry as well as all the staple themes of the self movement - the pains of growing up, the pains of growing up as a Fundamentalist kid, the pains of a mid-life crisis, the problems of marriage, the problems when marriages break up, struggling with homosexuality, struggling with less money than we would like, struggling with a diet" (209).

for "everyperson" to biblical interpretation from higher authority. The institutional shape of

evangelicalism shows that biblical interpretation is most popular when done in conjunction with

popular issues. Parachurch organizations thrive in relating the Bible to the American cultural

context because they both deal in popular rhetoric and concerns. As with the revivals of the

Great Awakenings, the evangelistic enterprises of the present cater to the individual and

therefore are about meeting them at the most basic level instead of inculcating them with the

theological complexities of reading the Bible and the world around them. The divisions

between the individual and the hierarchy continue to exist within evangelicalism, but as certain

scholars would have us believe, popularism within evangelism is gaining the upperhand.

D. Conclusion

The mixture of theological concerns, historical events and institutional shape are the

definitional boundaries through which evangelicalism can be viewed. Although institution and

history provide examples which show that evangelicalism is not solely dedicated to the

individual, the democratic emphasis within evangelicalism cannot be denied. The populist

hermeneutics honed by revivals and revolutions have created a heavy accent on majority

thinking. "Elitist" concerns such as theology, logical thinking, critical study have often been

lost in the popular concerns that evangelicalism has increasingly taken on. The fundamentalist

crisis, for instance, took on a crisis mentality against any sort of elitist mentality. One

evangelical theologian, David Wells, although not recognizing evangelicalism itself as the

cause, writes that:

> the disappearance of theology from the life of the Church, and the orchestration of that
> disappearance by some of its leaders, is hard to miss today but, oddly enough, not easy

to prove. It is hard to miss in the evangelical world - in the vacuous worship that is so prevalent, for example, in the shift from God to the self as the central focus of faith, in the psychologized preaching that follows this shift, in its strident pragmatism, in its inability to think incisively about the culture, in its reveling in the irrational. And it would have made few of these capitulations to modernity had not its capacity for truth diminished. It is not hard to see these things; avoiding them is what is difficult.[91]

Although Wells laments the bleak situation of the present, he neglects to mention that popularism has also given rise to some of evangelicalism's biggest moments. The popular strand within evangelicalism has been responsible for everything from the prophecy conferences of the late nineteenth century to the present - and continuing - two year revival in Brownsdale, Florida. Detriment and benefit result from the American evangelical emphasis on the common person's ability to read the Bible. The resulting individual interpretations have obscured both the academy's and the church's influence.

Popular religion is characterized by religious activity outside of traditional ecclesiastical structure.[92] North American evangelicals are unique in that they do not see themselves as living within the framework of an ecclesiastical structure. Evangelicals created an entire democratic religious structure based not on the hierarchy of the church, but on the authority of the individual. Evangelicalism is responsible for creating very personal individualized forms of religious belief which draw on emphases from the surrounding culture. Charles Lippy, writes that:

in American culture there has long been a range of sources outside of formal religious institutions to which individuals might look for helpful signs in erecting a personal worldview. Consequently, popular religiosity is not merely a phenomenon of the

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[91] David Wells, No Place for Truth, 95.

[92] Peter Williams, Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspectives (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1980), 3.

modern or postmodern period, but a constant in American culture.[93]

Although Lippy is writing about the popular religious constant in American culture, he could

also be writing about North American evangelicalism. Evangelicalism is permeated with a

popular bent which is detached from an academic and hierarchical counterpart. This populism

was generated right from the revivals onwards. Freedom from formal tradition continues to be

offered by revivalists, televangelists, and para-church organizations. Even outside the

extremes, evangelicalism thrives on its democratic voice to communicate personalized

interpretations of Protestant Christianity. Evangelicalism, and next chapter's fundamentalism,

and dispensationalism all participate in this popularism. The American ideal, shared by North

American evangelicalism, giving power to the people to uphold their own world-view and

explain their own destiny, gives rise to movements such as the popular apocalyptic. Popular

apocalyptic not only shares with evangelicalism its ultimate respect for the Bible, but it

appropriates its popular hermeneutic and its close connections with American culture.

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[93] Charles H. Lippy, Being Religious American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 17.

CHAPTER TWO: DISPENSATIONALISM

The particularly American concerns that were developed within evangelicalism have caused it to be a dominant movement within the nation's religious and political history. Evangelicalism, due to its success, has also generated and shaped many smaller submovements. Premillennial dispensationalism is one of these submovements, which, although starting small, has had considerable influence among the conservative evangelical population. It merged with fundamentalism, another outgrowth of evangelicalism, during the fundamentalist-modernist crisis to create an enduring affiliation of theological conservatives. Evangelicalism's theological concern to maintain the complete authority, inspiration, and perspicuity of the Bible was an issue protected by both militant and conservative fundamentalism and the supernaturally-focussed dispensationalist structure. This union not only preserved conservative evangelicalism, but was directly responsible for the generation of popular apocalyptic spirituality in North America.

Dispensationalism, similar to evangelicalism, manifests itself on several different levels. One only has to make a short list of those who represent themselves as dispensationalists or who use a dispensationalist method of biblical interpretation to see the various presentations. For example, Pat Robertson is an immensely popular religious broadcaster with a conservative political bent, while Craig Blaising is a scholar who works in an academic setting.[1] Jack van Impe hosts a weekly television "news" show that focuses on

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[1] On Robertson's life and views, see David Edwin Harrell, Jr.'s, Pat Robertson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987). Robertson is different from Blaising in his popular appropriation of dispensationalism, as well as in the way he structures the events of the

demonstrating how biblical prophecy is fulfilled by modern events, while Bob Jones III,

president of the large Bob Jones University, is a less flamboyant individual whose identity is

shaped by a rigid fundamentalist separatism.[2] All adhere to dispensationalism, but not one

resembles the other in the particulars of the belief or in its application. From these four one

can see that dispensationalism exists both as an overt theology/methodology as well as a more

subtle dispositional predilection for biblical prophecy embodied in a popular format. And

considering that there are approximately fifty million dispensationalists in North America,[3] the

similarities and differences these four represent provide a caution for those who would

overgeneralize the discussion of dispensationalism. As dispensationalists do not comprise a

monolithic movement, there are numerous and distinct ways of implementing dispensationalism

into a system of belief and biblical interpretation. Because of its diverse nature, one must view

it in its historical, theological and institutional contexts in order to understand its general

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end times. Harrell writes that Robertson is an anomaly among dispensationalists as he does not hold to a premillennial rapture of Christians (148). Rather Robertson is a "post-trib" dispensationalist which functionally robs the system of its appeal as Christians do not get to escape the terror of the tribulation period. Although Robertson holds to a dispensational view of prophecy, his "post-trib" views would curtail any active effort to bring in the events of the end-times.

[2] On Jack van Impe's views see his website (www.jvim.com). For an insightful presentation of Impe and his appeal see Iwan Russell-Jones, "The Contemporary Text: Media and Preaching Jack Van Impe Presents," Journal for Preachers 17.2 (Lent 1994): 25-29. For more on Bob Jones III, see Mark Taylor Dalhouse, An Island in the Lake of Fire: Bob Jones University, Fundamentalism and the Separatist Movement (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996). Although Jones and his school are more often characterized as militantly fundamentalist, their rigid separatist stance stems from a dispensationalist view of the world. As Dalhouse writes regarding the "separatist, premillennial heritage of the Joneses": "believers are locked into mortal combat with the forces of evil, a battle that will not be finished until Christ returns...They are living with eternity in view" (141).

[3] On this statistic, see David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Pat Robertson, 144.

shape. In doing so, not only does dispensationalism as a movement itself become clearer, but its connections to both evangelicalism and popular apocalyptic are accentuated.

A. Content[4]

Dispensational premillennialism is the belief that God's revelation of his divine plan for the universe is manifested progressively. Each progressive segment of time is known as a "dispensation." The content of and divisions between dispensations come from the dispensationalist focus on biblical prophetic literature. Guided by a literal method of interpretation - reading the text for the plain meaning - ancient biblical prophecy is read as having direct relevance for history. Although this is an abbreviated presentation of dispensationalism, these three aspects - literal hermeneutic, dispensations, and prophecy - are basic to understanding the theology as a whole.

The basis for these focal points lies in dispensationalism's particular approach to its biblicism. Dispensationalism shares the evangelical ideal of scripture alone as the foundation for all spiritual knowledge. Craig A. Blaising, a contemporary dispensationalist theologian, writes:

> Dispensationalists have upheld the belief that the Bible is the sole inerrant verbal revelation of God available to the church today and that it provides a sure foundation for Christian life and faith.[5]

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[4] Dispensationalism can be divided into three historical categories, and it should follow that the theological and methodological content could also be divided along the same lines. However, as most of the distinctions characteristic of the three dispensational progressions are touched on in the historical section, this theological overview will keep the discussion simple and present the classic dispensational content.

[5] Craig A. Blaising, "The Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism," in Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensationalist Thought, edited

However, dispensationalism's biblical ideal is distinct in that it assumes a mathematical

approach to the theology and interpretation of the Bible in keeping with its Enlightenment

suppositions. The dispensationalist concern for the Bible is dictated by a rationalistic desire

for absolute consistency. Behind this is a strict view of inspiration and a particular theological

view of God. Considering God to be absolutely consistent, inerrant. and intent on

communicating to humanity, the Bible. therefore. as the material representation of God on

earth, must be read in a manner which reflects this: it must be logical. truthful. and

perspicuous.[6] In the dispensationalist system, the only way to access the objective truth

without subjectively tainting it with one's own understanding. is to use a consistently applied

literal method of interpretation. Charles Ryrie, the father of modern dispensationalism.

asserts: "to try and see meaning other than the normal one would result in as many

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by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (A Bridgepoint Book.1993). 14.

[6] This is somewhat similar to the Princetonian approach. but more extreme. In fact. Ernest Sandeen in his Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism. 1800-1930 [(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1978), 167-172] connects all concerns for inerrancy with the Princetonians, this would include the inerrancy found in the dispensationalist system. Although there is a certain connection between the formulations set out by the Princetonians and those who assimilated these formulations into their own systems of biblical interpretation, Sandeen's argument as a whole has been challenged. D.G. Hart asserts that although the Princetonians had assumed biblical accuracy from their reliance on Baconian common sense, their Reformed stance on biblicism was far more influential in their construction of a hermeneutical method ["A Reconsideration of Biblical Inerrancy and the Princeton Theology's Alliance," Christian Scholar's Review 20 no.4 (1991), 364]. Not only that but the Princetonians were far more flexible than Sandeen gives them credit for (364-5). The dispensationalist view of the Bible, on the other hand. was not directly informed by Reformed theological convictions. More so than the Princetonians. dispensationalists assumed a rationalistic doctrine of Scripture.

interpretations as there are people interpreting. Literalism is a logical rationale."[7] The high

biblicism and assumptions of absolute consistency result in a literal hermeneutical mandate that

deals with the Bible in terms of its "factuality" creating almost mathematical divisions using

the information provided in the text.

All of the details of dispensationalism stem from the particular hermeneutical

methodology where the stress lies on the need for a literal reading and understanding of the

text. Ryrie defines literal interpretation as:

> [an] interpretation which gives to every word the same meaning it would have in
> normal usage...It might [also] be designated plain interpretation so that no one received
> the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. Symbols.
> figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and are in no way
> contrary to literal interpretation.[8]

Ryrie defends the use of a literal hermeneutic on the basis of three arguments:

> 1.Philosophically, the purpose of language itself seems to require literal interpretation.
>
> 2. ...the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ - His
> birth. His rearing, His ministry. His death. His resurrection - were all fulfilled literally.
> There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament.
>
> 3. If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation. all
> objectivity is lost.[9]

John Walvoord, an colleague of Ryrie, echoes this emphasis of literalism in his reference to

prophecy: "about half of the prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled. The study of these

demonstrates that when prophecy is fulfilled it is fulfilled literally."[10] Ryrie and Walvoord's

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[7] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 88-9.

[8] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 86-7.

[9] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 88.

[10] John F. Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis: What the Bible Says

comments demonstrate the common-sense philosophy heritage of dispensationalism. The biblical text, its language and its message are seen to be easily appropriated through a literal reading without a need to understand any outside variables also dictating the interpretive process. The resultant biblical interpretation establishes a system wherein the words are understood to be objectively applicable to world events: thus, the Bible becomes a great code book given to humanity by God.

The "facts" gleaned from a plain reading are assembled as a system of interpretation which is then read back into the text. Dispensationalists focus not only on the literal reading of the text, but on the literal reading of the entire biblical framework. The system of consistent literality, where one text can be read in light of another, and wherein what is not mentioned in the text is as important as what is mentioned, creates a dramatically different textual reading from that which appears in a non-dispensational reading. Other theological systems might spiritualize or understand Revelation symbolically, but dispensationalists pride themselves in taking the biblical prophecy along with the remaining biblical literature at "face value" in their literal approach.

This literal interpretation is especially important for dispensationalism in the framework it establishes for biblical anomalies. When a literal reading is combined with the conservative hermeneutical presuppositions of biblical inspiration, inerrancy and consistency, an explanation of difference requires a solution that can also maintain these presuppositions supporting the integrity of the Bible as God's word. So for instance, the principal dispensationalist division

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About the Future of the Middle East and the end of Western Civilization (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974, rpr., 1990), , 21.

between Israel and the Church arises out of this literalist system of hermeneutics.[11] Rather

than combining Israel and the Church as one and the same entity or explaining the difference

from an historical developmental point of view, the plain reading of dispensationalism

recognizes the gap between the special relationship that seems to be established between the

Jews and God in the Old Testament and the establishment of the Church in the New Testament.

Rejecting random and natural explanations, the dispensational focus on God's divinely

ordained plan even reads textual omission or dissonance as having meaning. The

dispensationalist interpretation values the difference between Israel and the Church as divinely

mandated.

The literal hermeneutic applied to the entire biblical structure allows dispensationalists

to uphold biblical integrity. A.T. Pierson, a classic dispensationalist author writing in The

Fundamentals, defines the parameters of his biblical hermeneutics by stating that "there is

diversity in unity, and unity in diversity."[12] Pierson, recognizing the diverse nature of the

biblical text in terms of languages, numerous authors, and literary styles among other things,

can still apply a theological and hermeneutical grid by which unity can be extracted. Working

within this "plain reading" supernaturally-focussed interpretative framework, dispensationalists

arrive at the concept of dispensations which allows God the flexibility to act in different ways

during different ages, and can accommodate the fulfillment of promises or prophecies still left

unfulfilled. The differences in the text, explained by biblical critics as resulting from textual

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[11] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 45.

[12] A.T. Pierson, "The Testimony of the Organic Unity of the Bible to its Inspiration." The Fundamentals Vol II of IV (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1917, rpr 1996), 98.

layers built up by a wide range of authors and redactors, are interpreted by dispensationalists as pointing to a segmented but progressing divine plan for the world. Both approaches recognize textual disparities and reject a blind coalescing of biblical literature into a unified whole, but dispensationalism offers a supernatural plan that, although explaining and acknowledging textual variation, knits the differences together into a unified goal culminating at the end of time. Dispensationalism has built biblical disunity into its structure where an overarching divine plan is the unifying factor.

The biblicism and literal hermeneutic of dispensationalism results in the feature most characteristic of dispensationalism: the division of the Bible into dispensations or historical epochs. C.I. Scofield indicates, in his definition found in the notes of his reference Bible, the importance of a dispensation: "a dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."[13] The importance of each dispensation lies in its reflection of a particular aspect of God's plan, and seen as a whole, they offer an overview of how God works in human history.

The concept of these divisions arises out of the English derivation of a Latin translation of the Greek words "oikonemos/oikonomenia."[14] Dispensations are given a chronological

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[13] C.I. Scofield, ed., The Scofield Reference Bible (Oxford University Press, 1909), 5.

[14] The word "oikonomeo" appears approximately twenty times in the Greek New Testament. A literal translation of "oikonomos" has to do with stewardship or "house rule." Classic dispensationalism understands this word to be the link to the idea of a seven-fold sovereign plan. Progressive dispensationalists, however, see the weakness in using "oikonomeo" as a basis for chronologically understood divisions. Paul Karleen, a progressive dispensationalist, writes that "not only does this involve illegitimate totality transfer, but I suspect that in context the world refers only to Paul's responsibility, not a plan of the ages. I hope we stop using this argument. It involves poor exegesis and poor lexigraphy" ("Understanding Covenant Theologians: A Study in Presuppositions," Grace Theological Journal 10.2 [1989], 137).

framework on the basis of an enigmatic interpretation of biblical passages which mention

"dispensation" in terms of household administration responsibilities.[15] For dispensationalists,

"house rule" or "stewardship" when used of God, is given a time reference as he imposes his

divine plan on his "house." R. Aldrich links his interpretation of the concept of stewardship to

an age of time:

> it follows that a dispensation is a stewardship or economy that God imposed for a
> certain period or age. A dispensation is an era of time during which man is tested in
> respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God's will.[16]

Together with biblical references that deal with significant periods of passing time - such as the

one found in Daniel 9.24-27 regarding a vision of 70 weeks - dispensationalists confirm their

interpretation of dispensations as progressions of time guided by God's overarching plan for

humanity.[17] Having deduced that the Bible refers to economies as separate chronological

epochs, Charles Ryrie further defines them as a system of progressing units that are uniform in

structure and divine intent:

> ...in using the word *economy* as the core of the definition, the emphasis is put on the
> Biblical meaning of the word itself. Economy also suggests the fact that certain

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[15] For a list of the passages and their interpretation see Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 25ff.

[16] Roy Aldrich, "A New Look at Dispensationalism," Bibliotheca Sacra (January-March 1963), 44.

[17] Daniel 9.24-27 is understood as a prophecy referring to the entire existence of the nation of Israel. In light of passages found in Ezekiel 4.6 and Numbers 14.34 allegedly dealing with God's time, the Daniel passage is seen as projecting a specific chronological existence from beginning of Israel's dispensation to its end. The Daniel passage is imbued with a quality of measurement, time being reckoned out by God, when interpreted through other biblical passages. In light of this, calculations are made as to how long the Church dispensation lasts. For more detail see Clarence Larkin, Dispensational Truth, 71-3.

features of different dispensations might be the same or similar.[18]

On the basis of particular biblical passages, dispensationalism constructs a model whereby the world since creation has been divided into chronological parcels, where each division is a stage in God's revelation of himself to humanity. Charles Ryrie writes that each dispensation is characterized primarily by: "(1) a change in God's governmental relationship with man.... (2) a resultant change in man's responsibility, and (3) corresponding revelation necessary to effect the change" and secondarily by: "a test, a failure, and a judgement."[19] Each division, although similar in structure and purpose to the others, reveals a distinct aspect of God's revelation of himself and his plan for humanity.

Even more foundational than the biblical passages, is the biblical paradigm which dispensationalists interpret as setting the precedent for the dispensations. They highlight the difference between one portion of the Bible that deals only with the Israelites, the other which provides a focus on the establishment of the Church and lacks the former emphasis on the Jews. Mentioned earlier in reference to hermeneutics, dispensationalists interpret this division between the Israelite-focussed Hebrew Bible and the church-focussed New Testament as an indication that two separate plans for humanity exist. Therefore, as Ryrie asserts, instead of coalescing the New Testament interest in the establishment of the Church into the Old Testament concerns of the nation of Israel as do many other evangelical theological systems, "a dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct."[20] Another dispensationalist, Arno

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[18] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 30.

[19] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 37-8.

[20] C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 44. Ryrie's system counters other methods of dealing

Gaebelein. writing before Ryrie's time, asserts:

> God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and
> earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with
> heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity"[21]

Therefore. according to the dispensational literalist understanding. because the New Testament

makes the distinction between "Jews" and "Gentiles," all that which pertains to Israel and the

Jews in the Old Testament cannot be subsumed by the Gentiles. or the Church. Consequently.

the promises offered to the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible were put on hold when the Jews

renounced their destiny by rejection of their Messiah embodied in the New Testament Jesus.[22]

As a result. Jews and Christians each have separate dispensations where God's divine plan can

be worked out. The point, thus, is to view the movement from Israel to the Church, from the

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with the Israel/Church distinction. For example, some evangelicals read the two testaments as a
unified whole wherein the Church replaces Israel; where the promises made to Israel are
transferred to the Church and the history of the former becomes a typology of the latter. Other
non-dispensationalists explain the gap as the logical difference between books written by a
different set of authors vastly separated by time, culture and historical events.

[21] Arno C. Gaebelein. The Gospel of Matthew (New York: Our Hope. 1910). I.

[22] Yaakov Ariel addresses the role of the Jews in the dispensationalist system in his book. On
Behalf of Israel Chicago Studies in the History of American Religion (Brooklyn: A Carlson
Publishing Series, 1991). Ariel points out that although dispensationalism purports to value the
Jewish people, there is a certain amount of bitterness expressed which questions their stance.
This can be seen in a statement made by Clarence Larkin, an early dispensationalist: "their last
Great Prophet was the "Man of Galilee," but Him they rejected. Like their forefathers, who took
Joseph, after they had rejected him, and sold him for 20 pieces of silver, and he was hidden from
their view in Egypt on the Throne of Pharaoh, so the Jews took Jesus. their Joseph, and having
rejected Him. sold Him for 30 pieces of silver. and He is now hidden from them on His Father's
Throne" (Dispensational Truth (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1918), 62. This
statement follows a listing of the various persecutions the Jewish people endured throughout
history. And the coming millennial dispensation sees the Jews suffering even more before they
finally recognize Jesus as their Savior after which they are finally able to receive all of God's
promises. As Ariel states: "the dispensationalist prospect for the future of Israel is not
necessarily beneficial for that nation" (120).

Old Testament to the New Testament, from Genesis to Revelation, as an orderly unfolding of

God's divine plan for humanity. And even the canonical order of the texts reflect this

deliberate way that God works; the dispensationalist literalism reads every biblical variation

and component as part of a reasoned pattern ordained by God. Within dispensationalism there

is no such thing as a haphazard detail or peculiarity.

C. Ryrie contends that after the one division the "number of dispensations in a

dispensational scheme and even the names of the dispensations are relatively minor matters."[23]

But with Israel vs. Church/Old Testament vs. New Testament as the model for division,

dispensationalists are able to demonstrate shifts and differences in the text as reflecting the

various divisions, each manifesting a distinctive facet of the divine plan. Although Ryrie

concentrates on the biblical precedent set for making divisions, he still spells out seven

different dispensations which he believes are designated by Scripture."[24] The traditional seven

dispensations - innocency, conscience, civil government, patriarchal rule, mosaic law, grace,

millennium - all have similar patterns. Ryrie lists these as: "a change in God's governmental

relationship with man, a resultant change in man's responsibility, and corresponding revelation

necessary to effect the change."[25] To give an example, the present day church exists in the

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[23] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 48.

[24] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 48-52. Ryrie writes that one "could have four, five, seven or eight dispensations and be a consistent dispensationalist as long as the scheme is true to the three essentials [recognition of a distinction between Israel and the Church, a consistently literal principle of interpretation, a basic and working conception of the purpose of God as His own glory rather than as the single purpose of salvation] of dispensationalism" (48). Seven is the number that most dispensationalists hold to. Ryrie's seven follow the order found in The Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 5.

[25] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 37. A little further on he restates the

dispensation of grace appearing just prior to the dispensation of the millennium. In the

dispensation of grace God offers his salvation to everyone as opposed to just one nation as in

previous dispensations. Those who do not take the offer will be judged and punished by the

tribulation (corresponding with the pattern "test, failure, judgement"). Although it offers grace

as "a change in God's plan," the dispensation parallels the others in that it adheres to the

pattern. God's promises, both punishment and reward, are maintained. The Church will be

rewarded by being raptured before the tribulation and Israel will be rewarded with the

reinstatement as God's people, after having suffered through the tribulation. The conjunction

of Israel and the Church towards the end of the grace dispensation ultimately revolves around

dispensationalism's understanding of the nature of God and his promises in that they are

immutable.

These divine promises, both negative and positive, are often revealed in biblical

prophetic literature. This third characteristic of dispensationalism, the emphasis on biblical

prophetic literature is foundational as it provides the dispensationalist structure its unity. A.T.

Pierson, a fundamentalist associated with Gaebelein, states that "prophecy, which is history

anticipated, takes up the broken thread..."[26] He is referring to the gap between the Israelite-

centered Old Testament and the Church-focussed New Testament, in which a literally read

long-range understanding of prophecy can unite the two strands. It is precisely in prophecy -

which is understood as forward looking - that past Israel is united with the future Church and

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characteristics of a dispensation as: "a test, a failure, and a judgement" (38).

[26] A.T. Pierson, "The Testimony of the Organic Unity of the Bible to its Inspiration." The Fundamentals, 100.

both together with the end-times. The dispensationalist view of prophecy accounts for biblical deficiencies. and unites the world's past/present/future into a neat package. Those blessings and promises perceived as not yet fulfilled. rather than being errors in the text or failed promises or misperceptions of biblical writers. are given a future context for fulfillment. The past. present and future political. social. economic events of this world are reflected in these prophecies. Because prophetic literature offers cohesion for a structure recognizing disunity. it becomes a focal point for dispensational belief.

Besides consolidating the grand scheme, dispensational views of biblical prophecy are important for three other reasons: 1) fulfilled prophecy affirms the Bible's veracity: 2) prophetic literature provides dispensationalism with the paradigm for each age or dispensation: 3) unfulfilled prophecy provides a map charting the signs that indicate when the end of this present age is near.

First. biblical prophecy. interpreted literally. is essential to dispensationalism's theology. In fact. this emphasis on prophecy leads many to think that dispensationalism is only an apocalyptic system.[27] Although this is not the case. prophecy maintains an essential role in classic dispensationalism upholding its views on the Bible. Clarence Larkin. the prominent dispensationalist illustrator, echoes many other dispensationalists in his statement on the importance of prophetic literature:

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[27] Charles Ryrie's defense against this charge is insightful. He refutes the assumption being made about dispensationalism by explaining that there is more to dispensationalism than just "an outline of future events" (156). The link being made between prophetic literature, apocalyptic literature and the movement's eschatology is not addressed. Ryrie makes no distinction between prophetic and apocalyptic literature; both are assumed to offer the same kinds of information about God's plan for the future (punishment and promises).

> The Bible is unlike all other 'sacred books' in that it bases its 'Authenticity' and 'Authority' on **PROPHECY**. All other 'sacred books' contain no predictions as to the future...Fulfilled prophecy is stronger evidence for the 'Inspiration' and "Authenticity" of the Scriptures than miracles. Prophecy is not a 'haphazard guess,' nor a 'probability' made up on uncertain data like our 'Weather Probabilities.' Prophecy is '**HISTORY WRITTEN IN ADVANCE.**'[28]

Larkin, quite forceful in his perspective on prophecy as unique and momentous literature for

Christians, understands that prophecy allows tangible proof for the Bible's veracity.[29] If the

text accurately predicted events, then the remaining biblical literature should be equally

trustworthy. And if one views the miraculous nature of accurate prediction in one section of

the Bible, it should follow that the entire text is infused with a divine quality. Having assumed

that prophecy is written previous to the event it addresses (based on the view of biblical

inerrancy), the circular construction of dispensational interpretation allows the system further

affirmation of the Bible's truthfulness using prophecy as an example.

Second, a dispensational reading of prophecy strengthens the idea that God's plan is

revealed in progressing segments of time. With the assumptions that prophecy is "history

written in advance" and that all prophecy will be fulfilled, Ryrie points out that what remains

unfulfilled, therefore, demands more time:

> if the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the promises of the future made to Abraham and David are to be literally fulfilled, then there must be a future period, the millennium, in which they can be fulfilled, for the Church is not now fulfilling them in

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[28] Clarence Larkin, Dispensational Truth, 6.

[29] What is interesting about dispensationalism is that although it highly regards biblical prophetic literature, it negates the charismatic view of prophecy as a present day spiritual phenomenon. Dispensationalists hold to a cessationist view of prophecy, wherein divine revelation ended with the establishment of the apostolic Church. See F. David Farnell, "The Current Debate about New Testament Prophecy," Bibliotheca Sacra 149 (July-September 1992), 277-303.

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any literal sense. [30]

With his literal understanding of prophetic literature, Ryrie is able to build on the

dispensational idea of progressive historical epochs with the help of prophecy. Prophecy

communicates a general chronological movement towards a time when all prophecy will be

fulfilled. but it also fills out this generality with specific markers perceived as pertaining to this

age. Unfulfilled prophetic "warnings" are seen to refer directly to the closure of the

contemporary dispensation.[31] For dispensationalists this functions as another confirmation of

their system where each age is "concluded" by some form of divine punishment.

The biblical security that prophecy affords as well as its building-block function for the

dispensational system is joined by a third role of prophecy: it acts as a guide for discerning the

details of the future.[32] A literal reading of prophecy and literal understanding of its place in

the historical progression of world events allows the reader to gauge how much of a

dispensational epoch is left before the world comes to an end. For example. Carl Armerding

writes that "present interest in Biblical prophecy is a healthy sign" as more people will find out

"what the Bible has to say about the universe and its future."[33] Interpreting biblical passages

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[30] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today. 158.

[31] Using the dispensationalist paradigm where each age is destroyed in judgement. the Church dispensation is seen to be heading for closure and judgement based on the biblical passage found in Revelation 19.21. See Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 63.

[32] Progressive Dispensationalists emphasize that this historicist understanding of biblical prophecy is a degeneration from a futurist position, and is something brought about by the dispensationalist participation in popular religious apocalypticism. See Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-To-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought. 19.

