ABSTRACT

Title of Document: I LOVE TO TELL THE STOR(IES):
                                        NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION IN THE
                                        CHRISTIAN RIGHT

                                        James Gilmore
                                        Doctor of Philosophy, 2017

Directed By: Professor Trevor Parry-Giles
                                        Department of Communication

Since the emergence of the Christian Right as an identified political and social

movement in the late 1970s, commentators have sought to explain it. *I Love to Tell the*

Stor(ies) posits that Christian Right rhetoric can be defined and understood by its appeals

to two narratives about the universe and the nation. The *Cosmic Narrative* suggests that

the cosmos is a battlefield between the Christian God and Satan, hinged on the

incarnation of Jesus Christ and culminating in the End Times. In the *American Narrative*,

the nation was founded by Protestant Christians to fulfill God's purposes, but has fallen

into moral decline and must return to Christianity so that it can again be blessed by God.

I Love to Tell the Stor(ies) reconstructs these narratives from texts by prominent

Christian Right rhetors. The narratives resonate with one another in the parameters they

set out for how the universe is held together and for epistemology within that universe,

forming the foundation of the Christian Right's rhetorical edifice. A challenge emerges

for Christian Right rhetors in some of the particulars, though, as the narratives present

dissonant hermeneutics for space and time, for the identity of the movement's adherents,

and for the relationship to other politically-conservative religious worldviews. This

project concludes that while these dissonances threaten to undermine the Christian

Right's worldview, they can also be strategically used to bolster that worldview. Rhetors

can use these dissonances to transpose methods of reasoning from one narrative to another, creating a context in which adherents' actions have eternal consequences, the symbols of civil religion are reinterpreted as special revelation from God to those with the means to understand them, and the humanist enemy is not merely a threat to God's purposes for the American nation but an occupying army in league with the forces of Satan in the great cosmic war. In the hands of skilled rhetors, the worldview structure constructed by these resonances and dissonances has continued to stand for decades.

I LOVE TO TELL THE STOR(IES): NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION IN THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

by

James G. Gilmore V

Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2017

Advisory Committee:
    Professor Trevor Parry-Giles, Chair
    Professor David Freund
    Professor Kristjana Maddux
    Professor Shawn J. Parry-Giles
    Professor Michelle Murray Yang

DEDICATION

To Cortney

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

William H. Sachs, whose class on fundamentalism was extremely helpful in shaping my thinking about this project (and also gave me the opportunity to meet Martin E. Marty, one of my academic heroes).

In a time when right-wing politicians try to score political points by attacking public schools and the educators who dedicate their lives to their profession, I would also be remiss if I did not point out that to the extent that I have been successful in college and graduate school, it is only because I was so well-prepared by thirteen years of public education, from kindergarten through high school. The men and women who shaped my ability to reason, to read clearly and express my thoughts in writing, to think critically about the world around me, were career public educators and teachers' union members in Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan. I am living evidence that public schools work.

My supervisor and friend at Dewey Square Group, Timothy Chambers, has been incredibly supportive and flexible as I have burned the candle at both ends with my Dewey work and this dissertation, as have my other colleagues at Dewey Digital, particularly Eli Center, whose encouragement and friendship has been invaluable.

Most importantly, this project would not have been possible without my family. My parents raised me to value hard work, intellectual rigor, critical thinking, and personal integrity, and they have remained supportive and loving even when those very values led me to political and religious positions that were a bit further afield from what they may have expected. They have embodied and modeled the very things I value as the best parts of evangelical Christianity—deep community and relationships, a commitment to character, integrity, and honesty, and an unwavering desire to show God's love to others.

In 2012, about midway through this project, I met a woman named Cortney Dale who was on the path to becoming an Episcopal priest. She agreed to marry me despite my being an incredibly frustrating person to live with at times, and supported me in this project long after it was clear that I had bitten off well more than I could chew. She sacrificed countless weekend afternoons with me at the seminary library when she could have been doing much more enjoyable things, and continually encouraged me when I was tempted to give up hope.

Finally, I must acknowledge my feline research assistants: Buster, Lucille, and the dearly-departed Simon. They were always happy to settle on my lap as I read, perch on my shoulder as I wrote, or provide me with a needed distraction during my writing breaks, even as I could tell they secretly thought I should be devising new ways to provide them with tuna instead of writing a doctoral dissertation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The dust from the World Trade Center still hung in the air over New York City on September 13, 2001. The nation awoke that morning still largely unsure of what had happened two days earlier, when hijacked airplanes had crashed into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, completely destroying the former and leaving a massive scar in the latter. Thousands were still missing as people went from hospital to hospital, clutching pictures of loved ones and asking emergency room receptionists to look for wives, husbands, partners, children, mothers, fathers.

That morning, the FBI confirmed what many had suspected: that behind the attacks had been Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, an Islamic fundamentalist terrorist group. President George W. Bush promised action to keep the nation safe, but many Americans, still mourning the lost, were unsure of when the next shoe was going to drop. Among other responses, Americans looked to religious authority figures as well as political ones to help them make sense of the events of the previous days. Church attendance boomed in the wake of the attacks as people sought to understand what was happening in a religious context or simply to be comforted by community or rituals that reminded them of childhood.

Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition and 1988 Republican presidential primary candidate, whose religious news/commentary show *The 700 Club* aired every morning on the ABC Family Network, also sought to provide understanding to his audience. Robertson appeared frequently on his show, generally providing commentaries interpreting the news from his own political and religious perspective. Like

virtually all other news shows during that week, the entire broadcast of *The 700 Club* on

Thursday, September 13, was devoted to the events of September 11.

Toward the end of the September 13 show, Robertson welcomed Jerry Falwell—

fundamentalist Baptist, founder of Liberty University and the Moral Majority, and

frequent guest on *The 700 Club*—to a satellite interview to provide answers to the "grief,

fear, and unanswered questions" of Robertson's audience. During the course of the

interview, Falwell and Robertson had an exchange that made headlines:

JERRY FALWELL: The ACLU's got to take a lot of blame for this.

PAT ROBERTSON: Well, yes.

FALWELL: And, I know that I'll hear from them for this. But, throwing

God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing

God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got

to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when

we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really

believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the

gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative

lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have

tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say 'you

helped this happen.'[1]

These comments represented a symbolic breach in political commentators' rhetorical

construction of the nation's attitude in the 48 hours that had transpired since the attacks.

In those two days, the story went, even those who had historically viewed one another

with suspicion or opposition were coming together. Newspapers in nations that had been

critical of American policies throughout the 1990s and early 2000s were proclaiming solidarity with Americans' victimization, liberal and conservative politicians were standing side-by-side, and people who had only a week before viewed New York City as a den of iniquity were proclaiming themselves New Yorkers in spirit. Now, Falwell and Robertson had ruptured that peace by blaming their political opponents for inciting God's wrath and thus removing God's protection from the nation, allowing the attacks to happen.

The criticism heaped on the remarks—not only from the media and commentators, but also from Falwell and Robertson's allies and friends—was eventually too much for the duo.[2] Several days later, Falwell issued a clarification of the remarks that apologized for any offense he had caused, and after that was deemed insufficient by many commentators, issued a second apology that was much more repentant; Robertson suggested in a press release that because of the satellite feed he had not understood the remarks Falwell was making, despite stating his full agreement with them on camera.

Because of the controversy resulting from that brief exchange, the bulk of the attention from scholars and media has been on that brief portion of the interview. The entire interview segment is laced with similar associations that reveal a larger narrative structure and framework at play; the reason that particular portion was so controversial was that it made the worldview of Falwell, Robertson, and the Christian Right as a whole explicit rather than implicit, providing media critics and scholars something to latch on to and point to as an obvious marker of the Christian Right mindset.

Throughout the interview, Falwell alternated between literal and symbolic interpretations of the attacks, between putting them into a contemporary political context

and a Biblically-driven theological narrative context, between seeing them as a call to greater devotion to God and seeing them as a call for America to become a stronger, more traditionally moral nation. In jumping back and forth between these interpretations, Falwell conflated the general sense of loss and unity experienced by many in the nation in the wake of the 9/11 attacks with what he saw as a nation's need and desire for spiritual revival; while the rest of the world sees a nation that is coming together to make sense of the attacks is, Falwell sees a nation "on its knees" and "calling upon God."[3] To Falwell, the attacks are thus both the beginning of a righteous war—on a par with World War II and the War of 1812 as wars of unambiguous good and evil—and "God's call to revival."[4]

Falwell relied on the metaphor of the United States as a new Israel—and strategically left his characterization of Israel somewhat ambiguous, in order to identify the US with both the contemporary state of Israel (when Falwell suggested that "now America knows in a horrible way what Israel's been facing for 53 years"[5]) and with the Biblical state of Israel (as Falwell cited 2 Chronicles 7:14, which Christian audiences would understand as a call to Israel to return to God in order to see their land healed).[6] Similarly, Falwell interpreted a quintessentially civil-religious act—Congress singing "God Bless America" on the Capitol steps—as their acceptance not only of a conservative Christian religious outlook, describing it as their having "called out on to God in prayer," but of the political and social agenda of the Christian Right, as he also interpreted their singing as saying "let the ACLU be hanged."[7]

As the nation did "the only normal and natural and spiritual thing to do" and returned to God, Falwell suggested, it would also engage in violent retribution toward

enemies that it had allowed to continue for too long—not only "the Husseins, the Bin Ladens, the Arafats," but also "the ACLU, the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America."[8]

Falwell thus integrated two major narratives about the history, present, and future of his audience. In one, he invited his audience to see themselves as part of the story of Americans in the War of 1812 or World War II or contemporary Israelis, who, under attack from an intractable enemy, engaged in a righteous war to protect the nation and rid the world of a dangerous geopolitical actor. In the other narrative, he invited his audience to see themselves as the vanguard of a spiritual revival for the nation, as those who were called to help lead the nation back to God and, as part of this effort, to rid the nation of immoral elements like social liberals, in order to return God's blessing and protection to the nation.