[33] Carl Armerding, "Russia and the King of the North." 50.

found in Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation, Armerding is able to provide exact details of the coming crisis: "...Russia and Syria play distinctive parts in the great prophetic crisis towards which the world is rapidly moving..."[34] This dispensationalist interpretation of biblical passages frames how one views world events: any kind of action on the part of Russia and Syria against Israel would be viewed as another indication that the end is near. Not only does prophecy become a measuring tool, but it imbues present events with a spiritual relevance. They are the guiding signs which point to the end of this age, the second coming of Christ, the Tribulation, the Millennium and the end of time as we know it.

Reading the text literally, assuming consistency, and ignoring critical issues are but a few of the critiques levelled at dispensational hermeneutics. It was never the intent of scholars like Ryrie to create a closed system that could became mired in its own assumptions; and in fact, dispensationalism at most stages has had an openness to other viewpoints.[35] But the features of dispensationalism - importance of prophetic literature, literalism and its concomitant Church/Israel distinctions, and dispensations - born out of the evangelical concern for the Bible, have become relevant for the popular apocalyptic movement. As with its parent evangelicalism, the elements of dispensationalism easily lent themselves to a popular format and this has created difficulties not only for itself but for evangelicalism as well.

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[34] Carl Armerding, "Russia and the King of the North," 55.

[35] In fact Ryrie spends a good amount of effort making connections between his position and the neo-evangelicals. The Bible Conference Movement, as well, was not dominated by one position, but was an eager gathering of different viewpoints in order to gain a larger understanding of the biblical content. Progressive dispensationalists, negating the restricted popular distillation of Scofieldian dispensationalism, are once again attempting to include various viewpoints in their discussion of the tenets of dispensationalism.

First. in raising the literal method to a level of the prime hermeneutical directive.

dispensationalism has been found to oversimplify the text. Although literalism was instituted

in order to respect the inspired nature of the entire biblical text. a literal interpretation actually

curtails a holistic understanding of the biblical text. Ryrie is correct in stating that

philosophically (and pragmatically) language does require a plain interpretation. but the gaps

between the reader and the text are so great in some cases that the language does not elucidate

a plain meaning. As James Barr writes: "physicality. simple common-sense. one-to-one

correspondence between the entities and the words of the text" do not always create the best

understanding of the text.[36] Not grappling with the complex hermeneutical issues of

chronological and cultural distance from the text. as well as failing to delve into the formation

history of the text. allows dispensationalism to continue the claim of biblical simplicity. A

literal interpretation of the final biblical text. without looking at the layers beneath. creates

interpretative problems. This is compounded by the uncritical perspective taken by the reader.

resulting in. ironically. a lack of consistency which obliterates interpretative vigilance. For

example. "stewardship" is interpreted as a chronological framework. even though there is no

explicit indication that it should be read this way in the context of the particular passages

where that word is used. Only when read in conjunction with unrelated passages can it be

given this meaning. As well. assuming that the mention of "Gentiles" in the New Testament is

part of the discussion of the dispensationalist "Church" age is an interpretative leap determined

by the creation of artificial dispensationalist categories. Although Progressive

Dispensationalists are working at rectifying the hermeneutical gaps, dispensationalism outside

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[36] James Barr, "Literality," Faith and Philosophy 6.4 (October 1989). 415.

of these newcomers treats the reader and the text simplistically.

Secondly, certain avenues taken by dispensationalism have been theologically dubious. Although correctives have always been present (as dispensationalism is not a monolithic unity). certain dispensational features have been taken to extremes. The focus on the radical division between the dispensations. especially between Israel and the Church. has led to accusations that dispensationalism offers "two salvations" which is radically inconsistent with the New Testament proclamations of one salvific plan upheld by traditional Christianity. Moreover. the dispensationalist focus on divisions. although forming an explanation for textual unevenness. cannot account for the biblical and theological unity required by traditional Christianity. The dispensationalist division between the two testaments is incapable of providing an explanation for the New Testament assumption that it is fulfilling Old Testament faith as it does not deal in progressive unity. only progressive disunities.

Robert Fuller. writing specifically about Scofield. provides an example of this extra-biblical system being placed on the text:

> Scofield's ability to forge these apocalyptic materials into a consistent brand of premillennialism depended. however. on his willingness to exercise considerable editorial license. In his footnotes to Daniel. for example. he thought nothing of stating as indisputable fact that any biblical reference to weeks actually means 'sevens of years.' It seems that the Bible is inerrant and to be read literally, but only after having reworked it to make sure it will support the kinds of conclusions dispensationalism supports in the first place"[37]

As C. Norman Krauss, a critic. states: "the course and character of any given dispensation are defined by classifying Scripture dispensationally, and then using the relevant materials which

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[37] Robert Fuller. Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 126.

have been thus defined to delineate its distinguishing features."[38] The assumption of

consistency provides the precision for the entire mathematical-like system. This is the legacy

dispensationalism has given to popular apocalyptic belief.

B. History

Dispensationalism is firmly planted within North American evangelical history.

Although this truly modern movement, developed within the confines of evangelicalism. was

an import. it proliferated and flourished only in North America. It has participated in the

evangelical struggles against liberalism. in the regrouping and alienation of the conservatives

after the struggle, as well as in the attempts to move into mainstream American culture.

Dispensationalism has existed in three stages since its emergence in the early

nineteenth-century.[39] John Nelson Darby and like minded British believers were the

progenitors of organized dispensationalism. Classic dispensationalism came to North America

with Darby and spread through certain ranks of evangelicals. Dispensationalism shifted into a

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[38] C. Norman Krauss, Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), 63.

[39] The variations within dispensationalism are best represented by this artificial division. These divisions are set out by Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock in order to clarify the historical progression within dispensationalism. They label the three divisions as classical or Scofieldian dispensationalism, revised dispensationalism and progressive dispensationalism. For more see the following articles: Darrell L. Bock. "Charting Dispensationalism," Christianity Today 38 (12 Sept. 1994), 26-29; Craig A. Blaising, "Changing Patterns in Dispensationalism." Wesleyan Theological Journal 29 (Spring-Fall 1994), 149-164; "Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists," Bibliotheca Sacra 145 (July-September 1988), 254-280; Blaising, "Contemporary Dispensationalism," Southwestern Journal of Theology 36 (Spring 1994), 5-13. Also see Bock and Blaising's Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought and their edited work Dispensationalism. Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press. 1992).

static and defensive position in its second stage during the mid-twentieth-century when men such as Charles Ryrie and John Walvoord attempted to defend a struggling system under attack. The third period is the contemporary movement, a significant shift away from the origins as well as the middle defensive phase. It is an effort by academics such as Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock to rejuvenate a system inconsistent with many of the subsequent claims of biblical scholarship. As a result of the continuing modifications, this third stage also harbors the greatest dichotomy between the popular and the academic.

1. Classic Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism came to North America in the nineteenth-century with John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), a leader of the Plymouth Brethren in Great Britain. In his dissatisfaction with the nationally aligned, works salvation oriented Church of England, he gathered a group of dissenters whose interest in prophecy grew out of distinctions he made between christendom as a whole and the composition of the true church.[40] He felt that churches were "playing Israel" in trying to achieve temporal blessings through their efforts at bettering the social realm thereby maintaining ties to earthly and therefore corrupt systems. Rather, according to his Church/Israel dichotomy understood from a literal reading of the Bible, only historic Israel was given temporal blessings by God. Therefore, the true church should concern itself with the divinely sanctioned spiritual blessings to come at the end of the age. Only those concerned with these designated spiritual-churchly matters could be included in the pure remnant within

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[40] C. Norman Kraus, Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), 28. See also Clarence B. Bass, Backgrounds to Dispensationalism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 48-63.

Christendom.[41]

Darby brought his collection of ideas to North America where he toured six times between 1859 and 1877.[42] He gained a wide audience among American evangelicals of various denominations for several reasons. The first being that Darby's method and message fit nicely into the revival mode already existing within North America. His American success. as opposed to Great Britain where dispensationalism remained contained within the boundaries of the Plymouth Brethren denomination. was due to the transdenominational framework the revivals had created within American religious appropriation. After the Second Great Awakening there were many religious leaders touring around the country setting up revivals. Darby's corresponding method of communication matched the surrounding revival milieu. More importantly. Darby's message resonated with the revivalist attitudes. Regarding the good reception dispensationalism and Darby received. Paul Boyer writes: "no doubt the anti-institutional bias of the Plymouth Brethren. a major theme in Darby's prophecy writings. found fertile soil in nineteenth century America, where laissez-faire ideology abounded."[43] Both the Revolution and the Great Awakenings had inculcated an ambivalence towards institutionalized authority. Darby's message encouraging personal Bible study to combat the apostasy of larger christendom reflected not only the individualized revival-inspired context, but also the sense nineteenth century evangelicals had of a rising spiritual and intellectual crisis.

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[41] C. Norman Kraus, Dispensationalism in America. 50-52.

[42] Larry V. Crutchfield, The Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor (Lanham: The University Press of American, Inc., 1992), 6.

[43] Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).88.

The second reason for his success was the simplicity of his system and the breadth of

biblical explanation it offered. Although millenarianism was not new to North America, the

organization of various elements into a coherent system of interpretation was an innovation that

can be credited to Darby and the Brethren.[44] Charles Ryrie writes of Darby's importance to

dispensationalism not in terms of originality but of organizational expertise:

> There is no question that the Plymouth Brethren, of which John Nelson Darby was a
> leader, had much to do with the systematizing and promoting of dispensationalism. But
> neither Darby nor the Brethren originated the concepts involved in the system...[45]

The operative words here are "systematizing" and "promoting." Premillennialism, with its

focus on the return of Christ and the establishment of his thousand year reign, was given a

distinct shape in its dispensationalist adaption. And Darby organized this further: the biblical

text was divided into seven "dispensations" or historical epochs based on a literal reading.[46]

These seven stages were formulated and given content from Darby's observation of the

differences between the promises to Old Testament Israel and those to the New Testament.

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[44] Three different types of millenarian beliefs existed in the nineteenth-century:
postmillennialism, premillennialism, amillennialism. Amillennialism did not take the millennium
literally. There is no period of perfection before the new heaven and earth are established.
Augustine was its most famous proponent (R.G. Clouse, "Amillennialism," Dictionary of
Christianity in America, 1990 ed.). Postmillennialism was the most popular in America before
the evangelical schism of the nineteenth-century. Postmillennialism asserts that Christ will return
after the millennium. Many postmillennial evangelicals in America thought the millennium could
be brought about by Christian solutions to social, economic and spiritual ills. Premillennialism
challenged the above not with the placement of Christ's return at the beginning of the
millennium. Premillennialism also challenged as naive the postmillennial hope for the recovery of
a peaceful world through human efforts. Premillennialism asserted that the only way a world
imperiled with problems of every nature would be rescued was through the return of Christ.
Premillennialism, although existing throughout church history, only became popular in a
dispensational form after the nineteenth-century.

[45] Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 74.

Not wanting to ignore the gap Darby organized a dispensational structure which focussed on and explained the biblical shifts. Darby promoted his system vigorously in his campaigns across America. Dispensational premillennialism became the prevalent mode of millenarian belief among conservative evangelicals as a result of the simplified and organized manner in which it was presented. The promotion of this simple system. in Darby's tour around the country, combined with the receptive audience made for a wide-spread acceptance of dispensationalism.

A third reason for its success was the support it provided to evangelicalism. Dispensationalism's blending of premillennialism with the theological elements of biblical authority, inerrancy and perspicuity into an aggregate interpretive structure. meant that it easily adapted into North American evangelical biblical concerns. Darby's system gained favor in the Bible Conference movement. especially towards the end of the nineteenth-century when the sway of evangelical thought in society was coming to an end.[47] Biblical authority and legitimacy were being questioned in light of new scientific theories of origins. and new methods of dealing with the biblical text left conservatives scrambling to find an explanation and a course of action. Protecting the Bible and traditional theology from these innovations was a priority. Dispensationalism offered a counter-system: it maintained biblical stature and

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[46] Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 75ff.

[47] These Bible and prophecy conferences were held in the successive summers between 1875 and 1918. The most famous of these conferences were the one located at Niagara-on-the-Lake and the revivalist Dwight L. Moody's sponsored Northfield Conference. These conferences functioned as places where conservatives could gather, recreate and discuss evangelical doctrine and practice. They are important not only in that they provided refuge for the beleaguered evangelical conservatives, but they provided dispensationalism with its largest audience.

offered explanations regarding the source of the perceived demise of culture reflected in the significant changes in European and North American society at the time. The complete biblical confidence that dispensationalism offered through its system was tantalizing in the face of the attacks, both perceived and real, on biblical authority by science and liberalism. By holding to a structure wherein every event, both ancient and modern, was seen to be supernaturally mandated as part of the progression of the dispensations, dispensationalism was able to sidestep the critical questions regarding the role of nature and humanity in the creation of the biblical text as well as in the larger world. Dispensationalism with its high view of the Bible and biblical inspiration provided yet one more shield against attack: this support of the evangelical biblical agenda accounted for a large measure of its popularity.

As with evangelicalism during the Great Awakenings, dispensationalism spread like wildfire through the informal American religious network of conferences, revivals, publications, and institutions. It was disseminated far and wide through these popular venues. And although the atmosphere within what came to be known as fundamentalism was rife with contentions and schisms, dispensationalism still proliferated. The prophecy conferences, for example, eventually split over questions regarding the rapture,[48] but not before many of the participants had adopted dispensationalism as the organizing system of their belief and practice and, in turn, influenced many other Christians who heard them speak. Popular evangelical institutions functioned as the podiums for the propagation of dispensationalism in North

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[48] The irresolution of whether the rapture was to take place before or after the great tribulation put a halt to the conferences which had been in existence for approximately twenty years. Gaebelein and Scofield were instrumental in the separation (George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980], 241 n.17).

America. An important example are the urban revivals of Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) where the dispensational premillennialist message of the imminent arrival of Christ's second-coming was preached.[49] Dispensationalism, with its seven epochs each ending in destruction. seemed to be an adequate explanation for the swelling societal turmoil Moody saw around him.[50]

Pushing dispensationalism into even more prominence was C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), who systematized dispensationalism in a popular manner through the Scofield Bible published in 1909. The doctrinal notes. interpretive comments.combined with headings and cross references. wove dispensationalism firmly into the fabric of the biblical text as Scofield's interpretations were almost indistinguishable from the text's own meaning. This Bible. read by many, made dispensational premillennialism an enduring phenomenon in American religious practice.[51]

Dispensationalism was also circulated through The Fundamentals (1910-1915). a twelve

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[49] Moody also established a series of conferences which ran from 1880 until after his death in 1899. The Northfield conferences, similar to the Niagara conferences of the same time. promoted premillennialism, often communicated in the form of dispensationalism.

[50] Douglas W. Frank, Less than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986). 32.

[51] Paul Boyer writes that in the 80 years of its existence. the Scofield Reference Bible. with its sales reaching over 10 million copies, has been a primary conveyance for distribution of premillennial dispensationalist doctrine throughout the world (When Time Shall Be No More. 98. Charles Lippy states that the Scofield Bible had influence because one did not have to be a convinced dispensationalist to be persuaded by its framework, as the Reference Bible was the only study Bible available when it was first published in 1909 (Being Religious American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States [Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994]. 134). As a result the Scofield Bible shaped American religion "etching deeply into the popular religious consciousness an understanding of the reality of supernatural power and its ultimate control over history" (134).

volume set sent out to three million people.[52] Although premillennialism and dispensationalism

were not overt topics of discussion in the series, one can see the influence of these on several

of the writers. For instance, dispensational concerns prevail in all of the articles dealing with

the inspiration of the Bible. The authors of these articles, all dispensationalists, show a strong

concern for inerrancy, literalism, prophecy and proof of the Bible's veracity. By virtue of

having sent out three million copies, these perspectives on biblical issues had a great impact.

By the time the modernist-fundamentalist controversy was fully underway in America,

dispensationalism was a dominant presence among conservative evangelicals, especially

amongst those who called themselves fundamentalists.

Through a variety of people, movements and institutions in this first period,

dispensationalism became a large part of American evangelical belief independent of Darby

and the Brethren. Besides Moody's revivals, Scofield's Bible, The Fundamentals, prophecy

conferences, such the ones held in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Northfield, were also formative

for dispensationalism's propagation among evangelicals. The Niagara Conference was

especially important, C. Blaising writes, as it was "the forum for introducing and developing

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[52] While the editors of these volumes were all dispensationalists, George Marsden states that "dispensationalism and premillennialism, which were controversial, were almost entirely absent" (Fundamentalism and American Culture, 119). As The Fundamentals' purpose was to unite conservatives of varying viewpoints, only broad commonalities were highlighted. One can see this self-conscious purpose at work in the statement of C.R. Eerdman, a dispensationalist publisher, who writes" this is therefore a time, not for unkindly criticism of fellow Christians, but for friendly conference; not for disputing divergent views, but for united action; not for dogmatic assertion of prophetic programs, but for humble acknowledgement that 'we know in part;' not for idle dreaming, but for the immediate task of evangelizing a lost world" ("The Coming of Christ," The Fundamentals [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1917, rpr. 1996], 312).

American dispensationalism."[53] The conference, as a nondenominational institution, fit into

the Darby-ite model of establishing a pure church going beyond the stifling limitations of

denominational boundaries.[54] Conference attenders were united not in denominational

background but in their evangelical belief that the Bible was the inspired and inerrant Word of

God. And they were united as well in their strong belief that the Bible was scientifically

credible and easily appropriated. This common sense and rationalist approach to biblical

literature meshed well with dispensationalism. In fact, dispensationalism as an entire system

better accounted for the existing evangelical method of interpretation, set of theological

concerns, and anxieties regarding the surrounding society. The conference's interest in the

Bible and the state of the world were better met by dispensationalism's literal reading

illustrating an imminent second coming as judgement on humanity, than by the optimistic

outlook of postmillennialism (another popular evangelical eschatological perspective of the

time). As a result of its relevance, dispensationalism was widely accepted by conference

attenders. This is especially noteworthy for dispensationalism's history, in comparison to

Moody's revivals and Scofield's Bible, because conference attenders were leaders in

evangelicalism. Unlike in a revival setting, these men had the time and the appropriate forum

in which they could consciously weigh dispensationalism alongside other methods of biblical

[53] Craig A. Blaising, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition." Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 16. The Niagara Conferences were a series of conferences held in various locations around North America until they settled on a permanent location in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, in 1883. These conferences focussed on millenarian concerns, and many of the leaders and those otherwise involved were dispensationalists.

[54] Craig A. Blaising, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition." Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, 16.

interpretation as opposed to simply appropriating its message without realizing the implications

or the existence of other methods . The acceptance of dispensationalism by the figures in

authority meant a long-lasting and far-reaching impact for dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism's acceptance by a large number of nineteenth-century conservative

leaders irrevocably altered evangelicalism. Dispensationalism, now autonomous from its

original sources of both Darby and the Plymouth Brethren denomination, was popularized and

modified by various evangelical personalities. These leaders, most of them conservative

evangelicals or fundamentalists, used dispensationalism to further draw the line between

evangelicals and their antagonists. Arno Clemens Gaebelein (1861-1945), a consulting editor

on the Scofield Reference Bible, was a leading dispensationalist who advocated his views as a

conference speaker and prolific author. Gaebelein was a militant fundamentalist who

communicated his beliefs regarding the fate of the Jewish people and its connections to the

Second Coming of Christ to a wide audience of conservative evangelicals. Other leaders from

the Niagara Bible Conferences such as A.J.Gordon, Henry M. Parsons, William J. Eerdman,

James H. Brooks, and Nathaniel West were also responsible for the widespread circulation of a

combined fundamentalism-dispensationalist package. Brooks (1830-1897), for example, had

far reaching influence through his speaking engagements at the conferences as well as his

numerous publications, including his editorial work on the premillennialist journal The

Truth.[55]. James M. Gray (1851-1935), another conference initiator as well as strong

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[55] P.C. Wilt, "Brookes, James Hall," Dictionary of Christianity in America, 1990 ed. David Gullon writes that Brookes was the key to dispensationalism's ultimate success through Scofield's Reference Bible (An Investigation of Dispensational Premillennialism: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Eschatology of John F. Walvoord, Diss. Andrews University, 1992, 160). Gullon argues that Brooke's leadership in the conferences and the resulting influence among

dispensationalist, became president of Moody Bible Institute (1889), which had a strong influence on the fundamentalist movement.[56] And the most prominent dispensationalist institution established, which also exists presently, was Dallas Theological Seminary, founded in 1924 by Lewis Sperry Chafer. This institution was specifically generated out of the concern for spreading the dispensationalist interpretation. From the prophecy conferences, leaders and institutions were established with the goal to rebuild the ailing evangelical empire.

This first group of individuals is important in that it established dispensationalism as a firmly entrenched presence within evangelicalism and fundamentalism. The success of dispensationalism was due largely to what it offered: interpretation of the crises that evangelicalism's former optimism could not explain, security offered to evangelicals who felt betrayed by the changes in society, and a foundation for the conservative structure.

Dispensationalism spoke to the late nineteenth century evangelical ethos. It was the opposing conservative counterpart to the developing liberal optimism. Not only did it extend protection for biblical integrity, but it presented an explanation for the social and political events unfolding. Beginning with the Civil War, and continuing with the radical changes being made in traditional society and religious belief, there was a need to provide a biblical explanation of what was perceived as wide-scale failure and chaos. The bewilderment of conservative evangelicals at the speedy demise of traditional belief and societal mores required

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other conservatives made him a primary link between Darby and Scofield.

[56] G.A. Getz, "Moody Bible Institute," Dictionary of Christianity in America. 1990 ed. Like Fuller Theological Seminary and other neo-evangelical academic institutions, Moody made the neo-evangelical shift and did not remain committed to its dispensationalist and fundamentalist beginnings.

an answer. This demand became even greater through the break up of the evangelical

consensus during the fundamentalist-modernist crisis. The attacks on the traditional view of

the biblical text by those using the historical-critical method, the perceived assault on the

Christian world view by evolutionists, the crisis fracturing the denominations, and the turmoil

in politics and society could all be explained through the dispensationalist structure which

pointed to a divinely mandated coming apocalypse bringing this present age to a close. G.

Marsden. connecting the fundamentalist agenda with dispensationalism. asserts that:

> dispensational premillennial interpretations of history, which had spread widely among
> fundamentalists, supported [the fundamentalist] separatist tendency. Dispensationalism
> taught the apostasy of the major churches of "Christendom" as part of a steady cultural
> degeneration during the present "church age.[57]

This adoption of supernaturalism, in its perception that events were in keeping with a larger

divine plan moving to a definite conclusion where wickedness would be brought to an end by

God, diverted attention from what might have been perceived as evangelical failure. The

appeal of certainty offered by dispensationalism is reflected in Arno Gaebelein's statement in

The Fundamentals. On the basis of his dispensationalist beliefs. Gaebelein can write with

confidence on the unfolding of the future:

> prophecies...are now in the process of fulfillment....we mention those which relate to
> the national and spiritual condition of the Jewish people and the predictions concerning
> the moral and religious condition of the present age.[58]

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[57] George Marsden, "Unity and Diversity in the Evangelical Resurgence," in Altered
Landscapes: Christianity in America 1935-1985, ed. David W. Lotz (Grand Rapids: Wm. B.
Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 65.

[58] Arno Gaebelein, "Fulfilled Prophecy as Potent Argument for the Bible," The Fundamentals
Vol II of IV (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1917, rpr 1996), 114.

Not only did dispensationalism provide a structure for understanding the dissonance

conservative evangelicals felt, but it provided the solution as well. Clarence Larkin wrote:

> But why, you ask, should we put so much emphasis on the "Second Coming of Christ"?
> Why not talk and preach about the practical affairs of life? About the social and
> commercial problems of the world and their solution through the Gospel? The answer
> is that the only way to solve these problems is for Christ to return, and the longer His
> "Return" is delayed, the longer it will be before these problems are solved.[59]

The fundamentalist concerns and anxieties were explained and therefore bolstered by

dispensationalism's pessimism regarding existence in the world. Dispensationalism explained

the world as the beleaguered fundamentalists perceived it and sanctioned the militant attitude in

the various denominational and doctrinal showdowns.

Dispensationalism coalesced with fundamentalism not only in that it offered a picture of

history that paralleled the experience of fundamentalists, but because it offered security.

Dispensationalism appeared to safeguard the primary foundation of evangelicalism: the Bible.

This goal was the object of much nineteenth-century evangelical effort. The Princetonians, as

mentioned in the previous chapter, devoted much of their academic energies to creating a

foundation which would protect a text under attack. Dispensationalism did the same. Whereas

the Princetonians had attempted to establish an informed system conforming to classical

Christianity with which to defend a traditional interpretation of the Bible, dispensationalism

offered a far easier, and more popular, access to the same goal. The linchpin for this

framework of interpretation was its self-confirmation feature achieved through a literal

understanding of biblical prophecy. Whereas the Princetonians relied on tradition and

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[59] Clarence Larkin, Dispensational Truth, 17. See also R.T. Clutter, "Larkin, Clarence," Dictionary of Christianity in America, 1990 ed., 630.

doctrinal formulations, dispensationalist structure allowed the connection between evangelicals

and higher theological learning to be severed. In dispensationalism. not only is the Bible self-

authenticating. but it is self-contained as well. All the important information lies in the

prophetic literature and therefore knowledge of doctrine and Church confessions is

superfluous. Arno Gaebelein contended in this regard that:

> the Bible is the *only* book in the world which contains predictions. It is pre-eminently
> that, which no other book could be, and none other is, a book of prophecy. These
> predictions are declared to be the utterances of Jehovah; they show that the Bible is a
> supernatural book, the revelation of God.[60]

Similar to Gaebelein. F. Bettex, in reaction to biblical source criticism's attack on the divinely

revealed status of the Bible, asserted that: "the Bible sets the seal of its divine origin upon itself

by means of the prophecies."[61] Certain prophecies can be shown to have been fulfilled. he

writes. and "there are other prophecies which will still be most literally fulfilled."[62] Also

supporting the Bible's verity in terms of prophecy is Clarence Larkin. who states:

> The moment we grasp this idea of prophecy [as history written in advance] and clearly
> see the relation of Christ's Premillennial Coming to scripture truth. the Bible becomes a
> new book, and doctrinal and prophetical truths at once fall into their proper place. and
> our theological system is no longer a chaos but an orderly plan.[63]

Bettex, Gaebelein. Larkin and others viewed biblical prophetic literature - the divine guide to

the past. present and future - as the defense of the Bible's divine. authoritative and factual

status. The dispensational hermeneutical framework offered up a structured but democratically

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[60] Arno Gaebelein, "Fulfilled Prophecy a Potent Argument for the Bible." 112.

[61] F. Bettex, "The Bible and Modern Criticism." Vol I of IV (Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 1917, rpr 1996), 81.

[62] F. Bettex, "The Bible and Modern Criticism." 82.

[63] Clarence Larkin, Dispensational Truth. 5.

accessible guide to the Bible. Nothing but the Bible was needed and the plain biblical meaning was available to everyone. Dispensationalism's hermeneutical package of focus on prophecy, literal reading of biblical literature, perspicuity of the text, and inerrancy offered biblical certitude without having to rely on a specialist or institution of learning. In a time when the Bible and traditional Christianity were under attack, dispensational interpretation offered fundamentalism freedom and security. Dispensational hermeneutics provided the common person with a structure by which to read the Bible as a supernaturally-organized and ironclad structure that responded to all ambiguities, including details surrounding the future. It is thus easy to see how dispensationalism's method and claims could become inherent to fundamentalism as a whole.

This relevance of dispensationalism for this fundamentalist phase of evangelicalism was reciprocal: fundamentalist acceptance of dispensationalism allowed it wide-scale recognition. Fundamentalists adopted dispensationalism on both popular and institutional levels which resulted in dispensationalism being almost synonymous with the fundamentalist movement.[64] Although dispensationalism started off as one view among several in the prophecy conferences, it ended up becoming the predominant method of biblical interpretation and worldview. Dispensationalism was taught in the Bible schools such as Moody, Dallas and Fuller, and propagated by conservative publications over the country. Because it was not relegated to one denomination or one faction of millennialist belief, as it was in Britain, it influenced and shaped an entire segment of American conservative evangelicals. It was not just the poor and dispossessed that were a part of fundamentalism's union with dispensationalism, rather, this

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[64] See Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, 93.

new movement attracted some of the most well respected and financially well-off leaders of the day.[65] Through the efforts of the forceful leaders, wealthy patrons and others, dispensationalism in America became firmly linked with fundamentalism because of the similarity in focus between the two. Fundamentalists became defined by the interpretative framework which they chose to explain their cultural, religious and political expulsion and therefore dispensationalism was given a concrete societal and political group context in which it could thrive. The solutions dispensationalism offered to a broad-based need ended with its institutionalization within conservative evangelicalism ensuring dispensationalism a place in twentieth-century life and belief.

2. Revised Dispensationalism

The first group of dispensationalists, was followed by a second group characterized by their attempts to hold together an increasingly maligned system. In this era, dispensationalism no longer represented the majority of evangelicals. The efforts of this group - revising dispensationalists - coincided with the break-up of fundamentalism into neo-evangelicalism and fundamentalism between the 1940's and the 1970's. A renewed effort at critical biblical thinking and ecumenism caused the more "liberal" fundamentalists to break away from their

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[65] Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, 100. Fundamentalists have often been dismissed as the poor and dispossesed. Although excluded socially, one can see that fundamentalists were not lacking financially during the early twentieth century. Fundamentalist leaders used their influence and their money to create a strong fundamentalist infrastructure in North America. For example Lyman and Milton Stewart, brothers and partners in a prosperous California oil business, provided the vision and the financial backing for The Fundamentals (George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, 119). Another instance, Charles Fuller used the funds from a foundation set up by his father's successful orange growing business to begin Fuller Theological Seminary (George Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, 18).

former academic isolation and reform themselves into a new group known as neo-evangelicalism. The resulting influx of new acceptable forms of thought within evangelicalism as a whole, put not only fundamentalism on the defense but dispensationalism as well. As dispensationalism had become a bulwark for fundamentalism and therefore also its hallmark. it elicited criticism not only for its own failings but also for those of its partner. Dispensationalism was co-maligned in the repudiation of fundamentalism as militant. narrow and simplistic by emerging neo-evangelicals. Now not only the secularists repudiated fundamentalism and its accompanying dispensationalist thought. but the newly emerging neo-evangelical academics joined in the critique with their rejuvenated concern for accurate reflection on biblical concerns.[66]

Although on the popular level dispensationalism did not suffer in its support base. academic dispensationalism reeled from the harsh attacks. It lagged as rival systems were developed under the influence of outside criticism.[67] Men such as Charles C. Ryrie. Alva J.

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[66] Both E.J. Carnell and Daniel P. Fuller, for instance. critiqued dispensationalism. Carnell and Fuller were from Fuller Seminary, a leading institution of the neo-evangelical movement. One wonders whether the sometimes rancorous tone these men took in their critiques was also partially due to the growing divisions between fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals. Charles Ryrie, in his defense of dispensationalism, noted that neo-evangelicals seemed to be critical even when negligible difference existed (Dispensationalism Today. 29). Neo-evangelicals desired to distance themselves from the unacademic separatist manner associated with fundamentalism. They directed their hostilities towards dispensationalism as it provided the scapegoat for the difficulties accompanying the increasing divisions between fundamentalism and neo-evangelicalism. See C. Blaising. "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition." in Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition , 27. For particular details on the evolution of differentiation between neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists see George Marsden's Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicals (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992)

[67] Censure came from both sides: both from those who thought dispensationalism useless and outdated and from those who thought it had not been implemented rigidly enough. For example.

McClain, John F. Walvoord, and J. Dwight Pentecost, prominent in this second stage of dispensationalism, attempted to address the opposition on all sides.[68] Defensively motivated, revisionists attempted to make classical dispensationalism appear theologically viable.

The revised dispensationalist response was an attempt to strengthen classical dispensationalism, but tinkering with the classical system in response to the specific problems, without modifying the entire structure, created a "domino effect." Rival covenantalists, who declared that the Bible spoke only to one divine covenant to humanity, pointed to the disjunction between divine purposes in the different dispensations as conceived by dispensationalism. These critiques claimed that dispensationalism offered two different salvations based on two peoples - Israel and the Church. In response, the dispensationalists reformulated the structure in order to highlight the unity of God's purpose.[69] This rephrasing had ramifications for the two peoples theory where the new emphasis on unity caused

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covenant theology, which had grown out of discrepancies within dispensationalism's portrayal of the biblical divisions gained status as the rival system of biblical interpretation among evangelical conservatives. Ultradispensationalism was also a problem for dispensationalists, as it pushed dispensationalism to extreme forms. Ultra-dispensationalists made a sharper distinction when the present Church dispensation began. They divided the book of Acts into two church dispensations and therefore certain church ordinances -baptism, the Lord's Supper - ended up not being applicable to the Church age, depending on where the divisions in Acts were made. For more on ultradispensationalism see T. P. Weber, "Ultradispensationalism," Dictionary of Christianity in America, 1990 ed., 1194; Roy L. Aldrich, "An Outline Study on Dispensationalism," Bibliotheca Sacra 118 (April-June 1961), 134-141; Charles Ryrie, "Ultradispensationalism," in Dispensationalism Today, 192-205.

[68] With the exception of McClain, all of these were affiliated with Dallas Theological Seminary. McClain's dispensationalist pedigree, however, was just as strong as the other three. He was Brethren by denomination which puts him in the right camp, and during his academic career he was associated with Grace Theological Seminary (R.T. Clutter, "McClain, Alva J." Dictionary of Christianity in America, 681).

[69] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 154.

confusion in the dualism dispensationalism had originally set up between the Church and Israel.[70]

Criticism of the inconsistencies within dispensationalist structure resulted in a self-conscious posture among the revising dispensationalists. Other critiques were far more harsh and threatened to damage the entire system in asserting that dispensationalism lacked historical precedent and biblical foundation. For a movement so centered around biblicism and the perception of its own correctness, confronting it with the lack of ties to the historic church's millennial beliefs was a deadly attack. Dispensationalism had to contend with many like C. Bass, for instance, who in the conclusion to his study on dispensationalism contends that:

> dispensationalism is not a part of the historic faith of the church; it is not the only premillennial view; since there was a historic premillennial interpretation for eighteen centuries before dispensationalism was formulated...[71]

George E. Ladd of Fuller Seminary pointed out the same problem when he highlighted the lack of past precedent for dispensationalism's eschatological system.[72] Both Ladd and Bass were essentially questioning dispensationalism's right to exist. In response, Charles Ryrie attempted to lay out a logically comprehensive theology of dispensationalism. Ryrie, one of the chief dispensational revisers, acknowledged Ladd's critique and proceeded not only with a counter-critique, but attempted to show from the biblical text as well as from church tradition that dispensationalism had historical and theological legitimacy. In response to the critics Ryrie

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[70] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 146-48.

[71] Clarence Bass, Backgrounds to Dispensationalism, 155.

[72] George Marsden writes that Ladd's 1956 attack on the pretribulation stance of dispensationalism, The Blessed Hope, had great influence among evangelicals (Reforming Fundamentalism, 150-152). He damaged dispensationalism's credibility among evangelicals

stated:

> We have tried to show two things: (1) Dispensational concepts were taught by men who lived long before Darby. (2) It is to be expected that dispensationalism, which is so closely related to eschatology, would not be refined and systematized until recent times simply because eschatology was not an area under discussion until then. The conclusions drawn from the charge of recency by opponents of dispensationalism are therefore unjustified. In all of this discussion, too, it is necessary to remember that the verdict of history is not the final authority. Every doctrine, whether ancient or recent. in the final analysis, must be tested by the light of the revelation of Scripture.[73]

He attempted to cover all of the weak areas in dispensational theology. He argued for dispensationalism's historical connections. Furthermore. Ryrie insisted. that even without the connection, dispensationalism was still biblically defensible. which is the biblicist bottom line regardless of historical precedent. Ryrie further bolstered this position by writing that dogma is progressive in nature thereby strengthening the dispensationalist system which he felt also reflected the unfolding nature of human knowledge regarding God.[74] Although Ryrie's book laid groundwork for progressive dispensationalism's reentry into academic biblical conversation, his work still contained problematic links to tradition and assumptions not shared by others.[75]

Charles Ryrie. by noting the flaws in dispensationalism. one of which was the lack of

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especially when he accused it of not being biblical.

[73] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today. 77-8.

[74] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today. 77.

[75] In trying to legitimize dispensationalism by connecting it to the apostolic church. Ryrie and others had to make numerous leaps. On this see Clarence Bass who writes about Ryrie's attempt to provide a definitional foundation for dispensationalism: "assuming that premillennialism and dispensationalism are synonymous terms, he traces numerous references in the history of the church to such terms as "second advent,' chiliasm,' 'millennial.' 'thousand years.' 'tribulation.' 'kingdom on earth,' antichrist,' etc. to establish the continuity between dispensationalism and the historic views of the church" (Backgrounds to Dispensationalism. 13).

adequate definition, played a principal role in the revitalization efforts. His effort to lay out a

logical hermeneutical and theological framework was a first step towards regaining an

academic form of dispensationalism. His book, Dispensationalism Today, was foundational

for the development of a new breed of academic dispensationalists. The progressive

dispensationalists continue this work, revamping the system in order to adequately reflect the

biblical text as well as new methods of textual criticism. These progressives distinguish

themselves from the popular dispensationalism that has flowed out of sources such as the

Scofield Reference Bible.

In spite of Ryrie's efforts at revision, academic dispensationalism wavered in light of

all the disputes and re-entrenchments. Popular dispensationalism flourished, however, during

this same period. In fact the responses of dispensationalist scholars augmented and fueled the

popular framework. Whereas scholars such as Ryrie attempted to give the dispensational

system much needed definition and clarification, men such as J. Walvoord limited the impact

of these efforts with their own popular versions.[76] Their corruption of a traditional

dispensationalist futurist perspective into an historicist view combined with the revised "two-

people's theory" incited interest in directly linking present events to biblical prophetic

literature. This historicist view is especially evident in the literal understanding of the re-

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[76] Although Walvoord has taught at Dallas Theological Seminary and is therefore familiar with the academic approach. But his book Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis detracted from the dispensational academic emphases. In many ways, Walvoord and others, serve as transitional figures between dispensationalism proper and popular apocalyptic. His book deals with the material in a popular manner, but is not as extreme as the content found in popular apocalyptic.

establishment of Israel as a nation requisite for the end-times.[77] Although this linking of

ancient concerns to present events had always been a tendency in North American popular

religion, now it was given an added impetus in its connection with dispensationalism. For

example, John F. Walvoord, a colleague of Ryrie, proffered a simplified method wherein

"any-reader" could go to the text to seek out answers to present political and social concerns.

Walvoord set out his hermeneutical stance in maintaining the biblical text as a simple answer

book for the present: "modern man is asking questions about the future as never before. They

are solemn questions; they are searching questions. Only the Bible has clear answers."[78]

Foregoing any distinctions on the function of biblical prophetic literature, he connects political

events of the modern world and ancient literature:

> The history of Israel since 1948 is a remarkable record of divine providence as God has
> miraculously preserved Israel, in spite of her unbelief in Christ, in keeping with His
> revealed prophetic program. The military conflicts that have engaged Israel have so far
> preserved and enlarged her position in her ancient land. The record of the history of
> these conflicts is as thrilled and prophetically significant a chronicle today as when it
> happened.[79]

Carl Armerding, another dispensationalist scholar of that era, reflects a similar viewpoint. In

his detailed analysis of Ezekiel 39.1, he identifies the biblical "Gog and Magog" as referring

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[77] Nineteenth-century dispensationalists held to a futurist premillennialism in order to avoid the
Millerite controversy of the mid-nineteenth-century, with its calculations of Christ's exact return.
Millerism ended in disgrace when Christ failed to come back at the designated time.
Dispensationalism in the twentieth-century, especially the popular versions, has often left the
safety of the futurist perspective for the date-setting speculations of historicist premillennialism.
See C. Blaising, "The Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism," in Progressive
Dispensationalism (BridgePoint Books, 1993), 17-8; and G. Land, "Miller, William," in
Dictionary of Christianity in America, 740.

[78] John F. Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis: What the Bible Says
About the Future of the Middle East and the end of Western Civilization, 21.

to the modern nations of Russia and Syria.[80] Although understanding this to be a literal reading of the text, Armerding does not seem to realize that his dispensationalist perspective is dictating interpretation. The dispensationalist focus on Israel forces him to interpret backwards from the events in modern Israel back into the text. This oversimplication of biblical hermeneutics was not condoned by Ryrie who warned against that kind of direct connection. The great interest in prophecy, however, is the danger inherent within the dispensationalist structure as it often degenerates into forcing the Bible into functioning only in a predictive role where its literature is simplistically linked with the progression of events pertaining to the contemporary world.

This development within revised dispensationalism tied into a general American interest in apocalypticism. This was a natural outgrowth of the speculation surrounding the new military technology being developed at the end of WWII as well as the Cold War relationship with Russia. Popular apocalypticism in literature and the media began to thrive. Armerding himself recognizes the growing interest when he writes that "present interest in Biblical prophecy is a healthy sign. Previous to World War I such interest was limited, more or less. to those known as fundamentalists or conservatives..."[81] This type of dispensational emphasis resulted in popularized apocalyptic readings like those of Hal Lindsey and other popular authors who picked up on this method of reading the Bible in terms of current history and took it to even further extremes. Thus, while dispensationalists continued to lose academic impact,

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[79] John F. Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis. 32.

[80] Carl Armerding, "Russia and the King of the North," Bibliotheca Sacra 120 (January-March 1963), 50-55.

they gained broad public impact outside the boundaries of fundamentalism.

This second movement of dispensationalists is characterized by the weakening of leadership and the rise of popularism among a majority of dispensationalists or dispensationally influenced interpretation. Unlike the first era of dispensationalism. leaders in this second phase were not nationally renowned leaders; and their influence remained in a far smaller sphere than their predecessors. The academic issues they raised were similarly limited. Much of their creative effort was restrained to going over the old system in defense against covenant theologians, neo-evangelicalism's new scholarship. and ultradispensationalism. Moreover. as Walvoord and Armerding illustrate. the gap between the popular and the academic narrowed. It was a short distance for popularists like Hal Lindsey to move from the revised dispensationalism to interpreting the reservoir of dispensationalist thought in light of non-dispensationalist concerns.

3. Progressive Dispensationalism

Last in the historical overview of dispensationalism are the progressive dispensationalists. This latest effort is an almost entirely academic undertaking. A group of dispensationalists, mostly Dallas students, understood dispensationalism only in light of Ryrie and his concerns for definition, hermeneutics, and response to critique. In 1986. a group of dispensationalist academics met and began a movement that substantially revised dispensationalism. Its shift from traditional dispensationalism is so great that outsiders have wondered not only how traditional dispensationalists will react, but that. as one evangelical

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[81] Carl Armerding, "Russia and the King of the North." 50.

academic put it, "newer dispensationalism looks so much like nondispensationalist premillennialism that one struggles to see any real difference."[82] Progressive dispensationalism maintains its high regard for biblical inerrancy and relevance of prophetic literature to biblical interpretation, but without the polarization and tensions of a generation previous. Not only do progressive dispensationalists reject certain aspects of traditional dispensationalism, but similar to neo-evangelicals there is an acceptance of outside hermeneutical methods and textual concerns. In response to the criticism of dispensationalism's relatively recent appearance on the theological scene, for example, progressive dispensationalists acknowledge that in fact this is the case, abandoning the tenuous argument that it has deep roots in the historical church tradition. As well, the dispensations are viewed less rigidly, unlike in previous dispensationalist forms. God's covenants are seen as universal transcending the boundaries of a particular age.[83] Most importantly, in relation to popular apocalyptic belief, this group of dispensationalists downplays the explicit matching of biblical prophecy with contemporary events. Darrell Bock, a progressive dispensationalist, writes about his futurist apocalyptic perspective:

> progressive dispensationalists are more circumspect about identifying certain details in

[82] Walter A. Elwell, "Dispensationalists of the Third Kind," review of Progressive Dispensationalism, by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, and The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism, by Robert L. Saucy, Christianity Today 12 September 1994, 28. See also Daniel Fuller who writes that dispensationalism after Ryrie appears almost indistinguishable from covenant theology (Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 45).

[83] For more on the resolved issues within dispensationalism see Robert Saucy, "The Crucial Issue Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Systems," Criswell Theological Review 1.1 (1986), 149-165; and Craig A. Blaising, "The Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism," in Progressive Dispensationalism, 9-56.

the prophetic calendar than some of their predecessors were. Looking for the "blessed hope" of Christ's return is still a motivating feature for the believer's walk with God. but some would be less confident about the ability to lay out a detailed scenario for its contemporary fulfillment.[84]

This most recent manifestation of dispensationalism therefore is. as Al Mawhinney summarized. "not your father's Oldsmobile."[85] Progressive dispensationalism not only departs from classical dispensationalism in content. but it makes a break with the popular forms by moving away from minute and obsessive concentration on biblical prophecy as a key to understanding the present. Its dialogue takes place mostly on the academic level.

4. Summary

The history of dispensationalism reveals two significant points for understanding popular apocalypticism. First. due to historical events. a large number of people have been influenced by dispensationalism in some form. Although it may not be the organized construction of any one thinker. dispensationalism has filtered down to the masses. Scofield's Reference Bible, Moody's revivals and conferences. the popular formulations of John Walvoord and Hal Lindsey have all aided in the dissemination of dispensationalism in North American religious culture. Its success has been largely on the basis of its applicability to the American religious environment: in the late nineteenth century it explained evangelical demise and in the mid-twentieth century political upheaval. As a result. dispensationalism not only

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[84] Craig Blaising. "Charting Dispensationalism," Christianity Today 38 (12 September 1994). 29.

[85] Al Mawhinney, as quoted by Darrell Bock. "Charting Dispensationalism," Christianity Today 38 (12 September 1994), 29.

permeated conservative Christianity, but it emerged in the popular media as well.

Second, dispensationalists in their reaction to the complexities of the world around them, came to rely on the popular expression of dispensational theology. The mathematical approach to the biblical text, the fatalistic view of the present world, and the end-times focus, were an all-encompassing and democratically accessible form of biblical interpretation. Although academic dispensationalism has in recent years sharply departed from its date-setting-event-interpreting tradition, the legacy still remains preserved in the popular trajectory. And it is the popular apocalyptic realm that generates the audience. the ethos and the leaders for the now predominant, although adulterated, expression of dispensationalism.

C. Institutional Shape

Mention dispensationalism to anyone familiar with the subject and the name of one institution will inevitably be mentioned. The strong connection to Dallas Theological Seminary is one indication that dispensationalism has an institutional shape. But like evangelicalism, dispensationalist institutional structure is a study in contrast. Whereas Craig Blaising's list of churches and schools linked to dispensationalism is long. there is an equally long a list of more popular representations.[86] Pat Robertson and his 700 Club. James

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[86] Craig A. Blaising, Progressive Dispensationalism, 12-13. Blaising's list indicates not only the institutionalization of dispensationalism, but also how interconnected dispensationalism and evangelicalism are. Although there are institutions like Dallas which are solely dispensationalist. there are other dispensationalist institutions like the Evangelical Free Church and The Christian and Missionary Alliance denominations which also align themselves with evangelicalism. The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola University), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Youth for Christ, the Navigators, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ reflect this same interconnectedness between dispensationalism and evangelicalism (13).

McKeever and his Omega Ministries, and Jack van Impe and his Jack van Impe Presents

Ministries among others are all popular alternatives to the more institutionalized

dispensationalism found in schools such Dallas Theological Seminary. Northwestern College.

and Grace Theological Seminary. Although Blaising asserts that "dispensationalism has

expanded to become one of the most common expressions of evangelical Christianity" he

neglects to mention how much of this expression is done on the popular level.

Outside of Dallas Theological Seminary and the other dispensationalist schools and

church denominations. dispensationalism is not generated through mainline and normative

institutions. Rather it maintains itself along informal lines outside of the institution. This is

very much in keeping with the American religious situation. as Charles Lippy claims:

> in American culture there has long been a range of sources outside of formal religious
> institutions to which individuals might look for helpful signs in erecting a personal
> worldview. Consequently. popular religiosity is not merely a phenomenon of the
> modern or postmodern period. but a constant in American culture.[87]

In dispensationalism's case. the statistics support Lippy's observation. Daniel Wojcik writes

that "Beliefs about the Rapture are quite pervasive. According to wide-ranging estimate.

somewhere between 30 percent and 44 percent of Americans embrace beliefs about the Rapture

of the Church."[88] The relatively small number of dispensationalist institutions compared to the

large number of people affirming dispensationalist perspectives indicates that dispensationalist

beliefs are largely conveyed through informal channels.

Dispensationalism is an enterprise that fits well within the American popular religious

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[87] Charles Lippy. Being Religious American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 17.

[88] Daniel Wojcik, The End of the World as We Know It. 42.

scene: its success is not tied directly to denominational lines and its theology and hermeneutics

stress the simplicity in personal appropriation of the biblical message. The success of

dispensationalism arises from the ease with which it appropriates the text and offers

explanations for the events transpiring in the present world. Its simplicity and democratic

appeal are key factors explaining its impact.

Peter W. Williams, in connecting popular religion to social crisis, offers three

characteristics distinctive of popular religion in relation to more traditional forms:

1. In terms of *social structure*, all these movements exist apart from or in tension with established religious groups with regular patterns of organization and leadership.

2. In terms of *sociology of knowledge*, the beliefs and lore of these movements are transmitted through channels other than the official seminaries or oral traditions of established religious communities...

3. In terms of *symbolism, expression,* and *behavior*...popular movements...generally look for signs of divine intervention or manifestation in the realm of everyday experience. This may take the form of possession by the Holy Spirit: of the expectations of the millennium...[89]

Although Williams is not writing about dispensationalism in particular, all three of his

characteristics can be applied to dispensationalism as a way to highlight its popular institutional

structure.

First, built into the simplified popular dispensational framework is a tension with other

groups. Although this tension may have come to the forefront during dispensationalism's

association with fundamentalism, at its beginnings dispensationalist theology also harbored an

inherent tension with its theological focus on the true church. J.N. Darby withdrew from

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[89]Peter Williams, Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 17.

England's national church because he felt it was compromised. Instead of a church dictated by national, political or denominational concerns, Darby sought out a gathering of people obedient only to Christ. In his opinion, those saints who gathered together as a "pure remnant" in their love for, and obedience to, Christ, would also be the righteous few raptured into the presence of Christ before the tribulation. With these concerns in mind, Darby's ambivalence towards denominational ties is understandable and indeed fueled dispensationalism as a reform movement.

This dichotomy which early dispensationalism set up between the righteous few and the large number of "arm chair Christians" within the various denominations of Christendom was only given more meaning in the evangelical crisis at the end of the nineteenth-century. Dispensationalism's appeal crossed over denominational lines and answered the heart of the conflict: only the stalwart few willing to stand up to prevailing intellectual trends, could maintain traditional standards. Those willing to distance themselves from denominational loyalties in order to maintain the evangelical distinctives of traditional belief centered around an inspired and inerrant Bible could consider themselves to be the righteous remnant. This element was only enhanced by the association with the militant separation of fundamentalism. The concept of a beleaguered few awaiting the Lord's return still exists within the dispensational/fundamentalist framework. Nancy Ammerman, in her study of contemporary fundamentalists, writes:

> that the pastor's righteous indignation is far more likely to be directed at the clergy and members of other Christian churches than at thieves, murderers, pagans or atheists. [90]

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[90] Nancy Ammerman, Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 75.

> Although they [neo-Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and charismatics] share most of Southside's central beliefs, they differ in many matters of faith and practice and are condemned as having wrong beliefs, wrong lifestyles, or wrong associations.[91]

These battles to remain pure against the perceived degenerative influence from the outside world, are always articulated with the Rapture in view.[92] The imminent end provides all the more reason to remain vigilant in upholding the standard of the spiritually pure church. This beleaguered mentality is reflected in John Walvoord's statements:

> In the twentieth century, however, change in theology has been more rapid and more devastating to biblical faith than ever before. The common agreement of the church for centuries that the Bible is indeed the Word of God has been abandoned by many who claim to be leaders in the church... Obviously the removal of every Christian in the world [in the Rapture] who is indwelt by the Spirit will release a flood tide of evil such as the world has never seen. It will allow the immediate takeover of the world church by those completely devoid of Christian faith...[93]

Pat Robertson, an important figure in American evangelical and political circles, also articulates this ambivalence towards outsiders. In regards to mainline denominations, he writes:

> There are signs of revival in the Anglican and Episcopal churches. There are pockets of revival in the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches, but only in those congregations where Christ is being preached and the truth of the Scripture is being proclaimed. God's Spirit will not remain in an atmosphere of compromise...[94]

Although Robertson is more open to the possibility that the "pure remnant" can exist within the mainline denominations than Walvoord or the congregation Ammerman studied, his

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[91] Nancy Ammerman, Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World.81.

[92] Nancy Ammerman, Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World, 211.

[93] John Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis, 114, 117. Here he consciously juxtaposes denominations against the faithful believer, who stands independent of the denominational framework (118).

[94] Pat Robertson, The New Millennium (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 99.

evangelical revivalist heritage is quite evident. Robertson considers revival the only way in which mainline individuals and denominations can regain God's favor. Popular dispensationalism remains at odds with the established churches and denominational moorings in that there is a strong drive, dictated by the end times focus, to maintain a spiritually pure church ready for Christ's return. This pure church is perceived to exist outside of denominational boundaries, or at least outside of established mainline denominations.

Second, historically speaking, dispensationalism has not generally been communicated through traditional ecclesiastical conduits. Because it transcends denominational boundary lines, dispensationalism has mass appeal. Although academically institutionalized in the bastions of dispensationalism such as Dallas, dispensationalism has been adopted as a framework in large part by popular elements. Its real success has come about in the realm of prophecy conferences, the Scofield Reference Bible, and revivals. Its appropriation by fundamentalists adept at using the developing technology from WWII onwards brought dispensationalism to the mass media.[95] Popular radio broadcasts during the mid-twentieth century featured the late Charles Fuller's "Old Fashioned Gospel Hour," Warren W. Wiersbe's "Back to the Bible" and others. With the advent of television, dispensationalism is propagated through television programs such as the previously mentioned "700 Club" and "Jack van Impe Presents" that convey the popular dispensational framework to their audience through their interpretations of world news. Contemporary popular literature abounds in dispensationally-influenced works. Hal Lindsey sold 28 million copies of Late Great Planet

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[95] See Charles H. Lippy, Being Religious American Style, 12.

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<u>Earth</u>, which was carried in most large bookstore chains in North America.[96] The Cold War difficulties with the Russians and the later Middle East Gulf War crisis in 1991 and the approaching turn of the millennium only heightened the attention paid to books like Lindsey's.[97] Because popular dispensationalism presumes that the Bible speaks directly about contemporary world events, it can cater to a need that traditional institutions and denominations cannot. Dispensationalism with its ability to connect the text to contemporary events can, according to Russell-Jones, weave the bits and pieces of telegraphic communication - fragments of a day lived in the media culture - into a theological narrative. It gives an answer to the question, "What hath God wrought?"[98] Dispensationalism can easily speak to a society inundated with information - both trivial and significant - and provide it with meaning.

Third, dispensational theology strongly affirms that everything is in the control of the supernatural power of God and that his final intervention will come about during the millennium. For example, Pat Robertson, who in his anticipation of the end-times decodes modern political events using the biblical text, has this to say:

> In Biblical numbers 10 is the number of completion. Usually the completion of provocation, sins, judgement. Forty, a generation, times 10 is 400, the number of years that God, for instance, permitted the Amorites living in Canaan to sin against Him before He gave their land to the nation of Israel....History tells us that the first official act of the first permanent English settlers at the beginning of America took

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[96] Grant Wacker, "Planning ahead: The enduring appeal of prophecy belief,'" review of <u>When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture</u> by Paul Boyer, <u>Christian Century</u> 111 (January 19, 1994), 48.

[97] See Joe Maxwell, "Prophecy Books Become Big Sellers," <u>Christianity Today</u> 35 (11 March 1991), 60; and Peter J. Leithart, "Middle East Apocalypse Now?" <u>First Things</u> 8 (December 1990): 10-11.

[98] Iwan Russell-Jones, "The Contemporary Text: Media and Preaching Jack van Impe Presents," 28.

place on April 29, 1607 when the settlers planted a seven-foot oak cross in the sand, then knelt in prayer and claimed this new nation for the glory of God and His Son Jesus Christ. In God's eyes the United States of America did not begin on July 4, 1776, but on April 29, 1607. Four hundred years from the beginning of America - ten full biblical generations - takes place on April 29, 2007. By some amazing coincidence - or might we not say foresight of God - the 400th anniversary of the greatest Gentile power that the world has ever known coincides precisely with the 40th year conclusion of the generation of the "end of the Gentile power. More remarkably the anniversary dates of the two event - Cape Henry and the taking of Jerusalem by the Israelis - (if my calculations are correct) are 40 days apart within the calendar year. (the spring of that year, I might add, this observer of events will have turned exactly 77 years old). Could this collapse be a time of collapse of the Gentile powers. None of us knows the times and seasons which God has reserved for Himself, but this scenario is fascinating to contemplate. If correct, it reinforces some of the other conclusions of this book that indicate the long cycle of Western European ascendancy has come to an end. The year 2007 is only 17 years away. But we should remember that an incredible number of convulsing events can take place in 17 years."[99]

His understanding is that all of American history has been enacted within a supernaturally-designed framework. The coinciding dates and numbers only reinforce Robertson's belief. Other events, such as the Israeli takeover of Palestine and the perceived degeneration of the American social order, where prayer is no longer tolerated in schools and homosexuals are allowed in the military, take on a completely spiritual implication. They are interpreted as part of a preordained supernatural historical climax leading to the rapture of the church. Social, economic, and political events are all controlled by the supernatural power of God and their progression only brings the end of the entire framework closer to its climax.

Dispensationalism, in its popular form, has theological and institutional freedom. More than any other contemporary manifestation of evangelicalism, it can address contemporary events specifically. And because it works on a popular level, it has access to popular culture. As a result, the variations and the manifestations are numerous. The next chapter will examine

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[99] Pat Robertson, The New Millennium, 312-3.

the results of popular dispensationalism working within a North American context.

D. Conclusion

Viewing dispensationalism historically illustrates the broad spectrum of dispensationalism's activities. Not only does the historical picture provide the various configurations of dispensationalism, but it shows how dispensationalism secured its future within evangelicalism as well as popular culture. The broad historical picture points out that not all dispensationalists are involved within the popular movement, in fact, from its North American beginnings it has participated in dialogue between the popular and the academic. But dispensationalism gave its greatest voice to its popular manifestation. Enmeshed within fundamentalism, represented by the Scofield Reference Bible and communicated by fire-and-brimstone revivalists, it gained many of its adherents among the general populace. Indeed, dispensationalism with its focus on mapping out God's plan and therefore focussing on its near conclusion, gave impetus for accepting the transforming and reforming message of the revivalists. As with ancient apocalyptic, dispensationalism fueled the message: "the end is near - repent." This is the dispensationalism that affected the popular apocalypticists.