Implicit in these narratives are larger stories about the origin and trajectory of the nation and of the universe as a whole; Falwell's allusion to just part of the narratives created symbolic room for his audience, familiar with these narratives, to fill in the rest of the story themselves. It is the integration of these two narratives and typologies—the secular and the spiritual, a narrative about America and a narrative about God's plans for the universe—that forms the foundation of the Christian Right's worldview and distinguishes it as a movement from other factions of conservative politics or conservative religiosity.

A Rhetorical Definition for the Christian Right: Two Narratives

What is the Christian Right? Who are the members of the movement? What does it mean when we refer to the Christian Right? Is membership in the Christian Right adherence to a certain set of policy positions or starting points—that the nuclear family should be normative, or that abortion should be illegal, or that homosexuality, bisexuality, and alternative gender identities should be discriminated against, discouraged, or punished by law? This would explain some of the movement's voting activities, but it does not explain the movement's continual expression through an electoral process: putting more conservative Republicans in office who have thus far not only failed to enact their agenda, but have in fact allowed it to be pushed even further back. Further, the Christian Right's policy positions on family, abortion, and LGBT liberation are not uniquely Christian; the Christian Right shares those policy prescriptions with conservative Muslims worldwide, but nobody would suggest that the Christian Right and conservative Muslims are political allies in the United States.

Is membership in the Christian Right identification with one or more of the many organizations or institutions associated with the movement—like the now-defunct Moral Majority, Christian Voice, Religious Roundtable, or Christian Coalition, or any of the still-extant Christian Right-identified political/social organizations like the American Family Association, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, Alliance Defense Fund, or Eagle Forum? Is it attendance of a Christian Right-identified college or graduate school like Liberty University, Regents University, Bob Jones University, Oral Roberts University, Wheaton College, or the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, or membership in a church or denomination that strongly identifies with the Christian Right,

like the Southern Baptist Convention or the Presbyterian Church of America? This has been the traditional view of many political scientists, who see the political sphere in light of the influence of various institutions. But this definition does not explain every Christian Right voter, many of whom will never send a check to a group like the Family Research Council or attend a Christian Right college like Liberty University. Nor does this definition explain politicians like one of the Christian Right's most revered political figures, Ronald Reagan, who never joined any specifically Christian Right-linked organization and was, by all accounts, not even a regular churchgoer.

Is membership in the Christian Right a natural political expression of a religious affiliation with evangelical or conservative Christianity? This is the suggestion of many media commentators, who imply a direct correlation between evangelical Christians or conservative Catholics and the Christian Right, with the implicit suggestion that holding evangelical or conservative religious views necessarily means that one will favor the Christian Right's policy prescriptions and generally conservative politics. However, this definition does not account for both specifically *a*political conservative Christians, such as the fundamentalists and evangelicals who believe that seeking political power is either not compatible with Christianity or not a good use of Christians' resources and witness in the world. Nor does this definition account for evangelical Christians like Jimmy Carter, Jim Wallis, or Shane Claiborne who hold evangelical religious views but work for liberal or even radical political causes.

Is membership in the Christian Right merely a matter of identifying as a member of the Christian Right? When Reagan stood before a convention of evangelical ministers and told them that "you can't endorse me, but I endorse you," and proclaimed his

identification with the Christian Right, was he *really* part of the Christian Right?[9] When George H.W. Bush proclaimed that he did not believe that atheists could be citizens or patriots, was he identifying with the Christian Right?[10] What, then, do we make of the unwillingness of those two politicians in particular, who held the presidency for twelve straight years between them, to put substantial amounts of political capital behind any of the Christian Right's major policy priorities?

I argue here that attempting to identify *people* with the Christian Right movement is necessarily misguided, in that it will run up against political considerations and organizational and institutional nuances that make the process of definition difficult. Additionally, identifying *policies* with the Christian Right ignores those who clearly are not Christian Right members who hold similar policy viewpoints, and identifying *organizations* with the Christian Right, while certainly useful for understanding the movement's leadership, major figures, and structural composition, has the opposite problem in that it leaves out many who would otherwise identify with the movement.

I argue that the Christian Right should be defined *rhetorically*—as a descriptor not of people, organizations, or policies, but rather of a rhetorical form that fulfills certain functions for those who accept its validity. In other words, I suggest that we should identify a politician like Reagan, an organization like the Christian Coalition, or a policy position like opposition to abortion with the Christian Right insofar as they or the rhetors advocating for them appeal to the overarching rhetorical worldview of the Christian Right.

Two Narratives

This rhetorical worldview is based on two narratives—myths about the universe and the nation—whose interaction and intersection function to shape the space and time in which adherents exist; create a political, social, and religious identity; and combine religious and political symbology to create alternative visions of civil religion that holds out a vision for the nation as a Christian republic with a universalizing mission.