Popular dispensationalism, although given a voice by academics such as Charles Ryrie, was taken for the most part in its Scofieldian form. This content consisted of a prophecy focus, dispensational divisions, and literal hermeneutics (a la Scofield). The righteous remnant of the Church and a prominence given to the destiny of Israel, were both theological concerns that were also very much grounded in contemporary political and social realities. Dispensationalism played a part in customizing biblical theology to North American readers

when it offered this mixture of biblical content prophesying about the world events at hand.

CHAPTER THREE: APOCALYPTIC SPIRITUALITY

A. Introduction

Apocalyptic spirituality in North America arises out of the convergence of three trajectories. It is first and foremost a full inheritor of the popular hermeneutic arising out of evangelicalism. As demonstrated in the first chapter. North American evangelicalism has been caught in tension since its beginnings in the two Great Awakenings. Conflictual patterns. continue to exist within evangelicalism: personal expression vs. clerical authority. academic vs. popular input. democracy vs. hierarchy. and tradition vs. contemporary relevancy. The flexibility of expression that results from these being held together in suspension allows variant movements to use the same evangelical tradition. This is true for apocalyptic spirituality which. although different from certain other conventional evangelical expressions. is concerned with all aspects of evangelical theology. Personal redemption and piety. the primacy of Scripture and evangelism are all at the heart of apocalyptic spirituality. These evangelical tenets are expressed alongside the evangelical democratic hermeneutic. This method of interpretation developed out of American evangelical history. Although the series of revivals that swept the continent were not expressly geared towards diminishing the interpretational authority of the clergy. the emphasis on the necessity of a personal faith in Christ regardless of church affiliation created the evangelical democratic hermeneutic.

Second. popular apocalyptic spirituality is given further definition by its connection to dispensationalism and fundamentalism. These gave it a particular methodology and attitude. Dispensationalism and fundamentalism joined league in the fundamentalist-modernist crisis and

produced a simplified but structured hermeneutic tailored for mass consumption. Fundamentalism's aggressive stance on the perspicuity of the Bible - against academia and its higher critical methods - was melded with dispensationalism's interest in a simple eschatologically-oriented interpretative structure of the Bible. The contemporary evangelical academic renaissance has done little to moderate this.

These two traditions, subjects of the previous chapters, create the theological foundation for this chapter on apocalyptic spirituality. The popular Christian apocalyptic movement rests firmly on the assumptions, content and attitudes generated by evangelicalism, fundamentalism, and dispensationalism. Because of its inherited assumptions about the biblical text, it represents a form of Christianity that evinces a particular reaction to and explanation of the world and its changes. Adding to this explanation of popular apocalyptic as a distillation of its forerunners, will be the idea that it is also a firmly-fixed and culturally dictated entity. Its underlying message about religious meaning and life in America can be accessed not only by viewing it historically through the theological templates of evangelicalism and fundamentalism, but by analyzing its content as evidence for its underlying concerns.

The third tradition, apocalypticism, adds definition to the discussion in light of popular apocalyptic's preoccupation with political, economic, and religious events of the present. Although both dispensationalism and evangelicalism have historical incidents where events were explained by using biblical imagery, this is not a methodological principle for either of them. The third tradition, on the other hand, has a history of directly linking the Bible to the events contemporaneous with the interpreter. Although not consciously assimilating apocalyptic tradition, authors such as Hal Lindsey and Dr.Jack van Impe, take on the mindset

and the imagery in order to interpret current events. Apocalypticism, more so than evangelicalism and dispensationalism, is able to describe the language, the patterns of interpretation, and the motivations of popular apocalyptic spirituality.

The number of apocalyptic writers articulating their interpretations of the biblical message is growing exponentially as a result of the new access and audience gained via the internet as well as the endless stream of political events demanding ever more interpretative variations on the biblical text. In order to discuss and evaluate popular apocalyptic, this chapter will focus on one author, Grant Jeffrey, as representative of that genre. Through an examination of his particular content, the links to evangelicalism and dispensationalism, historic apocalypticism, to other prophecy writers, and to popular culture will be examined. Furthermore, two questions will be raised as a result of this analysis: first, does the popular hermeneutic of contemporary eschatological belief live up to its own and to evangelicalism's ideal of an inspired, inerrant, perspicuous, and unadulterated word of God and second, what are the implications of the popular apocalyptic movement for evangelical hermeneutics.

B. Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism: Definition and History

Contemporary apocalyptic spirituality exists in a context framed not only by evangelicalism and fundamentalism, but by a long history of apocalyptic belief. Rather than being a phenomenon of recent appearance on the religious scene, apocalyptic expression has a lengthy tradition within the Christian community. Popular apocalyptic spirituality shares in this long history of communities turning to particular texts within the Bible in response to real and or perceived crises.

Apocalyptic is often used interchangeably with "millenarian" and "eschatological." Not only is there confusion in definition, but the genre itself is often distorted by viewing it as inextricably entwined with prophetic works. The term used in this paper "apocalyptic spirituality" seems to muddy classification even further as it combines a literary genre classification with mode of belief. A short clarification is in order.

Apocalyptic is a literary term, which translated from the Greek means only "revelation." "Millenarian" alludes to the expectation of an ideal society and "eschatology" refers to the knowledge of the "last things."[1] The genre of apocalyptic relates to these terms as its literature centers on relating the revealed message regarding the end of time. It is distinct from prophetic literature, although both are categorized under the heading of eschatology. Prophetic literature is consciously situational and therefore the language is direct, describing evident historical events. For example, Jeremiah's prophecies are undeniably about the fall of Jerusalem as he mentions this directly as well as relating the events surrounding the crisis. As well, prophetic literature concerns itself with communicating God's message to the people regarding the events they are enduring, the message is not told in the enigmatic and highly symbolic form which apocalyptic takes. Apocalyptic is, very simply, mythologized and trans-historicized prophetic literature. The within-history reform expectation of prophecy is in apocalyptic outside of history. And because its observations are directed towards the end of history as well as the events transpiring above history, its language is cosmic and indirect.

Apocalyptic spirituality is the term I use to refer to the community belief that has absorbed the characteristics of apocalyptic literature in order to interpret contemporary

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[1] "Millenarian," Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1983.

surroundings.[2] Biblical apocalyptic literature with its mystical figures, visions, and dreams is read not only into the entirety of the biblical text, but into the world. The term, thus, also takes into account the revelatory emphasis of the contemporary popular apocalyptic works of Hal Lindsey, Grant Jeffrey, Dr. Jack van Impe, John Hagee, Paul and Peter Lalonde to name a few. Others have focussed on the interest in prophecy these writers have, and have expressed this phenomena as "prophecy belief."[3] But this does not access the contemporary ethos characterized by the revelation of veiled truths in the biblical text related to the events transpiring in the world.

Apocalyptic (literary genre) and apocalypticism (community structure - essence and message) have been essential to Christianity.[4] Its progenitor was the Hebrew Bible prophetic

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[2] This is borrowed from Bernard McGinn who uses it to refer to the writings and belief of certain medieval writers in Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola (New York: Paulist Press, 1979)

[3] Paul Boyer in his history of this particular strand in American religious history (When Time Shall Be No More), terms it "prophecy belief." This addresses the importance prophecy plays within this system. As well, it is a label which allows Boyer to encompass the various manifestations within American history as a unified entity. However, for the purposes of this paper, where only the contemporary situation is highlighted, a more exact phrase is necessary. What Grant Jeffrey is doing is quite distinct from Timothy Dwight's 1771 expression of the Revolution in prophetic language (When Time Shall Be No More, 73)

[4] For more see Christopher Rowland, The Open Heaven: Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity (London: SPCK, 1982); Bernard McGinn, Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994); Bernard McGinn, trans., Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, eds., The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992; C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds., The Apocalypse: in English Renaissance Thought and Literature; Robin Bruce Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture

literature of the eighth to sixth centuries BCE. The prophetic literature found in the books of

Joel, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel attempts to make sense of Israelite social and

religious life jeopardized by captivity, exile and resettlement. Without temple and king, the

explanations of God's continuing presence in the community and the fulfillment of his promises

have to be reassessed and reassigned. Its themes of God's divine plan and the struggle between

good and evil are absorbed into apocalyptic.

As a genre, apocalyptic burst into the forefront during the intertestimental period in

post-exilic Judaism in texts such as Daniel and I Enoch.[5] However, unlike the preceding

prophetic literature this new genre took the explanation for good and evil to a more cosmic

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(Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1992).

[5] Bernard McGinn. "Early Apocalypticism." in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 12ff. McGinn explores the various viewpoints regarding the genre's origins. It is suggested that the "apocalypse" was either a new phenomenon that arose out of Jewish syncretism from either Persian or Babylonian religious ideas or that apocalyptic was "a gradual evolution from ancient sources" (14). McGinn concludes that although there is evidence for "protoapocalyptic" in the prophetic and wisdom literature. apocalyptic most likely is a product of third and second century BCE Judaism (14). He posits the motivation for writing within the political "sitz im leben" of the Maccabean revolt against the hellenizing program of Antiochus IV (15). About particular texts, he writes: "The Apocalypse of Animals. Daniel 7-12. and the Testament of Moses (not an apocalypse in form, but a text containing apocalyptic eschatology) are all Maccabean in date and are examples of political rhetoric in the sense that they are designed to move groups to adopt particular responses or course of action in the face of the events of the moment" (15). This apocalyptic literature with its strong belief in eventual divine deliverance was built on older themes in Jewish religion: the prophetic tradition of a coming "day of the Lord" to bring down his reign of justice, the foundational belief of the promised land in opposition to the oppression of Egypt, and the primordial story shared with other Ancient Near Eastern cultures where the deity wins the battle against Leviathan and brings order to chaos (Bernard McGinn, "John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality." in The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, 8). McGinn writes that Jewish apocalyptic was closely connected to these themes. Also see Frederick A. Kreuziger's Apocalypse and Science Fiction: A Dialectic of Religious and Secular Soteriologies (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 144 ff.. for a history of scholarship on Jewish apocalyptic's relationship to prophetic literature where he highlight's the viewpoint that apocalyptic lies on a continuum with prophecy.

level.[6] Whereas the prophetic focus on people's transgressions was specific and direct,

apocalyptic used extensive symbolism to communicate a much larger pattern evolving through

the current events. Early Christianity adopted this literary tradition centered around crisis and

hope to produce the apocalyptic writings in I Thessalonians 4, II Thessalonians, Mark 13 and

the book of Revelation.[7] The murder of Jesus, the community's Messiah. by the Romans and

the intense persecution faced by the fledgling group threatened to dissolve early Christianity

barring an explanation providing a larger understanding of the adversity. Taking cues from its

relationship to the prophetic literature. a message of hope was found in the expectation of a

returning Messiah."[8] This incorporated the earlier Jewish tradition of the expected return of

God to judge all of humanity and nature on "the Day of the Lord." Unlike the prophetic

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[6] Prophetic literature was not a futuristic-minded genre, despite its presentation as such by its apocalyptically-minded modern interpreters. It is concerned with salvation and rejuvenation of the community in "real" time. Apocalyptic originated out of the pessimism of post-exilic conditions, and thus saw salvation as possible only outside of real time. For more on the comparison between prophetic literature and apocalyptic literature see Paul Hanson's Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Bernard McGinn's. "Early Apocalypticism: the ongoing debate," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 2-39.

[7] I Thess. 4.13-5.11 and II Thess. 2.1-12 carry the apocalyptic expectations of a Risen Lord coming back to judge the world and of a cosmic battle with an arch enemy (Antichrist). Mark 13, also known as the Little Apocalypse, presents a vision of conflict and desolation leading to the end of the age. Revelation, the best known Christian apocalypse, is enclosed within the framework of a letter written to the scattered Christian communities of Asia Minor. The writer. convinced that he is living in the end-times, writes of a cosmic showdown where Satan will persecute believers. Those who remain steadfast will be vindicated when Christ returns to destroy the wicked at the end of time. As with the Jewish apocalypses, it is thought that the Christian apocalypse was written during a time of crisis where historical events were transcribed into the framework of an eschatological drama. Christian apocalyptic departs from the Jewish apocalyptic tradition with the addition of the resurrection of Jesus as an essential part of the apocalyptic pattern of crisis-judgement-vindication (Bernard McGinn, "John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, 11).

[8] Bernard McGinn, "Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate," in The Apocalypse in

literature. this was portrayed as no mere physical return, but rather was presented as the

reestablishment of cosmic order wherein evil would be purged and righteousness would

prevail. This literature, with its dual message of hope and doom, turned the perception of

persecution on its head. Persecution was reinterpreted as an indication that God's rule was

about to begin: God would return in their lifetime and the Roman persecutors would be

judged.[9] The dissolution of religious, political and social stability for early Christianity was

reshaped by apocalyptic belief so that the very dissolution experienced became not only a part

of God's divine plan for history, but a sign that the end was actually near. providing through

the dualistic reference to this age in opposition to the age to come. hope for a community in

crisis.

The extensive use of symbols to communicate the message set in the framework of a

"crisis-judgement-vindication" pattern allowed for veiled reference to the actual events of the

time but also pointed beyond the events to a divine plan. allowing the writers, through this

mythological language to address their very real situation on a metaphysical level.[10] "The Great

Whore" and "the Beast" mentioned in Revelation are to be understood as more than just nasty

name calling. The expressions, understood by the reader/listener to refer to Rome and its

leaders, elevated the evil perpetuated on the early Christians to a cosmic level. The writer of

English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 30.

[9] Adela Yarbro Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of Apocalypse (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984).

[10] Bernard McGinn, "Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 10. For more on the use of myth and discourse see Stephen D.O'Leary, Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 21-69; and Robert Fuller, Naming the Antichrist (Oxford: Oxford University

Revelation asserts that "they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them. for

he is the Lord of lords and King of kings. and those with him are called and chosen and

faithful" (Rev 17.13). By clothing the understood referents in mythological language, the

community was able to give a larger meaning to the events of the time. These texts were of

primary importance in the early Christian community as the flexible language provided

forward direction for a persecuted movement. Although Bernard McGinn is quick to point out

that viewing the early Church primarily as apocalyptic is an oversimplification of a complex

movement, he also asserts that looking forward to an expected end of history was a large part

of the early Christian community thinking.[11] In fact. McGinn assents to Ernst Kasemann's

statement that "apocalyptic...was the mother of all Christian theology."[12]

The patterns and characteristics of late Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic writing

became a core part of western civilization and its perception of the movement of history.

Early Christian writers expected an end to time based on the six days of creation (World Week

eschatology). For example, the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas (circa 130-132 CE).

allegorically interpreting the Gen 2.2 passage as apocalyptic information in light of the passage

in 2 Peter 3.8, asserts:

He speaks of the Sabbath at the beginning of the creation: "And God made the works of

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Press, 1995), 26ff.

[11] Bernard McGinn, "Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature. 30.

[12] Bernard McGinn, "John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, 10. At the center of the Christian message lies an apocalyptic core as from early on the death and resurrection of Christ was interpreted apocalyptically. See Dale C. Allison, Jr., The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

his hands in six days, and rested on it, and sanctified it." Observe, children, what "he finished in six days" means. It means this: that in six thousand years the Lord will bring everything to an end, for with him a day signifies a thousand years. And he himself bears me witness when he says "Behold, the day of the Lord will be as a thousand years." Therefore, children, in six days - that is, in six thousand years - everything will be brought to an end.[13]

Other writers such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus were also concerned with the coming Kingdom

of God. Not only did Irenaeus calculate the expected arrival of the millennium, but he used

apocalyptic thought to make a defense against groups and individuals outside doctrinal

orthodoxy.[14] Apocalyptic expectations remained a part of people's perceptions of their world

and were important to people for the clues they perceived were revealed about God's plans for

the future.

After the fourth century the imperial power which had formerly been the persecutor,

now became the patron of Christianity. Councils such as the ones held in Nicea (325 CE) and

Ephesus (431 CE) as well the great theologian Augustine (354-430 CE), provided another way

of looking at the apocalyptic message while still maintaining its importance for Christian belief

and life. Stephen O'Leary frames the shift in terms of drama. Whereas the early Christians

interpreted apocalyptic tragically, Augustine reinterpreted apocalyptic comically. He writes:

...in Augustine's comic reading, the ultimate features of the divine plan remain inscrutable to believers and nonbelievers alike...In the tragic periodization of history, calamities appear as part of a predetermined sequence that will culminate in the reign of the Antichrist, whose final defeat will be followed by the millennial kingdom. In Augustine's provisionally comic view of history, calamities become episodes, recurrent events that all human communities must face without recourse to an apocalyptic understanding, while the millennial kingdom becomes an obscure allegory of the church

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[13] Epistle of Barnabas 15.3-4, trans. J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer in The Apostolic Fathers, ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 182.

[14] Robert Fuller, Naming the Antichrist, 31.

> in the present age....The comic interpretation of the Apocalypse thus neutralizes its
> predictive function. What remains is the exhortation to the saintly life and the aesthetic
> functioning of the text experienced as allegory.[15]

O'Leary terms Augustine interpretation as anti-apocalyptic eschatology.[16] Although Augustine

was not unique in the use of allegory in reading biblical apocalyptic. he established a new way

of looking at apocalyptic literature. The eschatological battle between good and evil was

relegated to a human level where the battle became a part of the everyday moral and ethical

choices of a Christian's life and belief. Augustine's interpretation of biblical apocalyptic.

optimistic and disconnected from literal history. evidences not only the difficult position the

Church had been put in when the World Week millennial expectation. went unfulfilled. but

also a Church more content with its position within the world.

Apocalyptic belief rose to a new intensity in medieval Europe. Despite the end of the

persecution. acceptance of apocalyptic continued not only in the rereading of existing texts but

also in the production of more apocalypses.[17] This is interesting especially in light of the

connection often made between persecution and the creation and popularity of apocalyptic

material. However. it was not so much oppression as it was a crisis in thought that generated a

new interest in apocalyptic literature: everything from the influx of Islam to squabbles within

the church required a religious context and explanation. So for example the apocalyptic figure

of the Antichrist was invoked frequently to describe various hostilities including those with the

Jews (whose crime was that they were not Christian) and those with the Church (Pope Innocent

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[15] Stephen O'Leary. Arguing the Apocalypse, 75.

[16] Stephen O'Leary. Arguing the Apocalypse. 73.

[17] For an example of the popularity of medieval apocalyptic. see The Apocalypse in the Middle

IV was identified as the Antichrist by certain medieval clergy).[18] Through this new use of

apocalyptic the pattern of interpretation shifted and medieval Christianity set the pattern for the

reception of apocalyptic in the centuries that followed. The explanation for this new era in

apocalyptic popularity lies not only in the flexibility of the mythological language employed in

apocalyptic literature, but also in reinterpretation and the rhetoric which allowed apocalyptic

literature to develop a much broader meaning than just as a message of hope for a persecuted

early Christian community. Whereas early church fathers such as Augustine interpreted the

apocalypse allegorically as ethical direction for the Church, later writers concentrated on

biblical apocalyptic as the key for discerning history. Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202) did not

break with an Augustinian reading of apocalyptic tradition completely, but alongside using

Revelation as direction for the soul, he also interpreted it historically.[19] This direct connection

of biblical text to historical events continued after Fiore's death. M. Reeves writes that the

church reforms in the eleventh and twelfth century were identified as markers in God's

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Ages for the different ways that Revelation was incorporated into medieval culture.

[18] Stephen O'Leary, Arguing the Apocalypse, 82; Robert Fuller, Naming the Antichrist, 34-36. For more on this see Norman Cohn who deals with millennialism within a Medieval framework for understanding the social, religious and economic shifts happening (The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, revised edition]).

[19] As opposed to the almost anti-apocalypticism of Augustine, Joachim of Fiore for example, was a medieval Hal Lindsey. He held Revelation as the key to understanding history and linked the events written about in the biblical book to events occurring during his lifetime. This was a part of his four-fold hermeneutical theory which used biblical apocalyptic to show the meaning of history, both past and future. For more see Bernard McGinn, Apocalyptic Spirituality; E. Randolph Daniel's essay, "Joachim of Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse," in The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, 72-88. For a look at how apocalypticism functioned in the centuries previous to the eleventh and twelfth century, see Bernard McGinn's, "Early Apocalypticism," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 2-31.

progressively unfolding cosmic plan:

> In the great conflict the end-drama seemed to be already beginning and rhetoric on
> Antichrist was freely exchanged between Imperial and Papal partisans. But the deeper
> question was coming to the surface, how could the events of the present fleeting
> moments bear eternal meaning? Yet was not the divine purpose even now manifesting
> itself in new ways which must be marked as steps towards the End? [20]

The linking of biblical apocalyptic literature to events transpiring in the medieval world was a

foretaste of an interpretive process which blossomed in the centuries to follow.

The Christian end-times consciousness continued into the Renaissance. Although

apocalyptic did not resonate with the intensity that it did in the Middle Ages, it still provided

the imagery, rhetoric and framework with which to explain the crisis surrounding the

Reformation.[21] In fact, both Catholics and Protestants used apocalyptic language to describe

the struggle with each other. Luther (1483-1546 CE), for example, interpreted the 2

Thessalonians antichrist passage as identifying Pope Leo X when the Pope did not respond

favorably to Luther's demand for reformation.[22] Protestants all over Europe used the

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[20] Marjorie Reeves, "The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 48. For more background on the changes brought on by the reform movements see E. Randolph Daniel's essay "Joachim of Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse," in The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, 72-88.

[21] In fact there were some difficulties with apocalyptic texts. Whereas the Roman Catholic church at the time found meaning by appropriating apocalyptic texts allegorically, the Reformers were not certain what to do with texts such as Revelation. In their revision of the canon they were not certain if it should be included. And yet apocalyptic themes and images continued to be important. See Rodney L. Peterson, Preaching in the Last Days: The Theme of 'Two Witnesses in the 16th & 17th Centuries, who deals with the important role apocalyptic played in Protestant belief and activity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[22] Jaroslav Pelikan, "Some Uses of Apocalypse in the Magisterial Reformers," in The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature, 84-5. Robin Bruce Barnes argues that Luther's appropriation of apocalyptic imprinted upon his movement as well as other Protestant groups with an indelible apocalyptic character. See his book Prophecy and Gnosis:

apocalyptic imagery of the cosmic battle between good and evil to explain the chaos of the Reformation as well as utilizing it as a defense for their uncompromising rejection of Catholicism (or in the Anabaptist's case, both Catholicism and Protestantism).

The violence and turmoil of the Reformation caused a backlash in the use of prophecy and apocalyptic literature in the seventeenth century. Fittingly, it was during this age of developing science and rational thought that the two modern theories of millennialism - postmillennialism and premillennialism - were conceived.[23] Postmillennialism, a positive approach to history, placed the return of Christ after the millennium. Through the efforts of Christians, history could be perfected and the millennium would be brought in as a result. Premillennialism, on the other hand, was a negative depiction of history where Christ returned before the millennium. History, spiritually bankrupt and not capable of reformation, is ended with the return of Christ in order to pave the way for the beginning of the millennium. No amount of human effort could change the deteriorating course of history. Both theories turned out to be significant in American evangelicalism.

The use of biblical apocalyptic literature to provide the cosmic understanding of conflict was no different in America. It was first used as ammunition by Puritans in their Protestant opposition to Catholicism, then during the Revolution apocalyptic language was used to support the American opposition to the British, and even later still an apocalyptic understanding shaped the understanding of the conflict between the North and the South during

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Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[23] Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, 66.

the Civil War.

American religious and political history in particular resonates with biblical imagery. The colonists began nation-building with spiritual aspirations and biblical standards; therefore, relating the events transpiring in the emerging nation to biblical motifs, including those found in apocalyptic literature, was not an unusual step. Early colonists, for example, interpreted prophetic and apocalyptic texts in light of their experience as Puritans coming out of a hostile religious situation in England. Even Jonathan Edwards, who began his preaching career ninety years after the arrival of the first Puritans to America, retained the Puritan dissent against Roman Catholic influence in his rhetoric. In light of the battle motif found in Revelation, he extended the interpretation of the events leading up to the Protestant Reformation to a cosmic level. Jonathan Edwards gave his perspective on the source of this evil in his vision of the mandate given to America by God:

> And it is worthy to be noted, that America was discovered about the time of the reformation, or but little before: Which reformation was the first thing that God did towards the glorious renovation of the world after it had sunk into the depths of darkness and ruin, under the great anti-christian apostasy.[24]

Although this image of Catholicism as the spiritual enemy faded during the revolutionary war where the religious rhetoric was re-oriented against British oppression, the papacy remained an institution denigrated through the use of apocalyptic imagery. Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, stated in a 1783 sermon that:

> There are three coetaneous events to take place whose fruition is certain from prophecy, the annihilation of the Pontificate, the reassembling of the Jews, and the

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[24] Jonathan Edwards, "The Latter-Day Glory is Probably to Begin in America," in God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny, ed. Conrad Cherry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 57.

fulness of the Gentiles...The promising prospects of the *Propaganda fide* at Rome are coming to nothing: and it may be of the divine destiny that all other attempts for gospelizing the nations of the earth shall prove fruitless, until the present Christendom itself be recovered to the primitive purity and simplicity... At this period, and in effecting this great event, we have reason to think that the United States may be of no small influence and consideration. It was of the Lord to send Joseph into Egypt, to save much people, and to shew forth his praise. It is of the Lord that 'a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,' and upon 'her head a crown of twelve stars,'(not to say thirteen) should 'flee into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God' (Rev. xii. 1&6), and where she might be the repository of Wisdom, and 'keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.' It may have been of the Lord that Christianity is to be found in such great purity in this church exiled into the wilderness of America; and that its purest body should be evidently advancing forward, by an augmented natural increase and spiritual edification, into a singular superiority - with the ultimate subserviency to the glory of God, in converting the world.[25]

There is a doubling of single end-times motif. Stiles still maintained that the papacy had to be

demolished in fulfillment of biblical prophecy, which most likely drew from the association of

the papacy with the antichrist, the apocalyptic figure of evil. Yet America in its fight against

the British for independence is equated with purity making British opposition the "dragon"

(Rev. 12.3) which is also an antagonistic figure within the apocalyptic drama. The American

political and economic inclinations expressed in apocalyptic terms are indications that this type

of biblical literature held a strong influence. The apocalyptic theme of the battle between good

and evil expressed in cosmic terms the chaos people felt during the Revolution and Civil War.

This usage of eschatological imagery does not indicate the appropriation of an entire

apocalyptic worldview. Evangelicalism as a whole still maintained a more optimistic slant on

history, being for the most part postmillennial, and therefore did not look forward to an

imminent end of history despite this usage of eschatological language. The nineteenth century

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[25] Ezra Stiles, "The United States Elevated to Glory and Honour," in God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny, ed. Conrad Cherry (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 92.

confidence seen in the inception of a variety of social movements, was interrupted by the

premillennialist-directed Millerite controversy. Interpreting the War of 1812 victory as a

divine sign, William Miller calculated that Christ would return to end history in 1843.[26] Based

on a literal reading of the Bible, Miller preached an antithetical message to the prevailing

optimism with his ideas that only Christ's second coming would initiate reformation. This

incident of apocalyptic spirituality ended in disappointment when Christ did not return and the

movement was left to face the derision of outsiders. With the Millerite fiasco doing damage to

the negative perspective, it was only with the onset of dispensational premillennialist thought in

the late nineteenth century that a large-scale and structured world-view on the basis of a

pessimistic view of history took hold.

Apocalyptic literature, generated out of a situation of turmoil, had a continued life in

the shaping of Christian discourse through the centuries. In reference to its immense

influence, Paul Boyer writes:

> These, then, are the apocalyptic texts that have comforted the faithful, intrigued the
> curious, and amused the skeptics for two thousand years. However one views their
> status as sacred texts, their imaginative power and poetic richness is undeniable, and it
> is hardly surprising that they became part of the living fabric of Western culture,
> influencing not only religious leader and biblical interpreters, but also artists,
> composers, sculptors and poets. The apocalyptic worldview, with its underlying
> assumption that human experience is moving toward a transcendent goal, profoundly
> shaped the Western view of history. Indeed, some have argued that Karl Marx's *Das
> Kapital*, with its vision of a classless utopia emerging from successive cycles of social
> upheaval and revolutionary violence, is the last great apocalypse of the Western
> intellectual tradition.[27]

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[26] For more on the Millerite controversy see Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, 81-85; Stephen O'Leary, Arguing the Apocalypse, 93-132.

[27] Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, 45.

Although there were varied ways of incorporating apocalyptic beliefs according to the specific historical context, one can see the common thread of an apocalyptic framework that wove the Western understanding of history and its goal. While the situation directly giving rise to the text no longer existed, the mythological language which it used to describe the crisis allowed biblical apocalyptic literature to be de-anchored from its original historical situation. The words and symbolisms became associated with situations far beyond the direct historical links of the text. This freedom gave life not only to the texts but to the communities that used them. Only with the rise of historical-critical studies in nineteenth century Germany was there a shift in the latitude with which these texts were used. Yet even with these changes in the reader's orientation to the Bible, pockets of apocalyptic spirituality endured.

This brief sketch of historical apocalyptic spirituality illustrates its existence in a continuous line from the early church onwards. Several enduring features are important to note: 1) The longevity of apocalyptic spirituality throughout history indicates that this framework has given meaning to experience. In fact, the use of these particular texts is curious since on the surface they appear as peripheral biblical writings. Yet apocalyptic literature, whether viewed literally or allegorically, has resonated in a powerful way for people's experience. 2) Apocalyptic spirituality provides a directional impulse. Even with Augustine's allegorical readings of prophetic and apocalyptic literature, there is a prescriptive element on the level of personal ethics and morality. Certainly with a literal and negative version of apocalypticism this is even more the case. Levelling the accusation of "antichrist" is more than just rhetoric as it provides a direction for thought and action. This is given example in the Crusades where during the Middle Ages Jews and Muslims alike, were labeled as allies

of Revelation's Beast, where slaughtered in great numbers. 3) Concomitant to its symbolic power and directional quality is its adaptability. It has acclimated to every historical period in the Common Era as well as with the many different kinds of communities. The status quo Roman Catholic Church used it at the same time that the radical fringe Anabaptist community in Munster created their community in the anticipation of the "last days."[28] Apocalyptic themes were applicable to many different situations and groups although the direction each group took varied based on its particular interpretations and concerns. 4) Despite its pessimism on the subject, apocalyptic spirituality engages history. Historical events are the concern where good and evil are projected outwards into actual events as opposed to spiritualizing these concepts. There were periods where this was not the case, the Augustinian allegorical emphasis being one example, however, groups as diverse as the early Church, medieval monks, and twentieth century fundamentalists read Scripture in light of their political and religious contexts. As a result of this external emphasis, apocalyptic spirituality not only interprets historical events using biblical literature, but it reads these events back into the biblical text. 5) Apocalyptic spirituality functions as a reform movement. Using the end of time as an ethical motivator, apocalyptic spirituality encourages a return to purity before Christ comes back to judge evil. Situating the present as the greatest time of evil and therefore the nearest to the end-time resolution, makes reform all the more imperative. The letters to the churches in Revelation make the reform emphasis clear: "I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown...Be earnest, therefore, and repent."[29]

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[28] Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More, 56-62.

[29] Revelation 3. 11, 19b (New Revised Standard Version).

Apocalyptic spirituality has this end in mind as basis for right action. For example, the

assumed proximity of the Judgement Day motivated the Reformers in their efforts to purify the

church.[30] 6) Although the apocalyptic genre is described as literature of crisis, one cannot

explain the communities that use it by that same measure. Its usage is more complex than the

mere connection of crisis literature used by a tyrannized community in crisis. Status quo

communities use it just as frequently as seen in the American example where former President

George Bush applied apocalyptic language to the Gulf War. The status quo usage points out

that apocalyptic spirituality is not about direct experiential correlation. but rather about a

symbiotic relationship with apocalyptic literature where the appeal is made to a crisis ethos.[31]

7) In tandem with apocalyptic spirituality's directional quality. the crisis ethos appropriated by

communities not only explains the meaning of events, but has the power to create and mold

events. This is illustrated in events as historically diverse as the Crusades to the Anabaptist

community at Munster to the contemporary situation at Waco where perceived crisis justified

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[30] Robin Bruce Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 110.

[31] Stephen O'Leary, in his rhetorical theory of apocalypse, recognizes the interplay between
text and audience in the apparent lack of crisis the modern community. O'Leary writes:
"The early Christians who responded favorably to the book of Revelation were. by most
historical accounts, subject to intense persecution that included execution and public torture. If
the largely middle-class group of fundamentalist Christians in the United States who today form
the core of Hal Lindsey's readership believes itself to be similarly persecuted. this is surely a
rhetorically induced perception; for there is an obvious difference between being torn apart by
lions in front of cheering crowds and being forced to endure media onslaughts of sex. violence.
and secular humanism. As one critic puts it "the crucial element is not so much whether one is
actually oppressed as whether one feels oppressed"; and this is always a subject for persuasion"
(Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric [New York: Oxford University Press.
1994], 11).

particular actions.

Contemporary apocalyptic spirituality may at first seem only as a caricature of its evangelical and dispensationalist parentage. For instance, the distillation of the evangelical biblical authority tenet into a map-like function for determining historical events makes apocalyptic spirituality seem not only simplistic but absurd as well. Linking it to a third tradition, however, provides basis for understanding this and other characteristics as more than just derivations and simplistic modifications of the evangelical and dispensationalist legacy. The seven characteristics above, condensed from an overview of history, are key points as they link historic apocalypticism to current apocalyptic spirituality. The sense of crisis that various American prophecy writers and televangelists communicate, the regular inclusion of contemporary events into the religious framework, the prescriptive nature of the message, the flexibility of the interpretive structure and its popularity are shared with a long history of apocalypticism. The departure from classic evangelicalism and dispensationalism in these distinctives, especially in the creation of an ethos of crisis, provides the missing dynamic that helps one avoid the pitfalls of oversimplification or parody.

C. Grant Jeffrey: Popular Apocalyptic Spirituality

Perusing an evangelical book catalogue, one gets a sense of how prevalent popular apocalyptic spirituality is. Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth has been joined by scores of other books on the topic. John Hagee, Grant Jeffrey, Peter Lalonde and Timothy Demy are among the more well-known authors writing books on the end-times. There are also works of fiction that share in the ethos of apocalyptic spirituality. Frank Peretti, Tim LaHaye

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and Pat Robertson all have written fictional accounts of a world increasingly plagued with the forces of evil. Television offers more of the same with shows like Jack van Impe Presents, where Jack and his wife Rexella provide weekly updates and interpretations of world events leading to the end. The Internet has even larger access offering links to Peter and Paul Lalonde, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Jack van Impe, Grant R. Jeffrey Ministries as well as to more odd and disturbing versions of apocalyptic spirituality. The popularity alone makes this recent phenomenon a legitimate subject to explore. That its existence corresponds to a similar phenomenon in secular culture only increases the demand for examination. Secular apocalyptic seen in the Mad Max and Terminator movies and in television series like Millennium and X-Files, point out a pervading American attitude of anxiety.

The previous section opened with a definition of apocalyptic and an introduction to the apocalyptic genre, which was necessary to point out the distinctions of the literature. Many communities throughout history appropriated apocalyptic, as was shown in the historical synopsis, and used it to interpret their experience. Hermeneutical theory anticipates this appropriation as it states that a text becomes community-specific as community context determines textual meaning. This occurs to an even greater extent when the community is unconscious of the role it plays in the interpretative process. Sociological analysis adds to the discussion of interplay between text and community in that it analyzes community context and offers explanation of the sociological factors that play a part in shaping the textual reading. One additional tool, however, is required to account for the meaningfulness of the ancient biblical genre for communities throughout history as well as linking it to secular themes. Rhetoric, more so than sociological analysis, can access apocalypticism's distinctive ethos of

crisis and its meaning for community experience. Grant Jeffrey, as a representative of a

popular contemporary trend, as well as one standing in a long tradition of apocalyptic

spirituality, must be examined at the level of discourse and rhetoric in terms of how his

message answers core human issues.

1. Introduction to Jeffrey

Grant Jeffrey is a self-described Bible historian and prophecy researcher writing out of

Canada. Before beginning his career as a prophecy specialist, he spent eighteen years as a

professional finance planner.[32] Although he was able to conduct a "ministry" by giving

financial planning seminars to both secular and Christian audiences, he left this in order to

enter full-time ministry in 1988. He is the founder of his own publishing company, Frontier

Research Publications, has hosted his own television show on prophecy, and sits on the board

of the Pre-Trib Research Center in Washington, D.C. He is also a prolific writer, having

written eight books all published between the years of 1988 and 1997, including titles such as

Final Warning, Prince of Darkness, Apocalypse: The Coming Judgement of the Nations, and

Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny.[33]

[32] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning: Economic Collapse and the Coming World Government (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 10.

[33] The entire list of his books in order of publication are Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1988); Messiah (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1991); Apocalypse: The Coming Judgement of the Nations (Toronto: Frontier Publications, 1992); Prince of Darkness: Antichrist and the New World Order (New York: Bantam Books, 1995); Final Warning: Economic Collapse and the Coming World Government (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1996); Heaven: The Mystery of the Angels (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1996); The Signature of God (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1996); The Handwriting of God (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1997).

There is a great amount of content overlap in Jeffrey's eight books. All contain similar bits of information, differing only in their various foci (heaven, antichrist, apocalypse, etc). The basic gist of his books is that contemporary world events indicate with certainty, interpreted through the lens of biblical literature, that we are nearing the end of the world.

Grant Jeffrey is a particularly interesting and instructive choice for this study as he stands out from the usual line-up of American prophecy writers. Not only is he one of the latest writers to make his contribution to the genre, but he exhibits two particular distinguishing points that make him unique. First, Jeffrey is a Canadian writing a genre dominated by Americans authors. Reflecting this "traditional" American monopoly, the crisis-minded message of his books is based on an American perspective of political, social and religious issues. Second, Jeffrey, makes a significant shift from previous writers in the tradition when he sets out a lengthy methodology and compiles evidence for his argument from outside sources. There is a move here toward a more high-minded, academic approach to the issues. Therefore, Jeffrey functions as a suitable representative for this study of apocalyptic spirituality not only because of his immense popularity, but also because the differences he exhibits might suggest something more about the genre he writes.

Jeffrey is a relatively solitary figure in the Canadian religious scene when it comes to publishing end-times material. Dispensational influence in Canada has been minimal over the years and this is even more the case with popular apocalyptic.[34] Not only that, but Canada as a

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He also has written forwards to Yakov Rambsel's two books His Name is Jesus: The Mysterious Yeshua Code and Yeshua, The Name of Jesus Revealed in the Old Testament (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications,).

[34] There have been pockets of dispensationalist belief especially in the west and among

nation does not figure largely in the kinds of political machinations that popular apocalyptic spirituality focuses on. Therefore it is a little surprising to find Jeffrey-the-Canadian as a successful end-times author.

What is even more interesting than Jeffrey's success, or perhaps is the reason for his success given his relative Canadian obscurity, is that he does not seem to be directing his material to a Canadian audience. He rarely mentions anything distinctively Canadian and rather is appealing to a context of American concerns understood best by an American audience. Specific examples from a Canadian context are given at certain points. but these ultimately appear to fit into the larger discussion of American political and economic events. For example, the Canadian Communication Security Establishment is mentioned as an instance for government surveillance capabilities and the Toronto Board of Education's ruling on the school system's position on homosexuality is offered as an illustration of the degenerating times we live in.[35] These two specifically Canadian representations plus NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). are the extent of noteworthy Canadian elements in his books, with NAFTA functioning more as evidence of the growing power of the United

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sectarian groups, but it has not defined Canadian evangelicalism like it has in America. For a concise comparison between the Canadian and American religious situation see William Westfall's essay. "Voices from the Attic: The Canadian Border and the Writing of American Religious History," in Retelling U.S. Religious History, edited by Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 181-199. For a detailed look at Canada's versions of evangelicalism see John G. Stackhouse, Jr., Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Stackhouse asserts that Canadian evangelicalism has been far less defined by "sectish" fundamentalism than previously thought and rather has been of a more mainstream type.

[35] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 274, 320.

States.[36]

Conspiracy has more to do with American concerns. In his listing of the members of

the Council on Foreign Relations, an organization Jeffrey believes is working towards crafting

the one world government, no Canadian prime minister appears: only American presidents

figure.[37] Alongside numerous mention of American presidents, American institutions are most

frequently cited as examples for his arguments. The government institutions he reports on

include: the CIA, FBI, US Joint Chief of Staff, Congress, the White House, US Department of

Health, the Justice Department, Federal Reserve, US Supreme Court, US Navy, American

State Department, US General Accounting Office, and the US Air Force Chief of Intelligence.

These American government institutions are all focal points appearing without a Canadian

counterpart.[38] Perhaps these figure largely because he leans so heavily on American sources

for his information. A perusing of his books finds mention of CNN, CBS, NBC, and ABC, all

American broadcasting stations.[39] American newspapers also figure largely as sources: U.S.

News and World Report, L.A. Times, The N.Y. Sun, The Washington Report, The N.Y.

Times, USA Today, and The Washington Times, whereas The Toronto Star is the lone

Canadian source.[40] Specifically American events like the Branch Davidian affair in Waco

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[36] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 72; Final Warning, 331ff.

[37] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 64.

[38] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 206; Final Warning, 116, 170-1, 260, 263, 267, 317, 336, 342, 356; Messiah, 46,57, 90, 94, 106; Prince of Darkness, 97, 103, 104, 132, 152, 155, 161.

[39] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 14, 281, 285; Messiah, 141; Prince of Darkness, 315; The Signature of God, 119, 196.

[40] Grant Jeffrey, Armageddon, 203; Final Warning, 136, 152, 159, 176, 274; Heaven, 214; Messiah, 46, 90, 95, 96, 105; The Prince of Darkness, 112-3; The Signature of God, 198, 238.

(Texas), the Savings and Loan crisis, and the Gulf War point to his America-focus as well.[41]

The issue he takes with gun control and the universal health care crisis do not even make sense

within a Canadian context.[42] At most one could understand that Jeffrey coalesces Canada

under the heading of the "America" that he addresses in his books, however, the fact that

distinct American institutions are mentioned without naming the Canadian counterpart seems to

signify that Canada is not much of an interest for Jeffrey, even though he himself writes as a

Canadian.[43] Although Jeffrey might be reflecting the americanization of Canada, it also

appears that this genre is so intrinsically American that it has trouble tailoring the content for

another national or cultural context.[44] One can perceive a minimal attempt to include Canada

and Canadians, but American events and institutions provide the basic content for Jeffrey's

books. American-orientation is the foundation of the popular apocalyptic strand of

dispensationalism and it takes an outsider like Jeffrey to point to this definitively. This has

significant implications for the purported universal relevancy of Jeffrey's message.

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[41] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 202; Messiah, 47; Prince of Darkness, 101, 155.

[42] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 298, 301.

[43] He makes it clear that he is writing from a Canadian perspective when he designates himself as a Canadian friend of America. (Messiah, 46).

[44] For more on the americanization of Canadian culture see David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning, The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). The lack of definition for "Canadian" or "unCanadian" among Canadians themselves might make translation of popular apocalyptic difficult as its subject deals with the disintegration of the national ideal and vision. In a Canadian setting where these emphases are lacking, apocalyptic spirituality would not resonate quite as clearly as it does in the United States where national vision is a primary focus. See William Westfall, "Voices from the Attic: The Canadian Border and the Writing of American Religious History," in Retelling U.S. Religious History, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 181-199.

The other anomaly in Jeffrey's work is his methodology. Traditionally, American apocalyptic spirituality has not relied on an extended prolegomena to justify the usage of and reason for the mixture of theological traditions and pre-occupation with contemporary world events. Rather, popular apocalyptic spirituality has had a simplified theological construct. In fact it has prided itself on its simplicity and lack of academic subterfuge, being almost anti-academic. For example, Hal Lindsey writes that his work is not a "complex theological treatise."[45] And regarding the Bible, John Walvoord echoes Lindsey in his statement that "the Bible *clearly* outlines exactly what will happen leading up to the second coming of Christ."[46] In fact Lindsey creates the entire foundation for his now famous book by establishing prophetic legitimacy of various Hebrew prophets in a section of no more than eight pages in length. He concludes that the accuracy of biblical prophecies already allegedly fulfilled provides the precedent for our expectations of the prophecies that have not yet been realized. This simple equation is the basis of his book. Jeffrey, although working in the same tradition, adds a dissonant element through his attempt to provide a more elaborate and detailed, almost quasi-academic, foundation for millennial expectations.

Jeffrey is aware of opposing viewpoints and, interestingly enough, confronts them in an almost critical manner. For example, he addresses George Ladd's conclusion that there is no evidence in the early church of pretribulational belief with quotes from early Church

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[45] Hal Lindsey, "Introduction," in The Late Great Planet Earth (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1970), vii.

[46] John F. Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974, 1990), 12.

documents that Jeffrey believes prove otherwise.[47] Formerly with popular apocalyptic writers

such as Lindsey, it was enough just to dismiss opposition with ridicule. Lindsey intimates his

feeling about the usefulness of critical academic study when he writes:

> Has the academic community found the answers? There are many students who are
> dissatisfied with being told that the sole purpose of education is to develop inquiring
> minds. They want to find some of the answers to their questions - solid answers, a
> certain direction."[48]

Although Jeffrey indulges in this as well, he also provides lengthy discussions of the prophetic

genre, the importance of prophecy for understanding the Bible as a whole, as well as

delineating his methodological approach to prophetic literature.[49] He is even willing to admit,

unlike other popular apocalyptic writers, that although prophecy is essential to understanding

the Bible as well as contemporary events, it is a difficult genre to interpret.[50] Jeffrey attempts

to bring clarity to the issues by setting out his methodology and providing adequate proof of

the legitimacy of his interpretations. He even ventures to provide evidence for his particular

interpretation (i.e. dispensational premillennialist and literal approach to the Bible) from early

Jewish, Christian and Greco-Roman written tradition.[51] This use of extrabiblical sources is

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[47] Grant Jeffrey, Heaven, 56ff.

[48] Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, vii. Accordingly, Lindsey's book is filled with
details meant to answer the question of the future and little space given to methodological
constructions or extra-biblical corroboration. Jeffrey appears to have taken on other concerns in
his attempt to provide a larger framework for the details that he provides.

[49] Grant Jeffrey, "Interpreting Revelation," in Apocalypse, 6-35.

[50] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 6.

[51] Hal Lindsey mentions Pliny and Josephus once and only then quoting another writer using
these early works (The Late Great Planet Earth, 53). Jeffrey, on the other hand, cites large
portions of early works using primary sources. He mentions early Christian works such as
Didache, Shepherd of Hermes, Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Epistle of Barnabas and First

innovative in a field in which the strict view of *sola scriptura* has resulted in the opposite

emphasis -- the discussion of meaning has been limited to the interpreter's reading of the Bible.

As well, he bolsters his viewpoint with references to modern academic biblical interpreters.

Moreover, Jeffrey adds to his discussion by showing an awareness, albeit limited, of certain

biblical issues. He mentions the documentary hypothesis and the historicity of the book of

Daniel as obstacles to his perspective and makes an attempt to deal with them.[52] Jeffrey is not

critical to the extent where he seriously weighs all viewpoints, but his books have a higher

level of critical reflection than previous books in this tradition. Although Jeffrey is not entirely

successful in setting out a methodology cognizant of its own biases and leaps in argument, his

attempt is certainly a departure from the apocalyptic writers that developed out of

dispensationalism.

Popular apocalyptic writers such as Lindsey, having inherited the fundamentalist

ambivalence towards academia, took pride in their populist writing. In what has generally

been a simplistic discussion of prophecy, Jeffrey has begun to carve out a niche for an

awareness of past religious traditions and present academic concerns. Not only does this

indicate a possible shift in the genre itself, but it also signifies a change in reader audience.

Jeffrey seems to be tackling a reader constituency more in need of a broader point of reference,

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Epistle of Clement. From the church fathers, Jeffrey quotes Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus,
Cyprian, Lactantius, Ignatius, Africanus, Tertullian, Herodatus, Jerome and Clement of
Alexandria. His early Jewish sources are taken from the Talmud and Mishnah, various writings
from Flavius Josephus', Ethiopic Book of Enoch, quotations from The Sibylline Oracles, and
The Dead Sea Scrolls. The quotations from Greek writings include Tacitus, Pliny, Library of
Didoratus Siculus. He even refers to a gnostic text: Apocalypse of Peter

[52] Jeffrey, Final Warning, The Signature of God, .

as opposed to a writer like Hal Lindsey whose appeal was in flashy chapter headings and catchphrase content. Perhaps this indicates a shift in the concerns of the audience to which Jeffrey is appealing due to the increasing level of education Americans have attained in the last twenty years. If this in fact is true, the perplexing mixture of quasi-academic and popular American content in Jeffrey's books can be seen as a gauge of the progress as well as the room left for improvement in American popular evangelicalism.

2. Overview of Content: Form. Content, and Function

a. Form: Methodological Assumptions

Jeffrey's books are given shape by a barrage of contemporary events mixed with dispensationalist views of history and an evangelical reverence for the Bible. Combined with his methodological concerns and biases, the resulting form of his books make for easy accessibility, surface level coherence but also problematic and inconsistent underlying logic.

i. Background

The content of Jeffrey's books are perceptibly shaped by evangelicalism and dispensationalism. Despite holding the same evangelical concerns for the centrality and authority of the biblical text, previous writers dealing with biblical prophecy from an apocalyptic ethos jumped directly into interpretation without setting forth a statement on biblical foundation. Hal Lindsey in the popular <u>Late Great Planet Earth</u> offers only the statement that the Bible has been believed by generations of readers to contain the "philosophy of truth,..[and]...the great themes of peace, love, and hope. which are the desires of this and

every other generation."[53] John Walvoord, in his <u>Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East</u> <u>Crisis</u>, offers a revised version of a Dallas Theological Seminary tract on salvation, but presents no organized statement on the Bible.[54] Jack van Impe, in his ministry's statement of faith, writes that "we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible...the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture to be Scripture itself..."[55] But these few words are part of a twelve line statement obscured by the real area of Impe's interest: prophecy and world events.

In contrast, evangelicalism's hallmark tenets of biblical centricity and the focus on evangelism and salvation are evident throughout Jeffrey's discourse. Jeffrey's main emphasis in all of his books is that the Bible is the inspired Word of God "beyond the shadow of a doubt."[56] He aligns himself with a strict evangelical view of *sola scriptura*. Jeffrey writes that the "Scriptures contain the infallible, inspired and authoritative words of God."[57] As a result, only the Bible is suitable for Christian instruction.[58] In fact, Jeffrey's apologetic concern is so great that he devotes an entire book to proving the Bible's authority and inspiration, which is yet another departure from Hal Lindsey and other popular apocalyptic writings.[59] The

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[53] Hal Lindsey, <u>The Late Great Planet Earth</u> (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1992, [1970]). 7.

[54] John Walvoord, <u>Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis</u> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990 [1974]), 229.

[55] Jack van Impe, "Our Statement of Faith." Jack van Impe Ministries Homepage (http:www.jvm.com), 21/12/97.

[56] Taken from the short blurb on the back of the book, <u>The Signature of God</u>, summarizing its contents.

[57] Grant Jeffrey, <u>Signature of God</u>, 12.

[58] Grant Jeffrey, <u>Final Warning</u>, 12.

[59] Grant Jeffrey, <u>The Signature of God</u>, 7, 267.

Signature of God is solely concerned with documenting "the incredible scientific insights and revelations found throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, [which] act as God's genuine signature on the pages of Scriptures authenticating the Word of God."[60] Although not a theological treatise like one might expect from his stated intent, his goal is to show that the Bible is the revealed word of God to humanity. Due, however, to Jeffrey's other concerns, The Signature of God ends up being a collection of proofs but oriented by the logic that these will "absolutely authenticate the Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative Word of God."[61] Stating his biblical proclivity in even more evangelical terms, he writes that "as a Protestant Christian [read "evangelical"], I recognize that the only authoritative source of divine knowledge about salvation, etc., is the inspired Word of God." [62] Although his method of proof differs from the classic defenders of evangelical faith, he shares the evangelical desire to maintain the Bible's authority, inspiration and infallibility.[63]

At the heart of evangelical action on earth stands the Great Commission - the command by Jesus in Matthew to evangelize the world.[64] In keeping with this part of his evangelical heritage, Jeffrey states that "the primary purpose of the Bible is to reveal God's plan of

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[60] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 138.

[61] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 9.

[62] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 226. Jeffrey's defines "Christian" as "evangelicals and pentecostals" (247).

[63] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 12. He uses the classic evangelical text, 2 Timothy 3.16, alongside his own proofs to support the concept of biblical inspiration.

[64] Matthew 28.19.

salvation..." and this is the fundamental reason for keeping the Bible free from attack.[65] He

recognizes that the "true priority of the church...is to evangelize the world and create churches

everywhere for teaching. fellowship. and the worship of Jesus Christ."[66] His efforts at

evangelism, for example. are evidenced in his book. Signature of God. which ends with a

salvation-call to the reader who has accepted Jeffrey's perspective of an inspired and errorless

Bible. In other words, one of the primary motivations of his work is apologetic: Jeffrey sets to

prove the claims of the Bible which in turn puts a "claim" on the searcher/reader. Throughout

his books, Jeffrey expresses his great concern for evangelism. In fact. one of his difficulties

with the current spirit of ecumenism between evangelicals. Catholics and mainline churches is

that he suspects the endeavor is merely a ploy to keep "Christians" (earlier defined as

evangelicals and Pentecostals) from their primary task of evangelizing.[67] This evangelical tenet

merges well with apocalyptic spirituality as the genre of apocalyptic itself is about "reform"

and "revival." Demonstrating this apocalyptically-minded motive for salvation. Jeffrey writes:

> Our belief in the imminent coming of Christ should motivate each of us to a renewed
> love of the Lord and a willingness to witness to our brothers about His salvation. The
> hope of Christ's return will purify our daily walk as John said. "And everyone who has
> this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3.3).[68]

This apocalyptic "spin" makes evangelism all the more imperative. Jeffrey's recitation of

illustrations of increasing immorality. in keeping with his apocalyptic spirituality. are intended

to propel the reader towards purity and reconciliation with God. This call to salvation is given

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[65] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 10.

[66] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 250.

[67] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 247.

[68] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 350.

extended meaning by Jeffrey's premillennial assumptions. Not only will turning to God avert

personal damnation, but immediate salvation allows the individual a place in the rapture

thereby avoiding the terrible events of the tribulation.[69]

In order to understand what Jeffrey is attempting in the presentation of his content, his

statements about the Bible and the goal of humanity have to be placed in the context of their

evangelical theological boundaries. Because Jeffrey modifies these interpretative concerns

considerably, one might not at first glance see reflected in his content the orthodox evangelical

presentation of biblical inspiration, infallibility and salvation. In comparison to the classic

formulations by the Princetonians, for example, one can see that the shape of Jeffrey's content

is expressed differently. Several direct connections to evangelicalism do exist. On the most

obvious level, Jeffrey quotes a lot of Scripture: the Bible is foundational for Jeffrey where

experience and Christian tradition are incidental and always subordinate to God's word in

Scripture. For example, Jeffrey recites the contents of two visions from within Catholic

tradition, but introduces each with the disclaimer that only Scripture is foundational.[70]

Consonant with the Princetonian formulation, Jeffrey has biblical inspiration extending to the

very words of Scripture and inerrancy being taught by the Bible itself. In fact, Jeffrey's view

has the words of the text being hyper-inspired in that they are able to accurately relate beyond

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[69] The film "A Thief in the Night" is the most obvious example of this eschatologically motivated evangelistic emphasis. The film's message - that one cannot afford to be a nominal Christian when the tribulation years are so near - has frightened many people into either becoming Christians or renewing their commitment to Christ. Randall Balmer discusses the evangelistic message of the film which includes an admonition against theological liberalism in "On Location," in Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 57ff.

[70] Final Warning. 230, 237).

their textual context to specific situations transpiring in the modern world. Here one sees the connection of his view of inspiration to inerrancy: because the Bible is the word of God the biblical words have the ability to speak exactly and with perspicuity. The influence of "common sense" interpretation of the Bible is everywhere evident: God would not have said it if it only had meaning for "biblical times." Rather, the texts have exact meanings that leap the gap of time directly relating to us in the present. This emphasis on the reliability of the Bible in turn confirms the need for the individual's salvation: the message which is so directly communicated to the believer, is that one must in turn, repent, purify self and await the coming of Jesus.

Yet Jeffrey's works appear quite distinct when compared to classic evangelical works. For instance, the direct connections Jeffrey makes between the biblical words and contemporary events stand in sharp contrast to Jeffrey's evangelical heritage. The Princetonians, being used here as representatives of classic evangelicalism, were opposed to viewing revelation in terms of experiential miraculous events.[71] And Benjamin Warfield warns against a narrow view of revelation based on immediate confirmation and communication with God. He differentiates between the two species of revelation, a separation that Jeffrey blurs. Warfield writes that revelation occurring in Nature or in history makes God accessible to all people, but does not address salvation and cannot therefore "rescue broken and deformed sinners from their sin and its consequences."[72] Jeffrey fits his discussion of contemporary

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[71] See Benjamin Warfield's book Counterfeit Miracles (New York: C. Scribner's, 1918) where he addresses the cessation of the charismata in the New Testament era. He addresses faith healing and medieval miracles and discounts them.

[72] B.B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (The Presbyterian and Reformed

events that transpire in the natural world into the framework of supernatural revelation and makes them one and the same.[73] For example, what happens in Russia is a motivational link for the acceptance of salvation. Jeffrey has taken his own context of American-angst and melded it with the supernatural revelation contained within the biblical text. The Princetonians, on the other hand, were able to distance themselves from this kind of experientially based literalism not only by differentiating revelations but by stating that only the original autographs harbored complete infallibility. Not only that, but the Princetonians were still historical critics and understanding the Bible entailed uncovering the message in its own context. And stemming from their Reformed tradition, the Bible was to be used for assembling doctrine and not for constructing a roadmap for discernment of future events. Their concern was in upholding foundational biblical doctrine, as it was these statements about God that were relevant for the believer. This is different from Jeffrey: he shapes his material with the premise that the existing biblical words answer directly to the events transpiring in the twentieth century.

Jeffrey's concern for the Bible is matched by the attitude he takes towards certain institutions. Here one can see the residues of fundamentalism in Jeffrey's approach. During their cultural and spiritual battle with liberalism and modernism. Fundamentalists developed

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Publishing Company, 1948), 74.