The first narrative is the **Cosmic Narrative**, which describes God's master plan from creation to end times and tells the story of a grand Manichaean struggle between good and evil. The Cosmic Narrative is an interpretation of the Biblical narrative through the lens of a vast war between the forces of good (led by God) and the forces of evil (led by Satan) encompassing the entire history of the universe. The Cosmic Narrative begins with Adam and Eve being created and succumbing to temptation in the Garden of Eden, and its chief pivot point is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the church. The Cosmic Narrative draws its audience's eyes to a (near) future end of the world, in which Jesus will return to inaugurate the heavenly kingdom, reward His followers, and punish those who rejected Him. This narrative is the foundation of the Christian Right's rhetorical vision, setting the stage on which the stories of individuals, nations, and the human race as a whole are played out.

The second narrative of the Christian Right, the **American Narrative**, is nested inside the Cosmic Narrative like a Russian Matryoshka doll. In the American Narrative, Europeans came to North America with the explicit purpose of founding a Christian nation—a purpose that was held in common by Americans, more or less, through the founding of the country and the nineteenth century. However, throughout the 20th

century, the nation was stolen from Christians by secular humanists, who took over

national institutions, grew government into an oppressive monster, and rewrote history to

paint the founders of the country as secularists. Unlike in the Cosmic Narrative, where a

triumphant future is certain, the American Narrative's ending is left open-ended; either

Christians will retake the nation and return it to God's values, or the nation will continue

along its moral decline until it collapses or the world ends.

I will trace the ways in which these narratives, and the interplay between them,

resonate, circulate, and function to motivate action among the various members—from

local activists to national politicians—who identify with the Christian Right. These two

narratives form the foundation of the entire logic of the Christian Right's positions. If one

accepts these narratives as true and valid, one will be logically led to the Christian

Right's policy positions, and indeed see them as the only logical choice; if one rejects one

or both of these narratives, the logical system breaks down.

It is the interactions and spaces between the two narratives—the ways in which

the narratives contradict one another, reinforce and amplify one another, and create

multiple identities for individuals who adhere to them—that makes the Christian Right a

rhetorically unique movement. The resonances and dissonances between these narratives

account for much of the appeal of Christian Right rhetoric, even as political and social

commentators have, time and time again over the past thirty years, prematurely read the

movement's obituary. I identify three main functions of the narratives and their

interaction, suggesting that they create and shape identity, that they motivate and invite

action, and that they create discourses that weave together religious and political

symbology to create a form of civil religion that is both a political and religious argument.

Narrative Functions

The first function of these narratives is to form identity for those who adhere to them; members of the audience for these narratives are invited to see themselves and their own lives and struggles in light of their position in these grand dramas. In the Cosmic Narrative, adherents take the role of the members of the Church, engaging in spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness, living holy lives dedicated to their relationship with Jesus, evangelizing the lost and "saving souls," and waiting expectantly for the Second Coming. In the American Narrative, adherents are the true heirs of the legacy of the nation's founders, who are called to act locally and nationally to return Christianity and Christian practices to a position of legal and cultural normativity and to continue to work for spiritual revival throughout the culture. The nesting of the American Narrative inside the Cosmic Narrative creates a system of dual significance for the adherent's identity; there are both harmonies and tensions between the believer's two roles as a spiritual warrior for Christ and as a political and social activist.

It is important to note here that these narratives not only create roles for those who adhere to them, but also frame and shape the rest of the world as well. Political or cultural disputes over things like sex education, late-term abortion, "Merry Christmas," or LGBT rights take on extra salience when they are seen not only as battles against the continual moral decline of America or against those who would supplant the true heirs to the country, but also as part of the vast spiritual war against Satan; similarly, religious practices like prayer, musical worship, or evangelism take on political characteristics and

are seen as crucial parts of these cultural and political battles. Political opponents can be understood as willing or unwilling dupes of Satan; geopolitical or cultural developments like the continual threat of nuclear war in the 1980s or the spreading of equal marriage for same-sex couples throughout the 2000s are seen not only in terms of their impact on the vector of America's decline, but also in terms of their correspondence with this narrative's vision of the end times. The whole of the world can be explained by these dramas; not only the adherent's own identity, but all the other things that form part of an adherent's life—friends, family, neighbors, business, church, media, government, society as a whole—are seen through the lens of these myths.

In other words, these myths form a worldview, defined by Aerts et al. as "a symbolic system of representation that allows us to integrate everything we know about the world and ourselves into a global picture, one that illuminates reality as it is presented to us within a certain culture."[11] The mythological and dramatistic characteristics of these overarching myths enables the myths to function as totalizing lenses for reality; the space between the myths, in which harmonies and dissonances form and resolve, adds to the strength of the system in explaining things that cannot be fully understood in light of one or the other myth, or in enabling actions that might be seen as futile or worse in terms of just one of the narratives. This worldview functions to shape virtually every other philosophical and ideological approach by its adherents. It functions epistemologically, creating categories by which statements or phenomena are deemed true or false—as seen in disputes over the teaching of creationism, for example. It functions teleologically, folding everything the adherent sees into a vast sweep and plan of purposed history.