[73] Of course, experience and natural revelation are still distinct, as classically understood, from what Jeffrey sees in history. But methodologically the current events of history are a "natural revelation" of sorts which confirm the prophecies of the Bible. This is the apocalyptic trajectory's contribution to Jeffrey: the "crisis" emphasis raises current events as fulfillment of prophecy to the level of a call to salvation and therefore the events can be considered a functional equivalent to natural revelation.

certain stances which characterize them to this day. Marsden states that early fundamentalism

was a "loose, diverse, and changing federation of co-belligerants united by their fierce

opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought."[74]

Although he softens the statement by writing that this militancy was not the fundamentalist

primary concern, it was the militant tone they took in response to perceived threat that

characterized them as a movement apart from others.[75] This antagonism was not only

manifested in an aggressive stance against the academic institutions and liberal churches but

also against government and its policies. The fundamentalist paranoia is evident in popular

apocalyptic and is only fuelled by the crisis-orientation of apocalyptic spirituality. Jeffrey's

books are rife with the bashing of the academy, conspiracy theories and government-coverup

stories.

And despite his attempt to do a serious academic rendering of biblical prophecy. Jeffrey

slips into the "fundamentalist mode" when dealing with opposing viewpoints. For example. in

response to biblical scholars who suggest that the book of Daniel. instead of being written

during the Babylonian exile, was written at a much later date in Israel's history. Jeffrey merely

dismisses them with the accusation that they have not considered the evidence.[76] He addresses

the widely accepted practice of biblical source criticism as the "so-called" Documentary

Hypothesis and concludes that it is biased and "absurd" without considering the complexities of

[74] George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). 4.

[75] George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925, endnote 4, 231.

[76] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 22.

oral tradition, tradition history, or redaction additions.[77] Jeffrey argues for the impossibility of

later editorial work on the text since the Jewish communities were scattered: if editorial work

had taken place one would expect a lot more variance between the different manuscripts.

Moreover, he contends that no ancient Jew would have accepted new additions to a text or

practice. This is indicative of Jeffrey's ambivalent interaction with biblical scholarship.

Although he has done a significant amount of research into content and culled material from a

good many sources, his secondary supporting material is limited to scholarship from the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[78] His analysis of content, although more than what has

been referred to by previous writers in this tradition of interpretation, includes only a limited

input of current serious scholarship and is relegated to the sources with which he agrees.

Perhaps Jeffrey's statement in regards to prophecy - "prophecy was not intended to be so

difficult that only specialists could understand it" - relates to the entire conception of his

project.[79]

The other system shaping Jeffrey's work is his dispensationalist underpinnings.

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[77] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 34.

[78] A survey of Jeffrey's bibliographic material turns up a lot of older scholarship. Taking the bibliography from Apocalypse, one can see that half of his sources, 24 out of 47 sources used, were dated from before 1930. Over half, 15 out of the 24, of these were dated earlier than the turn of the century, the oldest being Dr. Samuel Hallifax's Twelve Sermons on the Prophecies Concerning the Christian Church (London: T. Cadell, 1776). Only a quarter of his sources were recent publications, none of which could classify as works of serious and legitimate biblical scholarship. The most recognizable names out of the list of 47 include E.W. Bullinger (ultra-dispensationalist), R.H. Charles (classic scholar), W.A. Criswell (fundamentalist), A.C. Gaebelein (classic fundamentalist and dispensationalist), I.M. Haldemann (classic fundamentalist and dispensationalist), H.A. Ironside (fundamentalist), Tim LaHaye (popular apocalyptic author), Clarence Larkin (classic dispensationalist), Dwight J. Pentecost (dispensationalist) and J.A. Seiss (classic evangelical).

Evangelical connections provide the theological boundaries, fundamentalist attitudes dictate the

tone and approach of his work, and dispensationalism provides the basis for Jeffrey's

methodology. The dispensationalist ideals of biblical perspicuity and literal interpretation.

combined with the dispensational premillennial interpretive structure, are essential to figuring

out the form of Jeffrey's work. In defense of his literalism, Jeffrey writes:

> When the plain sense of prophecy makes common sense, we should take their words at
> face value in their ordinary and literal meaning. We should remember that the Bible
> was written and intended to be read by ordinary men and women - not just scholars.[80]

Like dispensationalism which was shaped by its appropriation of Enlightenment ideas of truth

clearly understood by the common sense, Jeffrey's entire set of ideas is connected to verifiable

certainties and facts based on a very literal, proof-oriented quality. For instance, Jeffrey

accentuates the factual proof of the Bible's inspiration. He writes in this regard:

> Is the Bible true? Is the Bible truly the Word of God? Does it contain the authentic
> revelation of God about our spiritual destiny and the future of man? In the course of
> this study we will explore many of the Bible's prophecies that have already been
> fulfilled with absolute precision. These perfectly fulfilled prophecies are the strongest
> credentials that the Bible is precisely what it claims to be - the inspired Word of God.[81]

Indeed, inspiration is condensed to the point of taking on the appearance of biblical

mathematics. Jeffrey's view of biblical inspiration models his fixed and scientifically-minded

approach to theology and biblical literature. This is evident not only in his view of prophecy

as a simple equation of biblical statement and contemporary fulfillment, but also in actual

mathematical formulations. Jeffrey brings the statistical laws of probability to bear on

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[79] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 11.

[80] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 10.

[81] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 7.

prophecy fulfillment.[82] As well, he imports mathematics, conveying a numerical understanding

of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks.[83] He makes his mathematical predisposition clear

when he states: "a detailed examination of the Bible reveals a profound and complicated

structure of mathematical features throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation."[84]

With Jeffrey's literalism there are no unknown quantities, and everything can be proved from

the summation of facts. Similar to Jeffrey's evangelical connection, Jeffrey has modified

dispensationalist beliefs by heightening certain qualities. Literalism and perspicuity take on

scientific characteristics extending beyond their dispensationalist literary and theological

intentions.

Although he does not plainly refer to himself as a dispensationalist. Jeffrey states these

conditions as his strict guides to correct interpretation.[85] One can hear dispensationalism

clearly in statements like:

> Another tragic sign of the last days is the revival of a replacement theology that refuses
> to grant Israel its rightful place in the Bible and in God's prophetic plan for the future.
> Some Christians still reject the clear teaching of the Old and New Testaments about the
> role of Israel in God's plan for the redemption of the planet. The Bible, declares that
> Israel's covenant with God is unbroken. Israel is still the key to the unfolding
> prophetic events leading to the second coming of Christ. Since these prophetic words
> are unshakable, the only way to escape their clear message is to arbitrarily change the
> meaning of the Bible's words.[86]

One can perceive echoes of the dispensationalist concern about Covenant Theology where

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[82] Grant Jeffrey, Armageddon, 16.

[83] Grant Jeffrey, Armageddon, 28ff.

[84] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 55.

[85] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 10, 17.

[86] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 131.

dispensationalists want to ensure that Israel in the Bible is not read allegorically as referring to the Church. Jeffrey's statement corresponds to one made by Charles C. Ryrie, a classic dispensationalist: "a dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct...This distinction between Israel and the Church is born out of a system of hermeneutics which is usually called literal interpretation."[87] Jeffrey makes his dispensationalist predisposition even clearer when he writes:

> God deals quite differently with the Jews and the Gentiles during the last seven years of Tribulation leading up to Armageddon. It is obvious that God always dealt differently with the Jews and Gentiles throughout the Old Testament until Christ created the Church...During the Church, the Age of Grace, the Bible declares that there is no difference in how God deals with the Jews and Gentiles...However, when the book of Revelation describes the tribulation period. God again clearly deals separately and differently with the Jews and Gentiles.[88]

This Israel focus brings to light the dispensationalist concern for biblical prophetic literature still in need of fulfillment. Jeffrey echoes the century old statement by Clarence Larkin that prophetic literature is important to the Bible as it not only affirms the Bible's truth status. but it orients the reader towards the spiritual direction of history.[89] Jeffrey addresses his understanding of the vital nature of prophecy in four points:

> 1) Prophecy authenticates the Bible as the inspired Word of God to an unbelieving generation; 2) the message of the prophet calls the church to live in purity and holiness in these latter days in light of Christ's imminent return: 3) the prophetic message of the soon coming of Jesus motivates us to witness to those who have never accepted Christ as their personal Savior; 4) the message of prophecy is the best single evangelism tool we have to reach the lost with the claims of Christ.[90]

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[87] Charles A. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 44-5.

[88] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 217.

[89] Clarence Larkin, Dispensational Truth (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1920), 6.

[90] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 11-2.

In Apocalypse, another of his books, Jeffrey writes that "the Bible declares that prophecy is the absolute proof that God inspired the Word of God and distinguishes it from any other religious writing."[91] Having set prophecy up as the core of biblical literature. Jeffrey follows with a clear dispensationally oriented interpretative methodology: history is the unfolding of God's past promises in prophecy and narrative. so that not only the Bible - but all of history - is witness to this unfolding.

Jeffrey's prediction of a horrible cataclysmic event ending life on earth seems to fit the dispensationalist timeline where each dispensation ends with God's judgement on the world. However, whereas dispensationalism is concerned with not reading over essential elements in the biblical story, Jeffrey's interest deviates. His concern is refocussed on the end of this dispensation and making the Bible speak almost solely to this. Certainly, with the focus on the importance of prophetic literature that contains biblical promises and injunctions, dispensationalists have an explicit eschatology. However, theirs is not the historically-oriented system that Jeffrey's is. Ryrie warns that although fulfillment of the prophecies is expected, this does not mean one can establish a precise timeline.[92] Strict dispensationalism was accepted in the late nineteenth century exactly because it sidestepped the historicism of the Millerite controversy. There were expectations that biblical prophecy would be fulfilled. but as Christians were to be raptured before this began, the expectations were of a futurist, non-historically grounded kind. Progressive dispensationalist, Craig Blaising, is even more clear

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[91] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 9.

[92] Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 156.

on this:

> ...progressive dispensationalists reject historicism as a hermeneutical error which presumes prophetic authority for the Bible interpreter and also misconstrues the visionary genre of biblical apocalyptic.[93]

Dispensationalism despite its heavy emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy. turns towards past history as emphasis, maintaining the structure of a future fulfillment without reading too much into the specifics. Apocalyptic spirituality mutates dispensationalism: instead of looking to the past as a record of fulfillment, Jeffrey and others look to the present for the realization of God's promises. Instead of only a general pattern for the future. Jeffrey believes that biblical prophecy provides an exact pattern where the future can be known.[94] There is a collapse of the dispensationalist division between past and future and present history correlates exactly with biblical prophecy. Thus, Jeffrey's system radically departs from the classic dispensationalist

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[93] Craig A. Blaising. "Contemporary Dispensationalism." Southwestern Journal of Theology 36 no.2 (Spring 1994), 11. Much of progressive dispensationalism is in fact a reversal of the sorts of things writers such as Walvoord and Jeffrey have done with dispensationalism.

[94] Jeffrey does not make the mistake of setting exact dates for the ending of time. as per the Millerite fiasco. He warns against date setting using Scripture. but states that despite not knowing the exact dates that "the Church will have a sense of the 'times and seasons' of the coming Battle of Armageddon [but] the unbelievers will remain in darkness concerning the times" (Armageddon, 104). Having no biblical basis for exact date setting. Jeffrey can. however. calculate on the basis of world events and his scriptural paradigm that the end is near. This works as a functional date-setting as it calculates by current events, instead of exact dates, to demonstrate that we are not far from the End. For example he writes: "The combination of these factors [having provided a check list of European shared structures] has produced the world's first truly integrated confederation of nations. Just as the Bible prophesied thousands of years ago, during the generation that the nation of Israel is reborn. the Empire will rise again in the form of a ten-nation confederacy. This confederated super state is destined to rule the world under the dictatorial control of the coming Prince of Darkness, the Antichrist" (Prince of Darkness, 123). The nearness of the expected rapture of the saints is evident throughout his books. Jeffrey at one point writes: "I believe the generation that witnessed the rebirth of Israel in 1948 will not die as a group until the coming of the Messiah" (Apocalypse. 106).

system - it is not about God's unfolding plan in the entire history of the world, but God's unfolding plan in the here and now.

The presuppositions that guide Jeffrey's approach both tie Jeffrey in and at the same time set him apart from his classic Christian heritage. Evangelicalism ties Jeffrey to the biblical text. The democratic urge within evangelicalism to have this text in the hands of as many readers as possible, is also evident as Jeffrey provides a simple formula for easy biblical access. Moreover, his style is specifically dictated by fundamentalism and dispensational premillennialist concerns. Dispensationalism provides the prophecy-oriented compartmentalized biblical interpretive structure and fundamentalism the negative social stance and the high emphasis on popularism. The fundamentalist departure from academics reverberates throughout Jeffrey's books. He presents his work as simple and for the common person without clouding essential issues such as salvation and prophecy fulfillment with the distortions and baggage of scholarship: the resulting form is easily accessible, very contemporary and highly populist.

ii. Formal Narrative Elements: Tragedy

Jeffrey's books take on the form of tragedy.[95] His argument, made through what are at

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[95] The form and content of Jeffrey's books are dictated by his theological methodology. But there are several aspects besides his theology which give Jeffrey's work its particular shape. Through his particular theological tradition Jeffrey is communicating certain fundamental ideas to his readers. Instead of an approach based on theological background, this overarching meaning can best be accessed through the narrative concept of tragedy. In proposing a narrative or rhetorical explanation for Jeffrey's work, the intent is to highlight the persuasive discourse which weaves "style, form, content and context...at the intersection of aesthetics, politics and ethics" (Stephen O'Leary, Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994], 4). But this use of the term also keeps in mind that there are

times illogical connections, is solely directed towards communicating the imminent end of history. Although focussed towards this communicated end, the plot is highly convoluted with frequent repetition. Robert Wuthnow, quoting S.R. Suleiman states that "one of the ways in which certain kinds of texts or discourse close down the array of possible meanings...is through sheer repetition. By saying things over and over, texts reveal the way in which we should interpret them."[96] Jeffrey's repetition points out a particular negative plot line with distinct antagonists and protagonists. The recurring details not only convey a plot, but secure his role as a reliable and informed narrator. The lack of trust that the reader might be tempted to have in Jeffrey is countered by an amazing amount of detail that Jeffrey culls from a wide array of sources. Fortifying his trustworthiness as a narrator even further, are the short personal testimonials interspersed throughout the material. Thus, Jeffrey's work is both a work of tragedy, and at the same time. a means to persuade the reader of the correctness of this view of history.

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various other approaches to tragedy. In theology, as defined by Reinhold Niebuhr among others. tragedy deals with profound ambiguity and the mixture of good and evil (For a clearer view on a theological definition of tragedy see Niebuhr's book Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1937]). As some have noted. fundamentalist versions do not seem to fit this definition because there is no ambiguity as the boundaries between good and evil are clear. However, even theologically it could be argued that Jeffrey is dictated by a tragic form. His sense of ambiguity permeates the entire discourse in the theme of "things are never what they seem." And the naming of evil, which is the most overt characteristic in the popular apocalyptic genre, is never as important as the interpretive structure constructed around this theme. So, therefore, the boundaries between good and evil are not clear as they appear. This is corroborated in the change or shift in exact details regarding evil over time even in the works of one writer. Certainly this is a more literal interpretation of ambiguity and therefore not what Niebuhr had in mind, but it must be said that ambiguity exists within this system even though dealt with in a different manner than the classical formulation.

[96] Robert Wuthnow, Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 70.

Northrop Frye differentiating between the two organizing patterns in literature writes

that:

> One is the natural cycle itself; the other, a final separation between an idealized and
> happy world and a horrifying or miserable one. Comedy moves in the general direction
> of the former, and traditionally closes in some such formula as "They lived happily
> ever after." Tragedy moves in the opposite direction, and towards the complementary
> formula "Count no man happy until he is dead."[97]

Jeffrey's works fit well into a tragic organizational pattern, which dictates both his reading of

the Bible and his interpretation of world history. Placing prophetic and apocalyptic literature

in the forefront, and stipulating that these are waiting to be fulfilled in the contemporary

world, Jeffrey sets up a paradigm of anticipation. These expectations are negative:

government conspiracies, wars, threats to Christianity, economic collapse, and the rise of

absolute evil in the figures of the Beast and the Antichrist. His pessimistic viewpoint is

reflected in statements such as the one found in Final Warning:

> The ancient prophets warned that the generation preceding the coming of the Messiah
> would witness the complete moral breakdown of society. We may well be witnessing
> that breakdown today. For the last two millennia, western culture has reflected an
> almost universal acceptance of the fundamental values revealed in God's written
> revelation to mankind, the Bible. Even those who have rejected a personal faith in
> Jesus Christ still generally accepted the moral foundations based on the Ten
> Commandments and the teachings of Christ. However, all around us are signs that we
> live in a generation that has lost its moral anchor and spiritual compass, rejecting both
> Christian values and the guiding authority of the Word of God. In our present era
> alone, over 100 million people have died through devastating famine, plague,
> concentration camps, and world wars due to the evil actions of wicked leaders.[98]

Moral and ethical aberrations among other things are proof that history is coming to a terrible

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[97] Northrop Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace
Jovanovich, Publishers, 1982), 73.

[98] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 257-8.

close. Although the antagonists - the Beast, the Antichrist, and their minions - are vanquished

at the plot's end, Jeffrey's rendition of the story remains tragic in character. Victory appears

anticlimactic in Jeffrey's books because the bulk of the material is directed towards the

catastrophic end of history. Jeffrey is unable to view history and human behavior as natural or

unchanged, and so every resource, including the biblical words, is aimed at proving the

devolution of the world.

Jeffrey's marshalling of facts to fill out his plot line is astounding. Alongside news

stories from most of the major American newspapers and from television, his sources also

include a vast number of sources that are either unnamed or not documented fully.[99] His lack

of proper reference citation lends itself to the mystery already present in the subject matter.

There is also a dearth of actual linking facts to support Jeffrey's argument. Jeffrey constructs

his entire argument regarding Russian deception and the increase in military weaponry, which

is central to the plot, on the basis of several statements which are either sixty years out of date

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[99] The number of notes for his books are telling. One might expect the amount of information Jeffrey deals with would add up to an equally large number of notes in which sources would be documented. But the opposite is true. His book, Final Warning. for example, has almost five hundred pages but only 105 notes for the entire book. Prince of Darkness. another one of Jeffrey's books, has 353 pages and no notes at all. Frequently he makes references that are undocumented. One of many examples, found in Final Warning, quotes the Archbishop of Canterbury as allegedly being against evangelizing (247). These undocumented statements, not allowing the reader to find out the context for Dr. Carey's words, work towards Jeffrey's argument that the Church of England and the Roman Catholic church are spiritually bankrupt (248). In another example from the same book Jeffrey contends that government is attacking the private property of innocent Americans. Not only are there several government agencies that can confiscate property, but he maintains that they impound people's property for personal gain even if they know the property belongs to a person guilty of no crime (314). He does not document a source for this material, although he provides other supporting material from an end-times newsletter, the McAlvany Intelligence Advisor.

or are taken out of context.[100] Few of these statements address directly the information that

Jeffrey is purporting to be true. Yet the holes in source material and actual documentation are

not as detrimental to Jeffrey's story as it might seem. The quantity of research in collected

incidents and events happening all over the world overshadow the quality of Jeffrey's research.

Jeffrey's research points to his underlying belief in the unity of history. His argument may

seem disconnected to the reader who does not share Jeffrey's view of history. However those

who share his view would understand the spiritual connectedness behind all of the events

Jeffrey's lists which ultimately point to the tragic character of history and of human existence.

The responsibility for all of this information is weighty and one can see that Jeffrey

takes on a defensive tone. All the books read with this guardedness in the background: Jeffrey

is having to prove something in the face of disbelief. In regards to the military strength of

Russia, Jeffrey writes:

> at this point you may be shaking your head and wondering: if all that I have written is
> true, why in the world are America and other western governments disarming? The
> evidence provided in this chapter is true and verifiable.[101]

There is legitimacy in his posture as the narrative he presents is packed with evil figures

attempting world domination, world-wide conspiracies, mythical beings intent on destroying

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[100] Grant Jeffrey's view that history is one continual meaningful movement towards the end, allows him to connect Dimitri Manuilski's statement of Russian intent made in 1930 (Final Warning, 166) with Mikail Gorbachev's comments made about necessary changes in his 1987 book Perestroika (Prince of Darkness, 174). One can see the same regard for history in Clarence Larkin's charts, where the entirety of the world and its events, from beginning to end, are encapsulated into one unified chart. Having spiritualized the movement of history, the differentiating details set in various times and places do not really matter. These only serve to prove that history is moving towards one consolidated goal, and thus can be used together towards that argument.

[101] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 185.

humanity and divine figures unleashing judgment in response; Jeffrey appears to be aware of

its tenuous credibility. But Jeffrey's expectation of disbelief also stems from the literary

pattern of tragedy. In keeping with his pessimism regarding humanity and the present, he

expects rejection of his message.

This rhetorical feature of Jeffrey's work cannot be overlooked or under-emphasized.

Although Jeffrey himself finds it sufficient to rely on the central authority of the Bible, his

defensive posture compels him to brace the authority of his narrative with other means. Here

we see how his tragic view is also used to interpret the past. Jeffrey links his view of the Bible

and prophecy with the early church's, in order to authenticate his own position. He argues that

they believed as he does; their form of literalism and premillennialism were no different from

the forms that mandate his interpretation. Jeffrey writes about the literal method of

interpretation:

> The first method is the literal or common-sense method. This approach takes the verses
> in their normal, common-sense meaning and assumes that the writer wrote his prophecy
> to be understood as any other portion of writing. While the literal method
> acknowledges that prophecy contains figures of speech and symbols, these symbols will
> point to a literal reality. This method looks to the Bible to interpret its own symbols
> and avoids speculation. The New Testament interprets the Old Testament prophecies in
> the same normal, common-sense manner. Jesus Christ and the Apostles who wrote the
> New Testament interpret the Old Testament prophecies in a literal and common-sense
> manner.[102]

This attempt at fortification leads Jeffrey to difficulty in that he is obligated to explain why a

good portion of the history of Christian belief does not register his particular views. He, like

other dispensationalists, is aware that explanation for the gap between the early church and

now can at best be seen as a break in tradition and at worst the signal pointing to a creation of

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[102] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 9.

a new interpretational structure by dispensationalists.[103] Jeffrey, having made the link between

his method and that of the apostolic church, is obligated to go with the former explanation.

unlike contemporary dispensationalist academics who admit their relatively recent inception

without fear of appearing illegitimate.[104] Jeffrey, unable to critically examine this fear of

recency, has to strengthen his links to the early church and explain the gap between then and

now. Jeffrey, exercising a new twist on an old bias, states that Catholicism is to blame for the

lapse. He writes:

> It may seem incredible to you that it took so long for the legitimate teachings of the end
> times to take hold in the hearts of God's people. However, remember that throughout
> the history of the Middle Ages most Christians did not even have the Bible in their own
> hands or in their own language to read what God had revealed in the Scriptures. For
> almost eight hundred years, only the priests were allowed legal access to the Bible and
> many of them could not read. For instance, until 1870, it was illegal for a Catholic in
> Italy to have his own Bible. In light of these factors, it is understandable why there
> was little detailed teaching about the Rapture until 1825.[105]

Using this familiar Protestant rhetoric wherein the Roman Catholic Church is the designated

malefactor, Jeffrey is free to make the link between himself and the apostolic church as well as

account for the gap. Thus the tragic source of the fallenness of the church extends into the

past.

One immediately notices, however, a counterpart to this tragic narration. It comes in

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[103] Charles Ryrie responds to this criticism in Dispensationalism Today. 65ff. He attempts to find precedent in early Christian written tradition, but admits that the Church Fathers were not. nor was anyone else in the first 1600 years of Church history. dispensationalists in the modern sense of the word.

[104] Craig A. Blaising, for example, has no difficulty recounting dispensationalist history and defending it on the basis of ever better methods of understanding the Bible. See his article "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition," in Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 13-36.

the form of the optimism within which Jeffrey portrays himself as a narrator, counterbalancing

the negative effects of the tragedy of history. To convince the reader of his credentials Jeffrey

writes of his lineage:

> The study of Bible prophecy has been my passion for many years. When I was
> fourteen my father took me to a prophecy conference in Ottawa, Canada. My parents
> love the Lord and the Word of God. My mother and father gave me a precious
> spiritual legacy, their love of prophecy. I began to purchase specialized commentaries
> and old books on prophecy, history and archeology. After almost thirty years of study
> and the accumulation of some five thousand volumes from around the world I still have
> the same passion for prophecy imparted to me so long ago. Several years ago I was
> given the opportunity to share my love of prophecy with a group of Bible college
> students. I fell in love with teaching.[106]

Jeffrey here assures the reader that not only did he absorb his parent's pursuit, but prophecy

has been his own lifelong study. Not only has he collected a large library on the topic, but he

has taught on the subject (at an unnamed school) bolstering his references further. His position

as a scholar of the Bible is addressed further:

> I have spent tens of thousands of hours over the last thirty years in a detailed study of
> the prophecies of the Bible and their precise fulfillment as proved by ancient historical
> records and archeology. My conclusion, which is shared by thousands of respected
> Bible scholars over the centuries, is that the Bible's prophecies are to be interpreted in a
> literal sense.[107]

Not only has he logged a good number of hours of biblical study, but he aligns himself with

other academicians (unnamed). His credentials also include specialized knowledge attained

during one of his Israel trips:

> I was finally privileged to examine in detail these remarkable tablets. My friend had
> worked daily with these scholars for a year on another project, but they had never

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[105] Grant Jeffrey, Heaven, 50-1.

[106] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 9.

[107] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 10.

shown him their incredible, archeological discovery which they had been secretly studying for years.[108]

These statements might appear to the reader as boasting, but in fact they tie into the defensive posture that Jeffrey has taken. He establishes himself in comments scattered throughout his works as a legitimate narrator who will not only pacify the doubts, but, who, in the end, will bring a small ray of hope to the tragic narration he has to tell.

To conclude this section on form, Jeffrey's books at first glance can be described in terms of the density of facts. On the surface they can only be described as a collection of facts gathered in their perceived relation to a vast number of quoted biblical passages. Yet at closer inspection one can see that these facts are rigidly organized around a theological structure and the narrative pattern of tragedy. Evangelicalism and Dispensationalism give Jeffrey's works their Bible focus and concern as well as the literal way by which he reads the texts and the world around him. All of this works within the pessimistic story line, inherited from the crisis mindset of apocalypticism, that dictates the direction of the theology and the collection of facts. Yet despite having a methodological groundwork to provide basis for his plot, one can see that Jeffrey is self conscious and the books are peppered with his attempts to establish authority with the reader for himself as narrator and for the story he has to tell. The incredible nature of his unfolding plot makes it necessary for Jeffrey to reconnect himself with that part of Christianity free from tragedy - the early church. He reinforces his role as the "trustworthy" narrator in the midst of chaos offering, through his interpretation of the Scripture and correlation with current events, the one glimmer of hope in the midst of his tragic narrative -

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[108] Grant Jeffrey, Heaven, 143.

the conviction of his words. There is an almost gnostic framework to Jeffrey's approach. His words bring light to revelation. These words, unaccepted by "liberals" and "academics" and disbelieved because of their implausible nature, disclose the true meaning of the Bible and the events transpiring in the present world.

b. Content: Unfolding Drama

i. Basic Plotline

Armed with his literal common-sense methodology Jeffrey fills out a schema for the years leading up to the end of the world, focussing on the Bible's prophetic literature, particularly that found in Revelation, Daniel and Ezekiel. Like other apocalyptic writers, Jeffrey fleshes out his dispensationalist understanding of the Bible with a myriad of details culled from current events. Although the apocalyptic structure is based on the ancient biblical text, the basic apocalyptic message is contemporary with its blend of revised Cold War beliefs, anxiety over the rise of Islamic militancy, conspiracy theories and a fear of technology and innovation. Warnings against non-political issues such as the New Age, environmentalism issues, ecumenism, and secular humanism also figure in. These are fairly standard topics among American apocalyptic writers, who have inherited fundamentalism's conservative social and political impulses.

Jeffrey's main argument can be organized under four distinct sections or steps. Although they do not occur in this order in his books, this organization is introduced on the basis of the function of Jeffrey's material. The first two are foundational: the apocalyptic biblical paradigm and the evidence from contemporary experience that the world is slowly

moving towards this disaster. Jeffrey collects all the transpired events pointing to infringement on the lives of Christians in America, the reorganization of political entities, and the rebuilding of the nation of Israel. Although many of these facts appear unrelated to the outside reader, Jeffrey views them as a significant aggregated entity. Interpreting the Bible as well as contemporary society in the framework of altered dispensational premillennialism, Jeffrey is convinced that present events confirm that the Bible's apocalyptic message is slowly coming to fruition. The presentation of this mixture of biblical quotations and current events for Jeffrey exists not only to communicate the coming end of the world, but to present a case for the next part of his argument. Based on the foundational facts, Jeffrey sketches out the third stage of the coming end times. The events, none of which have occurred, lead up to the impending apocalypse and are the culmination of the contemporary political, social, and economic situation. The fourth and final stage is the cosmic conclusion to the very earthly events of the previous stage. This last section, a series of divine events no longer based on human machinations, forms the conclusion to Jeffrey's message.

The entire structure rests upon this first foundational section - the biblical apocalyptic paradigm. In what ends up being a circular argument, the interpretation of the biblical literature provides meaning to Jeffrey's collection of facts and these events, in turn, verify the interpretative structure. Thus this two part foundation holds a great deal of weight for Jeffrey's argument.

The overarching story, for Jeffrey, is gleaned from only a few biblical sources: Daniel 2.38-44 (Nebuchadnezzar's Dream), 7-8 (Four Kingdoms), 9.24-27 (Seventy Weeks), 1 Thess 4. 15-17 (The Rapture), and Revelation 6-19 (The Tribulation: Beast/Antichrist,

Dragon/Satan. Armageddon and Judgement). Daniel 9 provides the timeline, Daniel 2 and Revelation provide the characters, I Thess (in addition to a few other supporting verses) supplies what will happen to believing Christians, and Revelation fills in the details of what will happen as earth draws to a close.[109] The rest of the biblical text is used to fill in the schema derived from these passages. These few passages dictate how the rest of the Bible is read and used. The Hebrew Bible prophetic literature. for instance. is plugged into the topic of the future of Israel. Thus. once the pattern is in place. the entire Bible feeds into the structure. Here the apocalyptic paradigm has replaced the more nuanced dispensationalist framework.

Once the biblical apocalyptic paradigm is in place. the second stage of corresponding current events is organized. These collected facts fall into three categories: changes in politics. social sphere. and in the Jewish nation of Israel. In regards to politics. Jeffrey has collected all the data on political events having to do with reorganizing national limitations or boundaries or allegiances in the anticipation of the one world government he anticipates.[110] His interest lies in political organizational unity. whether based on trade like GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariff). NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). WTO (World Trade

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[109] Jeffrey spends a portion in each of his books reviewing these biblical passages to provide the interpretation for the contemporary events section. See Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse. 20-35. Final Warning. 42-105, Prince of Darkness. 13-39.

[110] The idea of the one world government is taken from Revelation 13.7-8: "Also it [the beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it. everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered." The rest of the chapter is also important for popular apocalypticists as it speaks of the beast and the dragon who enslave the population of the world by marking them with the number 666.

Organization) and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Community). or whether based on national

cooperation efforts like the United Nations.[111] He finds the European Union (EU) especially

worth watching because everything from the number of countries involved to the attempt at

creating a unified currency seem to fit his biblical model of where and how the one world

government will take shape.[112] He lists not only trade and political agencies attempting union.

but "think-tank" groups such as the Trilateral Commission. the Bilderburg Group and the Club

of Rome which promote a world government solution for certain world political. military. and

economic problems.[113] As proof that a large scale conspiracy is taking place. Jeffrey also

includes information on political and economic inconsistencies as these. in his opinion. show

that things appear not as they really are. For example. the lack of UN intervention in the

Somalian, Rwandan, and Haitian crises suggests to Jeffrey that the UN is masquerading as an

organization promoting international stability (i.e. the UN is really interested in instability).[114]

Besides the UN. Russia is a prime focus for Jeffrey. Largely as a residue of Cold War

sentiment, Russia is viewed as the age-old oppressor. Even the current rapprochement

between Russia and the West is viewed with suspicion. For instance. Jeffrey suggests that the

coup in Russia against former President Gorbachev was really phony. intimating that this

indicates Russia is not to be trusted.[115] Here the biblical pattern of "deception" functions as the

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[111] Grant Jeffrey. Final Warning. 116. 120-3. 133; Prince of Darkness. 63. 67-9. 71-4.

[112] Grant Jeffrey, Messiah. 40ff. 71-81..

[113] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 67. 69. 80.

[114] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 148.

[115] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 176 ff.

modus operandi - the Antichrist figure is raised to a hermeneutical level - and all events surrounding the end-time are perceived as deceptive in nature. No positive elements can be trusted: nothing can undercut the tragedy unfolding.

Consolidating all of these facts and more, without any context other than the religious spin he provides. Jeffrey creates a picture wherein a calculated effort by certain elite groups is establishing a governing body capable of ruling the entire world. The biblical pattern of apocalyptic can be used only incidentally and with a degree of manipulation to support this position. But it is powerful rhetoric regardless, particularly considering the creation and maintenance of a crisis mentality. Jeffrey highlights the crisis in order to show people what is **really** going on. The point of his message is that ignoring the concealed but nonetheless imminent crisis puts one in peril, and therefore one needs to be vigilant and skeptical as events in the present are not as they seem. Popular apocalyptic spirituality establishes perceptual patterns wherein events are viewed as deceptive and alarming.

Jeffrey continues his bleak forecast by listing all the ills that plague contemporary society. Interestingly enough, unlike his listing of political plots, the societal ills seem limited to an American context. And yet their mention, despite their limited nature, also serves to confirm Jeffrey's established framework. He provides statistics about the alarming murder rate, AIDS, homosexuality, government meddling in child raising methods (discipline), media misrepresentation of Christian influence, media corrupting morals and an increase in litigiousness against Christian organizations.[116] This, combined with signs that personal freedoms are being curtailed, signals to Jeffrey that something is afoot. The Clinton

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[116] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 258-280.

suggestion of universal health care and the resulting tracking system of its users. gun control.

roadside sobriety tests, surveillance technology. police confiscation of property, attempts to

keep records on the identity of all American citizens, electric patient-identification devices and

bank cards are, in Jeffrey's opinion, slow restrictions of personal freedom leading up to the

anti-christ's reign of terror and complete subjugation of the people.[117] It is important to note the

theme of "deception." Everything in our experience seems to disconfirm the biblical

apocalyptic pattern. But reality belies appearance in the crisis mentality. therefore Jeffrey

needs to re-create and re-generate the pattern by showing us the crisis we are blind to. This is

where the Christian popular apocalypticists have commonality with the militia groups and

secular apocalyptic writers.[118]

Giving all of these facts meaning is his underlying assumption that the world is a worse

place to live in now than it ever has been in the past. This is a repetition of the fundamentalist

lament: "we used to live in a Christian golden age and now look what has happened." In this

vein, Jeffrey writes:

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[117] Grant Jeffrey. The Final Warning. 298-327.

[118] This suspicious mindset appears similar to that found in American religious militia groups where government is viewed as the enemy of the people and conspiracy theories abound. The governmental blunders at Ruby Ridge and Waco are recounted by members of these groups as justification for their crisis mentality. Philip Lamy in his article "Secularizing the Millennium: Survivalists, Militias and the New World Order," (Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer. [New York: Routledge, 1997], 93-117) highlights the apocalyptic ethos of the militia groups. See Michael Barkun's article which deals with the religious "Aryan" ideology sometimes seen in the militia groups as well as other organizations: "Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement," in Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements, 247-260. There seems to be an undercurrent of paranoia in American culture generating these groups that share similar apocalyptic rhetoric. symbols and paradigms each for their own purposes.

The ancient prophets warned that the generation preceding the coming of the Messiah would witness the complete moral breakdown of society. We may very well be witnessing that breakdown today. For the last two millennia, western culture has reflected an almost universal acceptance of the fundamental values revealed in God's written revelation to mankind, the Bible. Even those who have rejected a personal faith in Jesus Christ still generally accepted the moral foundations based on the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Christ. However, all around us are signs that we live in a generation that has lost its moral anchor and spiritual compass, rejecting both Christian values and the guiding authority of the Word of God. In our present era alone, over 100 million people have died through devastating famine, plague, concentration camps, and world wars due to the evil acts of wicked leaders.[119]

His argument that society is degenerating is convincing on the surface especially set in the context of his larger framework of interpretation. He connects these national manifestations of societal deterioration with end-times clues surfacing on the international level.

The greatest proof that Jeffrey offers for his scenario outshines his inventory of political machinations and societal ills: Israel and its acquisition of the ancient land of Palestine. This is really the cornerstone in the establishment of a foundation for the rest of his argument. The 1948 creation of the nation of Israel is his direct link back to the biblical text and therefore is his strongest feature in demonstrating the end-times scenario. Jeffrey makes this connection between these contemporary events involving Israel and what is written in the biblical text:

Israel's history can be roughly divided into four sections: 1) God promised Abraham that he would become a "great nation" in a promised land; 2) Solomon finally ruled over all the land God promised; the Jews lost the land; 3) Exiled Jews returned to rebuild their nation, only to lose it again; 4) The rebirth of Israel in the twentieth century.[120]

Jeffrey, with an adaptation of the dispensationalist concern for the fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible promises to Israel, holds that the divine assurances to Israel for land and nation still

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[119] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 257-8.

[120] Grant Jeffrey, Messiah, 113.

remain and are waiting to be fulfilled:

> The Bible declares that Israel's covenant with God is unbroken. Israel is still the key to
> the unfolding prophetic events leading to the second coming of Christ.[121]

In another of his books, Jeffrey makes the connection not only to the biblical promise, but also

to the calculations based on his own interpretation of prophecy:

> On May 14th, 1948, an event transpired which shocked foreign governments around the
> world. The Jews proclaimed the Independence of the reborn state of Israel and the next
> day six Arab armies simultaneously invaded the tiny country to try and destroy it at its
> birth. As an old Jewish Rabbi blew on the traditional "shofar," or ram's horn. the
> Jewish nation celebrated the end of their tragic worldwide dispersion and captivity at
> the exact time prophesied thousands of years earlier by the prophet Ezekiel.[122]

Not only is the return miraculous to Jeffrey in that it fulfills one more biblical end-time

condition, but it is made all the more miraculous in that the return, in Jeffrey's opinion, is

fulfilled to the exact year and day prophesied by Ezekiel.[123] For Jeffrey, therefore, the creation

of a nation for Israel functions not only as the most prominent sign that the Bible is correct, but

it affirms his mathematically literal interpretation of the biblical text as well. The formation of

Israel thus provides the ultimate proof that the promises are being fulfilled in our time. And if

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[121] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 131.

[122] Grant Jeffrey, Armageddon, 41.

[123] Jeffrey calculates, on the basis of the Ezekiel passage. that 390 days is the figure attributed
to the ending of Israel's captivity. He converts these days into biblical years based on the
formula that a divine day is a human year. To this figure of 390 years he adds 40 more years.
He subtracts 70 years, which is the number of years of the Babylonian captivity, from the
resulting sum of 430 years. He multiplies the remaining 360 years by a figure of 7, as a biblical
passage in Leviticus 26.18 states that if Israel was not repentant its punishment would be
multiplied times 7. Jeffrey's calculations lead him to the sum of 2,520 biblical years (2,483.8
calendar years) which he believes is the exact amount of elapsed time from the prophecy to when
Israel again became a nation in 1948. Whereas the European Union and AIDS are not directly
mentioned in the text, the promise to Israel of land is explicit and in Jeffrey's opinion it has been
fulfilled exactly.

this promise is so clearly fulfilled, then the rest of the biblical apocalyptic pattern must not be far behind. Although less an issue of crisis for the Western reader, Jeffrey's sole point is to reinforce that we are in the time of crisis.

Jeffrey's treatment of the Arab peoples is informative here for how he generally uses his material. Jeffrey dismisses claims that Arabs and Palestinians were driven out, mistreated, or in any way had prior claim to the land.[124] His opinion is that the number of actual Palestinian refugees displaced by the event was inflated by the Palestinians working for the UN, that Arabs are nomads and therefore have no historical connection to the land, that Jews were always in the majority in the land of Palestine even before 1948, and that the PLO are the aggressors and therefore deserve some of the harsh treatment meted out to them by the Israeli government.[125] He goes as far as to suggest making Jordan or other Arab-held territories the designated Palestinian state.[126] Jeffrey is obligated to ignore the Palestinian difficulties because the Israeli possession of the biblically promised land overshadows the Palestinians predicament and nullifies the validity of their claims. Thus, on the one hand, Jeffrey feels inclined to combat the view that Israel somehow unjustly holds her land (an issue earlier writers like Lindsey could avoid). He is concerned that there not be any moral objection to his description of the unfolding drama. At the same time, what really matters for Jeffrey, is a certain end-

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[124] Grant Jeffrey, Messiah, 123ff.

[125] Grant Jeffrey, Messiah, 125-6, 128, 130. The presentation of the Israeli-Arab material fits into the good-evil paradigm whereby Israel is the protagonist and the Palestinians are the antagonists in the plot. Jeffrey not only dismisses the Palestinian claim to the land because of the good-evil pattern, but because the information regarding their plight is tainted. Again the crisis mentality where things are not as they seem crops up: UN involvement in the tabulation of statistics discredits the information.

time apocalyptic typology - good vs. evil. Israel is God's chosen nation and therefore

represents the perdurance of his goodness in the world. The Arabs, on the other hand, in their

objection to Israel's occupation are viewed in terms of the part they play in his end-times

schema: Palestinians and the rest of the Middle East are the appointed contenders who will vie

for the land in the last battle. Their resistance to Israel in the present is only seen as an

indication of the things to come. Jeffrey depicts the "good" characters and the "bad"

characters of his drama in terms of the roles they play in biblical apocalyptic spirituality.

Jeffrey's content has numerous other antagonists besides the Palestinians. Another

example, functioning not out of questions raised out by dispensationalism but rather out of the

historic tension between Protestantantism and Roman Catholicism, is the antagonism towards

Catholics. Although not going as far as to designate the pope as Antichrist as did Luther,

Roman Catholicism is still cast in a negative light in terms of the part it will play in the end-

time drama.[127] The extremist understanding of their placement is reflected in numerous

statements found throughout Jeffrey's books. For example, Jeffrey writes:

> ...incidents of satanic ceremonies and pagan initiation in the Vatican - rituals that
> defiled the holy name of Jesus Christ. European newspapers have reported numerous
> cases of satanic pedophilia involving priests, nuns, and bishops in Turin. Italy and
> various cities in America. These evil rituals involve the sexual defilement of innocent
> children by satanic priests who openly worship Satan[128]

Jeffrey links the Roman Catholic antagonist with another stock motif, the New World Order

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[126] Grant Jeffrey, Messiah, 132; Prince of Darkness, 143.

[127] The late Medieval era gave rise to the use of apocalyptic language to describe political dissension. The religious battle of the Reformation only saw in increase in this usage. For more see Bernard McGinn, "Counterfeit Holiness: The Papal Antichrist," in Antichrist (Harper SanFrancisco, 1994), 143-172; Robert Fuller, Naming the Antichrist, 36-39.

[128] Grant Jeffrey, Final Warning, 242.

tradition. He writes:

> Their goal is to obtain the spiritual leadership of the New World Order. John Paul
> actively rejects Marxism and Capitalism as models for the New World Order. His goal
> is to create a new spiritual-political model for Europe and Russia based on a Catholic-
> socialism...the Bible declares Rome and the Roman Catholic Church will be taken over
> by Satan during the last days leading up to the return of Christ."[129]

While apocalypticists like Lindsey do not mention Roman Catholicism at all. and Jack van

Impe has shifted radically to a pro-Catholic position, others still retain a rabidly anti-Catholic

sentiment.[130] Jeffrey mediates the various attitudes; although ultimately he has the Pope

aligning himself with the Antichrist. But Jeffrey is not even always consistent. which perhaps

reflects the contemporary rapprochement between evangelicals and Catholics. He wavers in

his position as he refers to visions and cites Catholic sources. but ultimately damns them by

placing them in a negative role.[131] Russia. China. the EU. the World Council of Churches and

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[129] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse. 172. 175.

[130] The website (www.balaams-ass.com) of one popular apocalypticist. vehemently anti-
Catholic, maligns Van Impe for his shift in perspective. The writer states that "Pope John Paul
II, or his strategists, read the book They Call Him the Walking Bible. and they figured how to
get to Van Impe. First, Promise him money. Second. Exalt him and feed him security. The Old
Mother Whore has been very good at this for 1500 years. To achieve this. the following strategy
was followed. First, Paul Appalling Crouch [reference to Paul Crouch founder of Trinity
Broadcasting Network] wooed Van Impe to TBN, where there is a standing rule that NOTHING
negative can be said against the Roman Catholic Whore. Second, somehow, the Pope then
wooed Van Impe into the fold as a good and faithful servant of His Hellishness. The result --
Van Impe has become the most effective embassador of the Pope to the Evangelical and
Fundamental community."

[131] Jeffrey quotes Malachi Martin frequently as an authority (Apocalypse. 172; Final
Warning, 229ff,; Prince of Darkness, 184). Malachi Martin, a former Jesuit. writes books
containing conspiracy theories regarding the Vatican. Although Martin himself is not against the
papacy, Jeffrey uses Martin's material as if it discredits the Pope. Jeffrey also refers to the
Fatima visions and St. Malachi predictions in order to further discount Roman Catholicism.
Although stating that he does not believe that these visions are from God (Final Warning. 230.
232), Jeffrey continues on to quote from them as if they were reliable sources.

several other organizations are placed in the similar roles. As with the moral type-casting of Roman Catholicism, traditional political or religious foes are translated into a negative role placement in the end-time drama.

The foundation of Jeffrey's argument, set on a compilation of political and social events that have transpired over the last century are the basis for his third stage where he details the direction these events are about to take. He believes that all of the above is moving towards the impending catastrophic climax of history, which, according to Jeffrey, is written about in biblical literature. The bulk of the upcoming events are hinted at and revealed *in nuce* in the events of the present: governments and agencies are conspiring together for a one world government, technology is being built with the intent to subjugate the world's population, moral degeneration signals a level of chaos that only the divine hand can set right, and the persecution of Israel as a nation by Arab-neighbors is a portent of a greater battle to come. Following the biblical apocalyptic pattern, and using his analysis of the contemporary events as a guide, Jeffrey constructs a picture where a one world government is forged from the efforts of all the agencies now working towards political or economic unity. This future government is the revival of the Roman Empire, which, in Jeffrey's opinion, is a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.[132] And although not all the agencies Jeffrey mentions were directly connected with the EU, it is the EU which Jeffrey asserts will be the source of most of the coming struggles. According to the sketch that Jeffrey lays out, the economic, political and military power that the group of European nations will wield after their union will make it an unchallengeable

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[132] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 113.

force.[133] This will be true especially after the collapse of the United States as a political power, something that Jeffrey anticipates especially with leaders like Clinton who, in his view, are leading the country to economic and military weakness, forcing a worldwide restructuring of various political and economic systems. This void will not only create an environment where the Antichrist, the ultimate figure of evil, will be able to gain power over the EU, but it will allow Russia to resume its role as a military force. Jeffrey contends that while the United States has naively, in his opinion, reduced its military machinery, Russia has only continued or increased its production of military weapons.[134] According to Jeffrey's timeline, when the United States declines in power due to the kind of leadership such as is in power at the moment. Russia will be able to rise up and align itself with the Arabs, attacking Israel. Jeffrey identifies Russia as a participant in this battle based on the passages found in Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20.8 which mention the nations of "Gog and Magog."[135] It is after this battle, at

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[133] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 122. Jeffrey coalesces the visions found in Daniel 2 and 7, where the fourth beast with ten horns in chapter seven is seen as the clay portion of the image in chapter two made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay (Final Warning, 74). Jeffrey believes that Daniel 2 and 7 predict the revival of the Roman Empire understood by Jeffrey to be the European Union. Jeffrey connects the ten horns on the fourth beast to the ten nations he believes will make up the European Union, which in turn, obligates him to explain how the 15 nations which now make up the union can be understood in light of the biblical figure (Final Warning, 85). Jeffrey is forced to artificially make interpretations fit by juggling numbers and combining various biblical passages in order to maintain the biblical connection for his tragic plot-line.

[134] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 168ff.

[135] Jeffrey connects "Gog and Magog" with Russia using outdated material and it is in instances like this where his choice of source material is crucial to the outcome of his argument. Although acquainted with modern scholarship on the matter, he dismisses it in favor of the older sources (supporting his position) by claiming that contemporary scholarship interprets the passages allegorically (Final Warning, 185). The inability of his apocalyptic framework to understand the biblical literature in its context forces him to stretch connections between the bible and the contemporary events. Whereas modern biblical scholarship contends that "Gog and

some point, where the Antichrist arises and makes a peace treaty with Israel. Israel, a nation

so beleaguered by attack, agrees without hesitation to join ranks with the Antichrist. The

morally questionable characters of the second stage now take on their full diabolical roles.

This third stage is a difficult and complicated section to fully understand, as unlike the

foundational part of his argument, this section is an abstract extrapolation from the

contemporary events and interpretation of prophecy. It is in this section where many of the

details change from book to book. Jeffrey himself is evidently uncertain on the order of the

details or how to correlate them exactly with the biblical apocalyptic pattern. Even the minor

characters in the drama have uncertain roles in this third stage. Roman Catholicism, for

instance, although characterized as an antagonist, is not clearly defined as to what exact part it

will play in the end-time conclusion. Despite its changing nature, this third section functions

as a guide to the reader pointing out where the drama of current events is heading.

The fourth section, on the other hand, does not shift. The conclusion to Jeffrey's end-

times outline remains the same regardless of the third section's changes in details: rapture,

tribulation, armageddon/apocalypse and Christ's second coming. After the saints are raptured

to take their place in heaven, seven years of unspeakable difficulties commence with the

appearance of fantastic beings that loose various plagues on humanity.[136] The first three and a

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Magog" are symbolic names referring to all of Israel's enemies, Jeffrey is obligated by his view
of the direct connection between biblical prophecy and contemporary events to "place a face to
the name." "Gog" is linked to another passage in Dan 11.40 referring to the "king of the north."
The antagonist in the drama which fits a nation north of Israel is Russia.

[136] Jeffrey interprets the cryptic narration in Revelation as referring to literal events and
beings. This leads to difficulty as the bizarre symbols in the book clash when read literally. So,
for example, Jeffrey's vision of the end of time has both the darkening of the sun (Rev. 6.12-13,
8.12) as well as it burning so brightly that it scorches all of humanity (Rev. 16.8).

half years of the tribulation, in Jeffrey's scenario, are marked not only by the false peace

offered by the Antichrist to the world, but by war, famine and plague all brought in by the four

horsemen of the apocalypse. To this terrifying scenario Jeffrey adds a seven angel assembly

which unleashes hail, fire, poisoning of water sources, darkening of natural light from the sun,

moon and stars, and a 200 million man army from China coming to Israel as a killing force.

The cosmic move towards the end also includes another seven angels pouring out from heaven

judgements of sores, transformations of natural water sources to blood, the increase of the

sun's heat (ostensibly from the decreasing of the ozone layer), and the complete evaporation of

the river Euphrates.[137] This first three and a half year segment of the tribulation ends with

Satan being expelled from heaven. He then proceeds to possess the body of the Antichrist and

for the next three and a half years wreaks havoc on the earth, defiling the temple, directing the

demonic Babylonian religious system, and persecuting the earth's inhabitants. And all who do

not take his number 666 will be beheaded by the Antichrist's one world government police

force.[138] The horror on earth will be brought to an end at the great battle of Armageddon when

Christ returns to throw Satan and his minions into the pit of hell as well as to judge the

nations. The drama ends with the earth, decimated by the chemical, biological and nuclear

weapons used during the last great war, being created anew for the faithful to live on for

eternity.

This final segment of the drama, although not a focal point in terms of space dedicated

to its discussion, is the culmination to Jeffrey's narrative. It provides closure for all the

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[137] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 188.

[138] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 123.

various characters and their respective plot-lines: the conclusion for Christians, Jews.

unbelievers and ultimate evil are presented. Christians get "the best deal" as they are raptured

before the tribulation to take their place in heaven beside Christ. The significance of the

rapture for Christians is not lost on Jeffrey as he states that "the Rapture is one of the most

important doctrines in the Bible."[139] Although he does not want to connect this to the doctrine

of salvation or label the rapture as a reward. the promise of the rapture is the motivation for

people to remain faithful and evangelize others. Jeffrey writes: "We must live and witness as

though Jesus could return at any moment."[140] The Jews. on the other hand. are destined to live

through the terrible events of the tribulation in order to be purified and thereby brought back to

God.[141] This second plot-line. not as pleasant as the one offered to the faithful Christians.

suggests a faint anti-Jewish sentiment presented in the guise of divine promise and

fulfillment.[142] The worst fate, however. is suffered by unbelievers: Jeffrey writes that "the

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[139] Grant Jeffrey. Apocalypse. 80.

[140] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse. 107.

[141] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 146.

[142] The Jews seem to suffer and fail more than anyone else in Jeffrey's material. The role Jews play is difficult to reconcile with their placement as the special people of God. Jews lost their divine focus when they rejected Christ at his first coming. Although their status as an alienated people ends when the land is given back to them in 1948. they are still destined for more punishment. Their acceptance of the Antichrist when he offers his false peace is only confirmation that purification is necessary. They suffer through the tribulation and then become the focal point as the nations converge in Israel to annihilate the Jews. It is difficult not to read an anti-Jewish sentiment at this point. Although the gentiles are held responsible for their individual actions, the Jews are singled out as people having to suffer for their status as God's chosen. The Jewish people are being used, their return to Israel is really only the beginning of the end of Judaism. Jeffrey's one-dimensional view of Jews is augmented with popular stereotypes like the one found in Signature of God where Jeffrey asserts: "the Jewish people are known for their brilliance." Yaakov Ariel (On Behalf of Israel [Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991]) expresses a similar view when he writes about an incident with Jimmy Swaggert who

wrath of God will be poured out on the unrepentant sinners during the Tribulation period."[143]

Not only do they suffer punishment in the tribulation, but will be cast into hellfire together with the Antichrist and his false prophet if they neglected to accept Christ during the seven years of cosmic brutality. This fourth stage is entirely spiritual in its cosmic conclusion to the preceding world events detailed in the third segment. God punishes not only humanity but the earth itself in order to renew history and establish his millennial kingdom.

The biblical apocalyptic pattern, in detailing a context for understanding current events, is foundational because it both verifies the unfolding plan of God and creates the crisis needed to convince the reader. The repetitive nature of the facts only further corroborate Jeffrey's apocalyptic message that humanity is in trouble where only obedience and salvation can alter the consequences for the individual. Jeffrey, having set up biblical inspiration as a provable entity in his methodology, sets out a paradigm where contemporary events certify the Bible's veracity, inspiration and revelatory status. The four segments to his argument all work towards proving biblical interpretation as well as establishing the accuracy of Jeffrey's apocalyptic paradigm. And Jeffrey is forced, because of the link he has made between biblical status and contemporary events, to portray contemporary events as biblically meaningful.

American political, economic and social concerns become connected to not only the

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is also a premillennialist like Jeffrey. He writes "In one of his TV broadcast sermons in October 1984 he showed pictures from Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps in order to illustrate the awful fate that awaits those who do not accept Jesus as their Savior. In doing so he demonstrated a premillennialist outlook that asserts that although the Jews are God's chosen nation, they would not be saved physically and spiritually until they accept the messiahship of Jesus. See also Timothy P. Weber, "Finding Someone to Blame: Fundamentalism and Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theories in the 1930's," Fides et Historia 24.2 (Summer 1992), 40-55 and

[143] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 107.

Bible's inspired status, but to an apocalyptic understanding which in turn provides the events with a deeper meaning. The tragic narrative framework which Jeffrey provides for the detailed events answers the audience's questions of what time and history means: Jeffrey asserts that everything can be understood as God's divine hand bringing evil to a close. In this respect, he offers comfort in corralling all of the horrors about to transpire as under the control of God.

ii. Stabilization of the Genre

The contemporary character of his narrative resonates with the reader thereby stabilizing Jeffrey's popular apocalyptic argument. As well, and mentioned earlier. Jeffrey concerns himself with his own authority to strengthen the power of the narrative. As though suspecting that the reader may have doubts. Jeffrey makes much of his own abilities as well as the links between his beliefs and traditional Christian sources.[144] Jeffrey reinforces the authenticity of his tragic portrayal of history by bolstering his status as narrator. Most importantly, though. Jeffrey relies on what appears to be stock content that fortifies the impact his content has with the reader.

One notices recurring constants in Jeffrey's works. These repetitious details also appear in other works of apocalyptic spirituality both in the recent past and in historic apocalypticism and therefore can be understood as either stock content or symbols. This stock content seems to function like oral tradition or urban folklore, where not only is there

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[144] Despite the awareness Jeffrey exhibits towards certain weaknesses of his narration and the necessity to bolster it with rhetoric regarding his own authority, he remains quite naive about his own competence. Jeffrey avoids critical examination of his own Enlightenment intellectual heritage and the oft-stated methodological position based on "common sense" is never delved into as something which might differ from an early church perspective.

repetition and transference of certain pieces of information through time, but these collected

motifs, although remaining intact, shift presentation in the transference as dictated by the

writer's/reader's context. Jan Harold Brunvand, in his study of urban legends, writes that:

> all true folklore ultimately depends upon the continued oral dissemination, usually
> within fairly homogenous "folk groups," and upon the retention through time of
> internal patterns and motifs that become traditional in the oral exchanges. The
> corollary of this rule of stability in oral tradition is that all items of folklore, while
> retaining a fixed central core, are constantly changing as they are transmitted, so as to
> create countless "variants" differing in length, detail, style and performance
> technique.[145]

Although Brunvand concerns himself with information that is transmitted orally, the stock

content in popular apocalyptic spirituality functions similarly as it remains fixed even when

used by authors writing centuries apart from each other. The connection between Catholicism

and the Antichrist agenda referred to in Jeffrey's works also appears in references as far back

as the Reformation. A Protestant concern with the explanation of Catholicism is evident in this

continuing theme in apocalyptic spirituality. Another motif in Jeffrey's works which has

endured a long historical transmission is the concept of the Illuminati. First referred to in

Catholic literature in the fifteenth century, it has appeared many times since in Protestant

literature. Although the referent shifted over time, the motif of a dangerous mystical society

remained constant appearing in Jeffrey's narrative as an occult group participating in one world

government initiatives.[146] The shifting nature of stock content is evidenced even more clearly in

the last one hundred years of popular apocalyptic spirituality. Here we see social, cultural and

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[145] Jan Harold Brunvand, The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 3.

[146] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 86.

political information gathered from particular events but transmitted via this collection of stock

motifs. These cultural and societal ideas being expressed by a particular motif remain in the

narrative even when the situation being referred to has disappeared. Russia. for instance. has

been identified as an antagonist in the apocalyptic scheme since the Bolshevik Revolution. Hal

Lindsey continued using the motif from a Cold War perspective.[147] And Jeffrey continues to

employ the concept of a threatening Russia well after the Cold War's end indicating that Russia

remains unchanged as a negative motif in popular apocalyptic. The enduring motifs in popular

apocalyptic may shift in presentation or context. but they continue to manifest themselves in

the various narrative settings.