For indeed, the narratives' salience is not only that they function to provide an identity for the adherent and a lens by which he or she understands the phenomena and people that make up his or her world, but also that they invite the adherent to take action to fulfill God's purposes in that world. If one sees oneself as a warrior for Christ, putting on the armor of God and taking up the Sword of the Spirit to engage in spiritual warfare, the obvious next step is to march into battle. If one sees oneself as the true heir to the nation's values and identity, whose inheritance has been stolen away by sinister political and social forces, the obvious next step is to take action to get it back. If one sees things like sex education or the teaching of evolution in schools as *both* part of the secularists' agenda to remove the nation from its Christian roots *and* part of the Devil's agenda to lead souls astray from the truth of Christianity, the obvious next step is to take action in the arenas—school boards, state legislatures, and eventually Congress, the Presidency, and particularly the judicial system—where these policies are shaped and determined.

These narratives also are flexible in presenting the *reasons* for political action. One of the requirements for a rhetor to motivate an audience to take political or social action is that the rhetor convince them that their actions will be, at least in some sense, efficacious. The Cosmic Narrative, however, suggests that the ultimate fate of the world has already been determined and written by God, eliminating any case for the efficacy of political or social action. This is a particular dilemma for those who adhere to the premillennial version of the Cosmic Narrative, in which the world grows steadily more and more chaotic until the apocalypse occurs and Jesus Christ returns in glory to inaugurate the kingdom.

Jerry Falwell faced this dilemma during the 1970s and 1980s, as he had to find a way to persuade his fundamentalist colleagues, most of whom adhered to this premillennial vision of the future, to support political and cultural activism through the Moral Majority. One of his solutions, according to cultural anthropologist Susan Friend Harding, was to suggest that American political and military action abroad would create space for evangelistic action.[12] He made the case for political involvement by suggesting to fundamentalists that while they may know (or at least suspect) that the USA's expansionist foreign policy would not (as the civil-religious version of the American Narrative suggests) produce worldwide democracy, freedom, and prosperity because that is not how God's story would end, it *could* succeed in opening up foreign countries to Christian missionary work, thus producing space in which more souls could be saved. Thus, even those who saw conflict between the American Narrative's open-ended future and the inevitability of the Cosmic Narrative's conclusion could be given reasons for acting.

Finally, these two narratives function to create spaces in which religious and political symbology are intertwined, in a way that creates an alternative and sectarian vision of civil religion that is neither completely Christian nor purely nationalistic. This differs from the ways in which religious and nationalistic symbologies have been intertwined in America's past, in that this conflation displays a consciousness of its religiously-sectarian nature.

Previous conflations of religious and nationalistic symbologies, like those in the Puritan, Revolutionary, and Civil War eras, sought to move from the perceived universality of the Christian religion (and specifically its understanding of Scriptural

authority) to a sectarian or activist political case. As evangelical historian Mark Noll would suggest about Civil War-era religious arguments between Union and Confederate advocates, not over whether Scripture was authoritative and binding on the culture (there was general agreement that it was), but rather over the proper interpretation of Scripture.[13]

While clergy and politicians alike certainly used military, political, and social crises to spark attempts at religious revival—such as the numerous calls for fasting and prayer during times of war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the context of these was that Americans (presumed to be Christian) should deepen their faith and commitment, not that a secular nation should return to Christianity. The cultural dominance in those contexts of Christianity as normative, and the relative absence of alternative religious viewpoints, necessarily led to a more or less universal call to revival; *all* citizens, the vast majority of whom were assumed to be at least nominally Christian, were to return to the faith and beseech God for aid and favor.

The contemporary conflations of religious and political symbology in Christian Right discourse have a more decidedly sectarian and contentious flavor; because the narrative *itself* posits the existence of at least one powerful alternative worldview in American culture, that of secular humanism, the context is such that these intertwinings of religious and political symbols call their adherents not just to contend in the political or cultural realm, as antebellum sermons for or against slavery did, but to contend in the religious realm as well. Because they set themselves in a pluralist social context, they are a sectarian call; rather than *assuming* that to be truly American is to be Christian, as the antebellum or revolutionary rhetors did, they must *contend* it instead. In previous

situations in which these symbols were linked, the idea of the nation re-devoting itself at least to some form of Christian God was presented a relatively uncontroversial proposition in a normatively Protestant nation; in Christian Right discourse, religious and political revival are linked with one another because *both* are assumed to be controversial.

This gives the religious end of the equation a bit more bite. Christian apologetics take on political significance; defending the faith against secularism is also defending the true America against a false vision. In this understanding of religion in civic culture, the act of calling the nation to prayer is not, as the old civil religious contract would suggest, calling on the people to commit themselves to a doctrinally-obscure notion of whatever God they hold in their heads. Rather, the call to prayer is the call to commit oneself to an evangelical (or quasi-evangelical) sectarian vision of God, in which not just a vague Christianity but a conservative and exclusive form of the religion is the norm.

A Note on Terminology

Before continuing, I would like to make a brief note about the terminology I use. Many of the terms I will be using throughout this project are ambiguously defined as they circulate throughout academia, the media, and popular culture. The word "fundamentalism" is a salient example. The "fundamentalist" label was originally self-applied by conservative Christians in the first decades of the twentieth century who felt that their beliefs were threatened by theological modernism; they set out a specific set of doctrinal beliefs as the "fundamentals of the faith" for which Christians should "do battle royal."[14] Most prominent among these beliefs was the idea that one's salvation from hell could only be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but the fundamentals of

the faith also included the literal interpretation and historical inerrancy of the Bible, six-day creationism, and a certain vision of the end-times.[15]

In the intervening century, however, the term "fundamentalist" has undergone a major expansion. After the Scopes trial of 1927, the term "fundamentalist" became a pejorative term in the dominant American discourse.[16] Particularly over the last few decades as the Christian Right has become a prominent political movement, "fundamentalist" has been used as an umbrella term to describe conservative evangelical Protestants as a whole, with well-known evangelicals like Billy Graham or Rick Wallis described as "fundamentalist." Perhaps more significantly, the term has branched beyond Christianity, most prominently being used to describe traditionalist Muslims in conflict with Western liberalism; scholars like Bruce Lawrence and Niels C. Nielsen, among many others, have underlined ideological connections between fundamentalist Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus in suggesting that fundamentalism is a category of religion as a whole.[17]

However, for the purposes of this project, references to "fundamentalism" will (unless otherwise noted) refer to the historical movement of fundamentalist Christianity from which have come many of the institutions and concepts used by the Christian Right, a doctrinal and cultural movement that traces its history back to the late nineteenth century and is defined by adherence to *The Fundamentals*.

Along the same lines, "evangelical" is another term that has an ambiguous definition in contemporary culture. As historian Diarmaid MacCulloch notes, the term has been in circulation since at least the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, with early Protestants describing themselves as "evangelical" (referring to the Gospel as "good

news," which in Latin is *evangelium*).[18] The term has also been self-applied by Protestant

Christians on the American continent since the very first migrations. Those who identify

as evangelicals today are more directly descended from a group that originally called

themselves "neo-evangelicals": conservative Christians who broke from fundamentalism

in the middle of the twentieth century, overlooking the minor doctrinal differences among

themselves to form a coalition working together to "save souls." When I refer to

"evangelicals" in this project, unless otherwise indicated, I am referring to this latter-day

movement—a movement that includes not only high-profile figures like Billy Graham

and Rick Wallis, but also multitudes of lesser-known preachers and evangelists, and

churches ranging in size from tens of thousands of members to only a dozen or two.

However, even these definitions of fundamentalism and evangelicalism are

somewhat fluid; Lundberg echoes Joel Carpenter in suggesting that rhetoricians have

erred in seeing fundamentalism and evangelicalism as "substantially coherent bodies of

belief" and as "unified and unproblematic identity categories" rather than as "strategic

unities" built from disparate elements of doctrine, theology, and cultural commitment.[19]

This is perhaps even more true as "fundamentalist" and, to a much lesser extent,

"evangelical" have been used as pejorative labels in society. I agree with Lundberg and

Carpenter that a hermeneutical approach that progresses from the labels "fundamentalist"

and "evangelical" to a set of propositional and coherent doctrines is an error; hence my

attempts to couch these terms not in a doctrinal definition, but in terms of self-identified

fundamentalists or evangelicals seeing themselves as part of a narrative about their

particular approach to the faith.

The final term I will discuss here is "Christian Right." Culturally, this movement is known under several terms—the Religious Right (or New Religious Right) and the Christian Right (or New Christian Right). Randall Balmer is one of the few critics who has offered a serious analysis of the various terms used, defending his use of the term "Religious Right" by writing that "I don't find much that I recognize as *Christian* in the actions and policies of the Religious Right."[20] Balmer seeks to differentiate the Religious Right from Christianity in order to reclaim the label of "Christian" within the culture.

While I respect Dr. Balmer's viewpoint and certainly sympathize with his frustration at the cultural and media portrayal of the Christian Right as emblematic of all Christians, I make the opposite choice, preferring the term "Christian Right" for three reasons. The first reason is accuracy: the movement is *not* generically "religious," but specifically *Christian*. Though Christian Right rhetors describe their beliefs in terms of "Judeo-Christian values," suggesting an openness to Judaism, it is an indisputable fact that the dominant voices in the movement on every level are Christians—and, more specifically, theologically conservative (and mostly Protestant) Christians. The second reason is that the movement does not *aspire* to generically inter-religious alliances with those who agree with their positions, except on certain well-defined issues (such as the defense of the contemporary state of Israel).

My third reason for using the term "Christian Right" is, in fact, related to Balmer's reasons for *avoiding* the term: Like him, I am a Christian, and like him my faith leads me to liberal or social-democratic positions on economic, social, and cultural issues. Also, like Balmer, I believe that the Christian tradition offers a solid ground for critique of the Christian Right's worldview, positions, and stances. Describing this rhetoric as "Christian

Right" thus opens up space for critique of Christian Right rhetoric on the basis of the Christian theological and rhetorical tradition; were I to use the term "Religious Right," I believe I would be ceding the rhetorical space of "Christianity" and thus potentially confining my critique to more general theories about the relationship between religion, culture, and the state.