Their longevity testifies to their truth telling for the reader. Stock content resonates

with the reader by referring to the underlying concerns about cultural. societal. political and

historical situations. Contemporary apocalyptic spirituality has an entire set of stock motifs

which can be understood through the lens of American concerns. The continued mention of

Russia indicates that despite the Cold War having ended. certain American tensions over the

situation obviously have not dissipated. For instance. the accompanying disarmament treaties

threatens to weaken American military strength. One can see similar concerns regarding the

weakening of America as a singular world power in the presentation of organizations

encouraging unity in trade, political goals. etc. Most interesting is the negative

characterization of other nationalities. Jeffrey shares this with Hal Lindsey for instance.

Russians, Chinese, Europeans and Arabs are all portrayed as antagonists. Perhaps this

portrayal resonates with an underlying xenophobia present in American society. American

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[147] Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, 55.

religious concerns regarding church orthodoxy growing out of the fundamentalist modernist crisis can be seen in the recurring invectives against the ecumenical movement. In a contemporary age where oral culture has basically disappeared. popular apocalyptic comprises a narrative version of this form. Popular apocalyptic interprets concerns by encapsulating them in an apocalyptic pattern which is transmitted down through the years. The genre is stabilized through this use of stock content not only because it forms a tradition on which to rely. but the content's flexibility along with its constancy is able to maintain a relevancy to reader concerns.

c. Function: How the Narration Works

One might think that a tragedy such as the one spun by Jeffrey might not be well accepted considering some of its unusual content matter. Apocalyptic spirituality held by Jeffrey and others is certainly dismissed as ludicrous by some. Judging by the number of people who read and accept the message of apocalyptic spirituality. however. one is required to take this phenomenon seriously. Not only does the apocalyptic framework provide meaning in a North American context. but the existence of apocalyptic spirituality throughout the centuries suggests that it provides meaning on a very human level.

Evangelicalism's history in North America provides a welcome context for the integration of popular apocalyptic spirituality. Jeffrey makes the most of the American democratic environment where religious expression is divorced from hierarchical and traditional sources. Jeffrey merely has to establish himself as a qualified spokesperson in

order to present his view of Christianity's importance.[148] And thus, gaining the reader's regard is a large part of Jeffrey's rhetorical aim. Integrated into his argument is the establishment of his own authority not only as a reader of the age old texts and of modern events, but as a teacher. Jeffrey validates his theological connections by affirming the evangelical emphasis on the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as well as connecting himself to ancient Christian tradition. These connections are made on a surface level as opposed to engaging these sources on a deeper theological level; yet, this is sufficient as Jeffrey needs only to gain a modicum of the reader's trust in order to provide an effective argument. Once his qualifications are in place, he then makes his appeal to the reader. Instead of a complicated theological treatise, Jeffrey offers the reader a Bible that can be read easily and correlated directly to the reader's experience. Jeffrey proceeds to bring the Bible back to life as a contemporary and easily followed "road map."

The personal style of Jeffrey's discourse creates an inviting communicative act. He writes simply, using inclusive plural pronouns to involve the reader directly in his concerns. Jeffrey also has a particular audience in mind when he offers this simple and reliable method. His appeal targets a searching individual and not academics or liberals, who are comfortable with relativity and unanswerable questions. Jeffrey offers solutions to the person who needs problems solved; his rhetoric focusses on facts, answers, and knowable quantities. And Jeffrey addresses this reader often throughout his narrative, confronting the reality of their doubts. This functions as a form of "inoculation" wherein skepticism is recognized, thereby

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[148] See Richard Quebedeaux's By What Authority: The Rise of Personality Cults in American Christianity (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982).

strengthening his own opposite position. Jeffrey's narrative reassures the reader in the

acknowledgment of doubt and in the quelling of it.

Jeffrey's narrative is highly effective in a society that denigrates elitism, impracticality,

and impersonalism: his argument is simple, plain, relevant and personal. Jeffrey's

hermeneutical methodology centers around populist concerns where each individual is

encouraged "to determine for [themselves] whether the Bible is truly the Word of God or

not."[149] Jeffrey does not concern himself or the reader with discussions of hermeneutical

"horizons" or reader-response theories. Rather, the heart of Jeffrey's apocalyptic methodology

revolves around simplicity, security and reliability: the Bible can be understood by anyone who

studies it; it provides all the answers to questions about contemporary life - and it is never

wrong. Although constructing what is at times a complicated and convoluted explanation of

how and why events are about to occur, there is an expectation that every reader can discern

scriptural content and its inspired status. In regards to prophetic literature, for instance,

Jeffrey is willing to admit that it might be difficult to interpret, but hastens to add that any

dedicated student of the Bible is capable of understanding. He writes:

> Prophecy was not intended to be so difficult to interpret that only specialists could
> understand it. The prophecies authenticate the truthfulness and inspiration of the Word
> of God.[150]

He sets forth a method that can be used by any dedicated individual. Anyone who studies the

Bible, according to Jeffrey, can understand its essence. He models this essential aspect of

commitment in his statement that he has "spent tens of thousands of hours over the last thirty

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[149] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 7.

[150] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 11.

years in a detailed study of the prophecies of the Bible and their precise fulfillment as proved by ancient historical records and archeology."[151] The results of this detailed study, according to Jeffrey, will provide insight into the present world. Jeffrey writes: "as we approach the final crisis of this age, it is vital that we study this portion of God's 'love letter' to His beloved Church to understand the times we live in and His instructions to us in light of His Second Coming."[152] The hermeneutical method of biblical perspicuity and relevancy is completed with Jeffrey's assertion that the reader is guaranteed an inerrant response:

> God did not give opinions to the biblical writers. He gave them inspired 'revelations' concerning His truth. Christianity is not based on opinions or philosophy. Our faith and spiritual life are founded on the unshakable revelation of the Almighty God who cannot lie.[153]

Apocalyptic spirituality, as presented by Jeffrey, offers a hermeneutical method where the only tools needed are the individual's determination to read Scripture and a need for answers to contemporary problems.

Jeffrey's methodologically encoded simplification of the Biblical message serves a democratizing purpose. The power to determine complicated biblical genres without any prior biblical knowledge is given to every reader with the promise of enlightenment as the motivation. Jeffrey would concur with Hal Lindsey who wrote that "we believe that a person can be given a secure and yet exciting view of his destiny by making an honest investigation of the tested truths of Bible prophecy."[154] Anyone who is dedicated and has common sense is able

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[151] Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 10.

[152] Grant Jeffrey, The Signature of God, 11.

[153] Grant Jeffrey, Signature of God, 10.

[154] Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, 8.

to read and understand prophecy. This democratizing feature is not only evident among

popular apocalypticists, but it is an outgrowth of historic North American evangelical

concerns. Jeffrey engages in a populist-driven denigration of experts and specialists that only

further emphasizes this democratic feature. As with the historic evangelical revivals, Jeffrey

empowers the individual to interact with faith issues for themselves without the mediation of

scholars or other religious leaders.

The narrative functions effectively not only as a result of the simplified method and the

warmth of personal address. Even more important than its democratic method is its function:

Jeffrey's apocalyptic spirituality provides meaning in a world that is fast spinning out of

control. North Americans live in a world where technological and scientific advances seem to

be out of control, where world-wide political instability threatens security, and where social

changes make life almost unrecognizable to those who hold traditional values. Jeffrey's

presentation of various, seemingly random, facts reflects the disjointed way in which many

people see their world. In his narrative, poll information from Brussels regarding the

establishment of the EU appears alongside information about computer chips implanted in

animals by the Toronto Humane Society and Gorbachev's appearance on the Larry King

show.[155] But he offers a context by which to understand all of this confusion and perceived

danger; Jeffrey is able to make sense of all of the confusion by placing the tragic framework

around his collection of seemingly random bits of information, knitting them into a cohesive

entity. Other than the overarching structure Jeffrey places them in, there is nothing about

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[155] Grant Jeffrey, Armageddon, 143; Grant Jeffrey, Apocalypse, 120; Prince of Darkness,
113.

these pieces of information that would link them either to his structure or to each other.

Animal implants and television appearances by former world leaders are woven into a

theological narrative wherein the individual can understand self and world. All information is

pertinent for Jeffrey as it all fits into the confirmation that the world is heading for terrible

times as God is finally bringing history to a conclusion. Out of the chaos Jeffrey provides a

divine sense of order.

On a deeper level, Jeffrey's argument is addressing the age old question of theodicy.[156]

Jeffrey's apocalyptic paradigm offers an explanation of how evil can exist when God is

apparently in control. The presence of terrible human corruption where torture, abuse and

mass slaughter can take place are not signs for Jeffrey that God does not exist, but rather the

opposite. Jeffrey's dispensational framework makes sense of the present evil observed and

experienced by the reader, where evil is the result of a world slowly coming to a close as

directed by God. This cosmic judgement of history extends to the individual. Jeffrey's

theodicy is reduced to a practical personal prescriptive where in light of God's future

obliteration of evil the individual is expected to make a choice. God deals fairly with those who

follow him, but all those who reject God will be judged and punished alongside the evil-doers.

Evil exists as a reminder of the fallenness of history as well as a cue that there will soon be a

universal cleansing by the divine and all powerful hand of God.

Jeffrey's apocalyptic spirituality also advances a cosmology, providing the reader with

a way to understand time and the world. Regarding the cosmology offered by apocalyptic

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[156] Stephen O'Leary asserts that this is the concern of all apocalyptic spirituality. Arguing the Apocalypse, 34ff.

spirituality Stephen O'Leary writes:

> As narrative, cosmology establishes a group ethos through a vision of shared origin and destiny that implicitly represents a culture's beliefs, attitudes and values. In its argumentative form, cosmology offers propositions both descriptive and normative, intended to depict and explain the universe as it is and to orient human beings towards right action.[157]

Jeffrey's dispensationally inherited system offers a way for the reader to orient self in a world that seems to have had no beginning and no end. This is why prophecy is so important for Jeffrey's system. Prophetic literature addresses an ending point, if only by divine punishment. Reading prophetic literature apocalyptically allows Jeffrey to interpret this end and judgement cosmically. Jeffrey also uses "end" in relation to the cosmic "beginning" of the world, placing finite boundaries on existence. The dispensationalist scheme wherein various segments of history end in punishment allows further placement. Jeffrey's listing of evils and conspiracies as increasing phenomena functions as a measurement of time left before the end. His narrative provides a structure for the reader by which to place the self in relationship to a beginning and a fast approaching end in order not only to understand world events, but to discern the reader's own place in history. This cosmology, like the theodicy, is prescriptive. It directs the reader to make a choice based on the known conclusion in order to escape the final catastrophe brought on the world by divine judgement.

Jeffrey's rhetoric has appeal also because it offers a popular epistemology. This is in keeping with Frederick Kreuziger who writes:

> apocalypse is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant when viewed in terms of how it ends...apocalypse means much more than visions of the end and tales of doomsday. Its meaning cuts across the spectrum of life.

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[157] Stephen O'Leary, Arguing the Apocalypse, 25.

both personal and social.[158]

Alluded to in the above paragraphs, Jeffrey's apocalyptic paradigm allows the reader to understand the self. The meaning Jeffrey imputes into present world events allows the reader to see self situated at a time when history is coming to a close. With history no longer meaningless, but rather given a directional focus, the individual's relationship to transpiring events becomes clear. Jeffrey's popular cosmology places the reader at a distinct point in the world's history. And having presented a theodicy, Jeffrey now offers the reader the opportunity for personal orientation towards God and evil. Understanding events, history, time, and God allows the reader to understand self and the purpose of life.

Jeffrey also makes sense of more specific concerns arising out of a distinctly American angst. Apocalyptic spirituality always carries with it a crisis mentality where a tragic framework is used to interpret people's anxiety regarding their contemporary situations. Apocalypticism highlights the fears, simplifies the complexities and orients the reader to a defensive position. Jeffrey's system carries with it this same crisis mindset. American society, however, harbors an already existing anxiety about itself and its relationship to the rest of the world. Questions existing from the inception of United States regarding national definition and ideals, inhabitants, and outsiders form this underlying stress in American life. This angst is reflected in the popular media and literature. The genre of science fiction, for example, functions like a secular apocalyptic where fears about technology, science and outsiders are confronted and extrapolated upon. The popularity of apocalyptic movies such as

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[158] Frederick A. Kreuziger, The Religion of Science Fiction (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986), 1-2.

Waterworld and Independence Day are an extension of the disaster flicks of the 1950's which as a corpus reflect an underlying uneasiness about technology and attack from outsiders. Jeffrey's American-directed rhetoric taps into this existing angst. He plays out his drama with an American audience in mind. His narrative is so focussed on American issues that Canadians, who are quite closely related to the United States in terms of societal and political concerns, would nevertheless find much of it irrelevant. Jeffrey addresses the laments of American society where change in family structures, gender roles, and race relations have destroyed a particularly American vision of how life should be. Jeffrey answers the question of "why isn't America working out the way it should?" by placing the perceived decline of traditional values in a tragic framework. Jeffrey provides a significance to this question by indicating that the disintegration of the American vision is a precursor of things to come. Other insecurities are played upon in Jeffrey's material. The American fear of outsiders is given real substance by casting other nationalities in the antagonist roles of the end-times drama. The defining American concern for freedom is played upon in all the various conspiracy theories, many of which involve the United States government. The existing fear of a powerful federal government is reinforced by including mention of gun control legislation and the institution of universal health care. While Jeffrey provides a contextual understanding of the disintegration of American life, he also appeals back to the national vision of the United States for reassurance. The fact that the country had Christian origins means, for Jeffrey, that it will not suffer in the same way as other nations will during the tribulation.[159] The specific message in Jeffrey's books, although he understands it to have universal appeal, is essentially

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[159] Grant Jeffrey, Prince of Darkness, 161-3.

about providing meaning to uniquely American fears and hopes.

D. Conclusion

Apocalyptic spirituality is both the product and the reduction of several related theological traditions. The convoluted logic resulting from the amalgamation ignores essential emphases of evangelicalism and dispensationalism. Evangelicalism's concern for the Bible. translated into Jeffrey's system, no longer carries the qualitative emphasis of careful study and familiarity with church doctrine. Rather Jeffrey picks up on popular evangelicalism's quantitative concerns where making the Bible available to the masses becomes the foremost concern. Which is not to say that Jeffrey is innovative in this regard. rather he is picking up on the North American populist evangelical history. One can see the dominance of traits developed throughout evangelicalism's existence in North America: the importance of the individual and the incorporation of nationalism observed in Jeffrey's works were both developed through evangelicalism's intersection with revivalism. revolution and civil war. Similarly, dispensationalism's interest in prophecy is reworked into an easy to grasp format. Jeffrey's popular strain of dispensationalism misses the heart of classic dispensationalism concerned with biblical integrity and highlighting every distinct emphasis of scripture. Jeffrey recognizes the importance of prophecy and the inclusion of Israel in biblical interpretation. without including the larger dispensationalist methodological interests. Yet, inspite of having lost many of the distinctions, Jeffrey stands squarely in the evangelical and dispensationalist theological traditions. One can trace evangelical and dispensationalist history by Jeffrey's material. Evident is the nineteenth century evangelical rationalist and common sense approach

to biblical interpretation, the importance of the individual and the American nation in God's plan for humanity, the fundamentalist suspicion of liberalism and the expectation that the true church will be a small community expected to sustain oppression from outside forces.

The fundamentalist paranoia moved naturally into apocalypticism. Apocalyptic spirituality, evident throughout Christian history, is defined by a crisis-minded community milieu assembled around crisis-created biblical literature. The use of apocalyptic through the ages has allowed people an interpretive structure by which to explain their surrounding context. The flexibility of the genre with its mythological language and veiled references was readily applied to various historical contexts. Its division of the world into good and evil easily explicated the meaning of events and institutions. From fundamentalism onwards, American evangelicalism assimilated this apocalyptic mindset. The loss of the nineteenth century evangelical golden age provided the basis for the antagonism and suspicion of the surrounding culture. The residue of the Puritan theodicy ideal connecting national and spiritual destiny in conjunction with the loss of the evangelical authority within society during the "Great Reversal" created a negative vision of how God and society were connected. Jeffrey and other apocalyptic writers have appropriated the negative fundamentalist understanding and interpretation of the American situation in which they live. Their incorporation of the fundamentalist sentiment into a larger cosmic drama has revitalized North American evangelicalism by providing a highly directional and literal quality to faith necessitating individual reform and restitution of political and economic structures in the face of imminent historical collapse.

Although popular apocalyptic spirituality answers essential existential questions, its

existence within the dominant form of North American Christianity actually functions as a detriment to the larger society. Apocalyptic spirituality with its defensive posture and negative views of society creates a tragic meaning for particular events. The perceived crisis and expectation of the nearing end of history contours people's actions so that the crisis interpretation not only explains crisis, but creates crisis by shaping a particular milieu. During the Gulf War. for example. the attitude of excitement taken by North American Christians who considered the war as a possible part of fulfilling prophecy, ignored the fact that thousands of Iraqis were being killed.[160] Similarly Jeffrey's lack of concern for the plight of Palestinians in Israel stems from his adoption of this mindset considerably limiting his perspective on human rights and political events. Not only does it shape attitude, but the apocalyptic paradigm also functions as a catalyst for people's action. An extreme example is the Randy Weaver incident in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Weaver amassed a large arsenal of weaponry on the basis of apocalyptically based conspiracy theories and believed he would have to defend himself against a corrupt federal government.[161] When federal agents came to arrest him for illegal possession of weapons a gunfight ensued and three people were killed. The apocalyptic paradigm shapes action not only in an American context. but in nations outside of the U.S. For example, a recent newspaper article focussed on the aid Israeli Zionist settlers have and continue to receive from North American evangelicals, even while the support for Zionist

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[160] Michael R. Cosby, "The Danger of Armageddon Theology." Covenant Quarterly 51 (August 1993), 44.

[161] Michael Barkin, "Millenarians and Violence," in Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem. 249: Philip Lamy, "Secularizing the Millennium," in Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem. 94. 102.

causes from North American Jews dwindles.[162] One evangelical quoted in the article states his

belief that: "the Bible says in the last days the Jews will be restored to the nation of Israel"

indicating the link between his intention to strengthen the state of Israel in the anticipation of

the second coming of Christ.[163] The author of the column also quoted a pastor of a Maryland

Four Square Gospel Church as saying:

> In 1948, when Israel became a nation, that was the real key point to our biblical
> prophecy. We believe the Old Testament prophecies are as current as tomorrow's
> newspapers.[164]

Israel and biblical prophecy are combined in the minds of these evangelicals and this forms an

impetus for tremendous evangelical political action. The desire to hasten God's coming

Kingdom promised in the Bible gives reason to the financial, political and spiritual support

being given to the Israeli settlers. This evangelical support for Zionist political causes, over

against Palestinian political and social concerns, is pronounced enough to be recognized as

valuable by Israeli politicians who cater to this seemingly unlikely support base in North

America.[165] The popularity of apocalyptic spirituality in North America has created a

powerbase from which to act both economically as in the above case, as well as politically

according to an apocalyptic worldview. Not only does apocalyptic spirituality colour

[162] Ann LoLordo, "Evangelical Christians Come to Jews' Aid," Atlanta Journal-Constitution 8 August 1997, p. A.8; Thomas L. Friedman in From Beirut to Jerusalem (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989) highlights the decreasing support for Zionist causes among non-conservative Jews in North America (447).

[163] Ann LoLordo, "Evangelical Christians Come to Jews' Aid," . A.

[164] Ann LoLordo, "Evangelical Christians Come to Jews' Aid," A.

[165] Thomas L. Friedman wrote how Menachem Begin in 1989 befriended the likes of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as well as other fundamentalists for their support of the Jewish state (From Beirut to Jerusalem, 486).

political, economic and social perspectives and therefore action, but it limits the positive

evangelical impact on society. Crisis is expected and the only cure for societal and political

ills can take place with the return of Christ.

EPILOGUE

North American evangelicalism has been an experiment in democratic religion. Evangelicalism's history of making the Christian message real to the individual has resulted in a unique and often popular religious expression. The pietism of the revivals generated a focus on conversion and took emphasis away from doctrinal and ecclesiastical authority. The Revolution and Civil War, conflicts both framed by a Puritan notion of a sacred society, stamped a national identity onto evangelicalism. Identity and individuality were further inculcated during the nineteenth-century when evangelicals busied themselves with societal concerns. Further development appeared with the inability to incorporate the new ideological movements from Europe, higher criticism and evolution, within an evangelical consensus. The fragmentation that developed added further individualization as well as a negative and suspicious character. Each further development within evangelicalism prompted less formal and more private ways of being religious. North American evangelicalism became characterized by, among other things, its simple and popular approach to doing religion.

The development of apocalyptic spirituality is one example of evangelical popularism. Not only did it develop out of evangelicalism, but it holds specifically North American evangelical concerns. The Bible, the supernatural and the individual are fused together in such a way as to provide a message that combines personal spirituality, American nationalism, and societal anxiety. Developed out of a context of evangelical despair, popular apocalypticism is a popular appropriation of the Christian message that allowed believers to gain control of history. And like many other popular expressions of evangelicalism in North America, it catered to the specific concerns of the ordinary people. This popularism evident with North

American evangelicalism, has allowed it a great deal of flexibility and therefore success.

The popular and democratic nature of evangelicalism, although flourishing in the North American context, also works to evangelicalism's detriment. Apocalyptic spirituality demonstrates this as well. Although it attempts to uphold evangelical ideals, its simple appropriation of theology and hermeneutics unintentionally attacks evangelicalism's biblical foundation. The alliance of apocalypticism, evangelicalism, and dispensationalism along the popular strand endangers the evangelical understanding of *sola scriptura*. Not only does popular religion narrow the understanding of Scripture, but it, as seen in apocalyptic spirituality with its focus on the contemporary situation, imputes meaning into the Bible. Apocalyptic spirituality, dictated by a literal and common sense method of interpretation, confines God's revelation in Scripture to tangible and contemporary realities. In Jeffrey's system, general revelation is given the capacity of special revelation. This substitution has impact on biblical apologetics, for example, which focusses on events transpiring in the modern world in order to affirm the Bible's veracity. Biblical doctrine, church tradition and even spiritual experience are eclipsed by the importance of contemporary events. Jeffrey in his naive perspective of meaning, his contemporary frame of reference, and his restricted understanding of the biblical world and its literature offers a framework of interpretation contrary to that fought for by the Reformers. However, instead of Church tradition dictating meaning, popular apocalyptic spirituality is shaped by contemporary political and social events. Jeffrey has eroded the central position of the text as a result of the focus on the contemporary "horizon of interpretation." His position, like that of other popular apocalypticists, ends up attacking not only his evangelical heritage, but the very foundation he is trying to uphold.

Popularism in its prevalence has the ability not only to erode certain emphases but could affect the continued existence and efficacy of evangelicalism. The predominance of apocalyptic spirituality within evangelicalism has the ability to dictate populist concerns. Popular apocalyptic, firmly rooted in the fundamentalist anti-intellectualism and its general distrust of the structures of authority, assumes that it embodies the reformation ideal of the "priesthood of all believers." Unlike Luther, who never envisioned a community without boundaries of authority (Luther's conception was that every believer is given the opportunity and the responsibility to exercise a redemptive ministry unto the neighbor not that everyperson was literally their own "priest"), popular apocalyptic is a movement which extols the virtue of every person's ability to interpret the Bible without encouraging the accumulation of other kinds of knowledge to broaden the perspective. North American evangelicalism, at one time a movement concerned with maintaining the highest standards of orthodoxy, has become a movement tyrannized by pop-psychology, materialism, nationalism and the individual. Carl Sagan, writing about a conversation he had on one of his travels, stated that pseudoscience predominated over real science in the discussion. Unproven but popular ideas such as the existence of extraterrestrials and the power of crystals seemed to hold more sway for his conversation partner than did proven medical and geological discoveries. Sagan, writing about the man, stated that:

> he *wanted* to know about science. It's just that all the science had gotten filtered out
> before it reached him. Our cultural motifs, our educational system, our
> communications media had failed this man. What the society permitted to trickle
> through was mainly pretence and confusion.[1]

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[1] Carl Sagan, The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 4.

Although this statement pertains to the relationship between science and popular culture, a similar statement could be made about protestant Christianity's manifestation in apocalyptic spirituality. Authors such as Hal Lindsey, John Walvoord, Grant Jeffrey and others *want* to communicate the "good news" of Christianity, but traditional protestant Christianity has been sifted through the mesh of their concerns, thus shaping the "good news" into a North American eschatologically focussed phenomenon. In eclipsing the traditional meaning of the Bible, the popular apocalyptic movement highlights exciting and dramatic events over and above what might be considered the mundane nature of traditional belief and practice. The common-sense presentation of "the Bible as it is, for People as they are," results in a readily accessible text. However the democratic approach limits the complexity of the biblical message and the richness of church tradition. As a result of its sometimes fantastic reformulations of the essence of Christianity, apocalypticism finds itself directed by the nationalistic and individualistic concerns of popularism thereby cutting off access to the essence of Christian tradition's version of full biblical meaning and impact. This is the dilemma that evangelicalism finds itself in. The vibrancy that has resulted from the Protestant emphasis on the priesthood of all believers has created movements such as apocalyptic spirituality that bring the biblical text to bear on the events of the world we live in. However, popular movements such as these also diminish crucial evangelical concerns when they force the Bible to speak to their own concerns. Popular apocalyptic demonstrates that North American evangelicalism has become marked by popularism where not only have the "keys of the kingdom" been given to everyone, but the power of locksmith has been democratically supplied as well.

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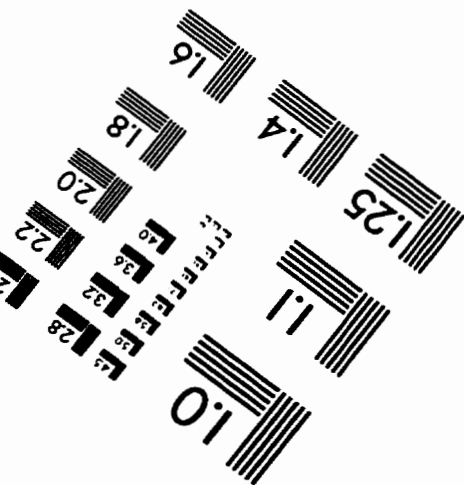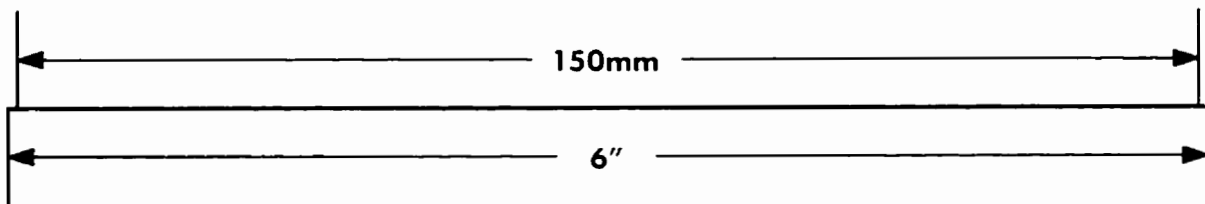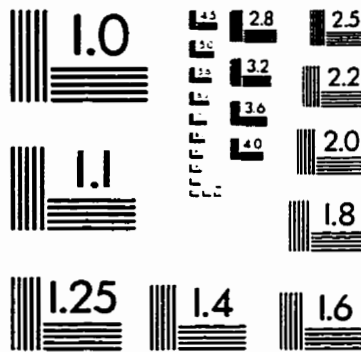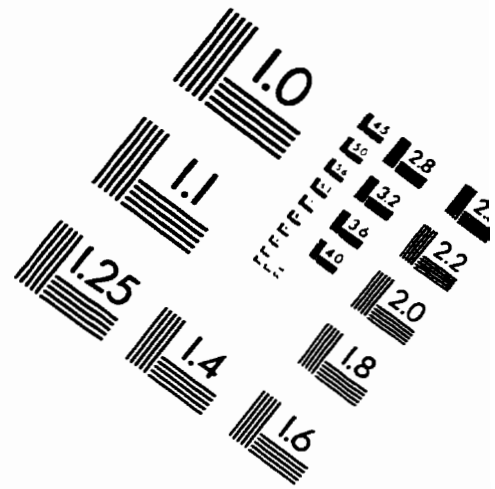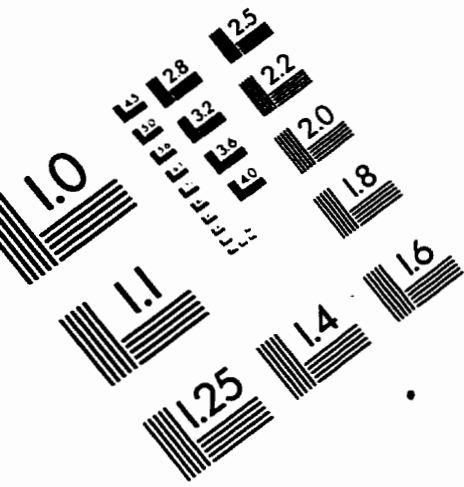Nattan, Steve Van. Balaam's Ass Homepage. (www.balaams-ass.com).

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IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA–3)

1.0

1.1

1.25   1.4   1.6

2.8   2.5

3.2   2.2

3.6

4.0   2.0

1.8

← 150mm →

← 6″ →

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