Theoretical Backdrop

This project is situated in a significant lacuna in rhetorical scholarship. Perhaps because religious terminology saturates the work of Kenneth Burke and perhaps because of his use of "perfection"—discussions in absolute terms—as a category for understanding the core of rhetoric, religious rhetorics have always been a ripe subject for analysis in the dramatistic mode. Dramatistic and narrative perspectives have certainly been used to illuminate individual texts associated with the rhetoric of the Christian Right—such as treatments of apocalyptic discourse by Brummett and O'Leary, abortion rhetoric by Lake, and young-earth creationism by McClure, to name but a very few.[21] However, while there have been numerous rhetorical treatments of individual texts[22], rhetors,[23] discursive genres,[24] and issues[25] that interact in smaller or greater ways with the Christian Right—many of which I discuss throughout this project as they become relevant to the topic at hand—there have been relatively few wider-scale treatments of Christian Right discourse as a whole, particularly from a dramatistic and narrative perspective, and perhaps the best example of such a study (by Susan Friend Harding) comes from outside the field of rhetoric.

Sharon Crowley's treatment of apocalyptic rhetoric and its impact on democracy parallels and informs this project in many ways. The structure of Christian Right

discourse, Crowley suggests, is built on what Linda Kintz describes as the "ideology of clarity": a "densely articulated and hence highly resonant set of conjectures" that forms a "recursively spiraling logic" of mythological and propositional symbolic structures that create a "sense of seamless coherence" between personal, political, spiritual, and historical narratives.[26] Crowley presents Christian apocalypticism as striving against secular liberalism for hegemony in American culture, drawing its strength from its attachment to key nodal points in American rhetoric, concepts like "family" and "God"; however, she contends, the ideology of apocalypticism is dangerous for democracy because, in denying any means by which an interlocutor could falsify the ideology, it "opens few spaces for [rhetorical] invention" and demands instead that the interlocutor completely convert to the apocalyptic ideology.[27]

Crowley writes that despite the fact that the logical system of apocalypticism is built on some rather novel interpretations of the Bible by privileged figures, the adherent is asked to believe that the entire system is logically derived from the "common sense" principles that anyone should be able to find in a "literal" reading of the Bible. The interpretive leaps of the movement's leaders, such as the premillennial dispensationalist narrative, are presented as quite literally absolute truth, functioning to lend the authority of "divine reason" and "divine reality" to their views on history, politics, and culture, while maintaining a healthy enough distance between "God's time" (the elements of the eschatological narrative) and "historical time" that the eschatological claims cannot be empirically falsified.[28]

Further, Crowley links the appeal and resonance of apocalyptic discourse to the emotional associations believers make with it, suggesting that adherents are asked to

judge new facts and ideas not based on their empirical veracity, but rather on their

emotional resonance. This creates what Crowley terms as "a rightness that is deeply felt

rather than rationalized" as a warrant for accepting or rejecting facts or reasons; thus, she

argues, "apocalypticism is faith in belief itself, belief that the deeply resonant structure of

the ideology of clarity is reality itself."[29]

I agree with much of what Crowley suggests about the Christian Right's

constitutive and ideological nature, and in many ways this project is another variation on

the same basic tune. However, I do differ with her in a few areas. First, I agree with

Christian Lundberg's critique of what he terms her "rhetorical fundamentalism," and

particularly his disagreement with her claim that rhetoricians will be able to defuse the

resonance of the rhetoric of the Christian Right by contextualizing their antagonism

toward their opponents within a larger transcendent *agon* of contingency. Lundberg

argues that fundamentalism of any kind represents "an investment in a doctrine of

otherness," a constitutive rhetoric that relies heavily on notions of opposition and polarity

for its resonance.[30] I agree that these antagonisms are necessary components of the

narratives that constitute the Christian Right's rhetorical identity.

This dovetails with my second critique of Crowley, which is her privileging of the

eschatological narrative over the whole of the narrative. While she does allude to the

importance of creationism to ideology in several points in the book, I believe she places a

disproportionate amount of emphasis on eschatology. The unity of past, present, and

future within the narrative structures I identify in this project suggests that to isolate

future antagonisms (the eschatological narrative) is to miss the bigger picture: the

symbiotic relationship between future antagonisms with collectively-remembered past

and present agonistic scenarios in which the adherent understands him- or herself playing a role.

Furthermore, Crowley's emphasis seems more to be on the *fact* of eschatology than anything specific to the narrative; premillennialism and postmillennialism, she suggests, have similar resonance in that both present a future as already written, despite the fact that (as Crowley acknowledges) they have markedly different views about the fate of the world and the efficacy of action. As O'Leary and McFarland point out in their discussion of fundamentalist criticism of Pat Robertson for his eschatological shifts in the 1988 presidential campaign, the question of what the apocalypse looks like is very much a point of contention—and often doctrinal purity—among many fundamentalists and evangelicals.[31]

Susan Biesecker-Mast suggests that the reason for the relative paucity of rhetorical scholarship about fundamentalism—and I would extend this to include the whole of the Christian Right—stems from the fact that "the discourse appears entirely unrhetorical," in that it relies on Biblical inerrancy, a closed view of history as an already-written narrative, and a repetitive message that fits all observed phenomena into a fixed eschatological narrative with a fixed response from the audience. However, she suggests, the political activity of fundamentalists suggests that the discourse is in fact rhetorical—and thus worthy of further exploration by rhetorical scholars.[32]

Starting with Falwell and Robertson's comments on September 13, she sees this rhetoricity in the contradictions between premillennial dispensationalism and political action, suggesting that the narrative basis for the former—in which God is "the sole author of a closed history in which the world careens by its ever-increasing sinfulness

towards its imminent damnation," an unchangeable and immutable narrative arc—makes the latter not only "nonsensical" but also "blasphemous."[33] As Biesecker-Mast suggests, motivating people to political involvement requires at least some sense of the efficacy of human action; if a rhetor cannot convince his or her audience that what they do will be at least in some way efficacious, the audience will not be motivated to act. However, the logic of the fundamentalism described by Biesecker-Mast suggests that the very notion of humans as efficacious creatures suggests that they are in some way the authors of history's narrative and capable of turning the tide—which would contradict some of the most basic tenets of fundamentalism.

I would suggest that this contradiction is resolved by the placement of the American Narrative within the Cosmic Narrative; if the audience accepts their dual identity as soldiers in God's spiritual war against Satan and as Americans who are a part of the nation God has chosen as a beacon of light and a missionary to the world, they will be motivated to act if not out of a sense that national revival could spark a worldwide movement toward freedom and Christianity, then at least out of a desire for an evangelistic demonstration. If the Christian America is prosperous, free, and happy while the rest of the (secular) world falls into sin, war, poverty, and chaos, then at least some around the world would wonder what Americans had that they did not have, and convert to Christianity (and Americanism) in order to be a part of that.

Perhaps the closest other study to this project is Susan Friend Harding's dramatistic and narrative analysis of the discourse of Jerry Falwell and Southern fundamentalism during the transitional period of the 1980s. As a cultural anthropologist, Harding bases her analysis on extensive interviews and participant-observer experiences

within Falwell's movement in particular throughout the 1980s. The whole of the project is an exemplary treatment of the ways in which the dramatistic perspective with an emphasis on the narrative component can illuminate the rhetorics associated with the Christian Right.

Harding argues that Falwell used discourse "not only to mobilize fundamentalists politically, but to transform, rearrange, and reposition fundamentalism itself," bringing it from the position it had held for the last six decades—in which fundamentalists perceived themselves as set apart from the world, and saw political action as unimportant in comparison to evangelism—into a new, broader outlook in which fundamentalists would see themselves as politically and socially engaged in the battle for the heart and soul of American culture.[34] She suggests that this was accomplished through the manipulation of the fundamentalist perspective on history, which sees a basic continuity between the Biblical narrative, history between the Bible days and today, and their own personal narratives; through the manipulation of fundamentalist perspectives on time, in which time flows forward for humans (in our experiencing the world from the present into the future) but in a coherent unity, backward and forward, from the perspective of God (who has already written the narrative that we all enact); and through the manipulation of fundamentalist identity, in which emphasis was placed on the commonalities between traditional fundamentalists and the larger evangelical movement that contained Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, "neo-evangelicals" in the tradition of Billy Graham, and other conservative Christians of all stripes.

Harding also discusses the circulation of these narratives, outlining the ways in which Falwell took advantage of his "empire of words"—a "veritable Bible-based

language industry" that included circulation of Falwell and his allies' rhetoric on television, on the radio, in books and other publications, in Christian schools and Sunday school programs, in education, and in the news media—to reach audiences well outside most other southern Baptist pastors' spheres of influence, arguing that his presence at the top of this empire made him "exceptionally well poised" to transform fundamentalism.[35] This web of discourses, she argues, were the "sites, or workshops, in which Falwell, his allies, and their communities recast and resituated themselves as a people in history."[36]

Dramatism and Narrative

Harding touches on a set of scholarly discourses central to this study, those centered on Burke's conception of dramatism and identification. Most significantly, Burke's work on identification creates a specific space for totalizing narratives like the ones I will be discussing here in his differentiation between what he calls "dialectic" and "ultimate" language. Dialectic language, to Burke, is language that creates and describes the "realm of ideas," but it is limited in that when ideas come into conflict, they remain in tension with one another—resulting in compromise or conflict—rather than resolving to a whole.[37] Ultimate language resolves these conflicts between ideas by placing them within a larger order or progression, with "a 'guiding idea' or 'unitary principle' behind the diversity of voices."[38] Burke also suggests that "perhaps the 'ultimate' order comes most natural to narrative forms," even if he does not make narrative a *requirement* for an ultimate order.[39] Burke writes that in a "properly constructed" ultimate narrative, the succession from principle to principle will be "so implicit that we may not even discern it," where each successive point of the plot builds on the previous ones to form an ultimate progression of forms.[40]

Burke sets up a critical framework in which the critic examines the dramatic roles created within a text, for individuals to identify with communities and nations both diachronically and synchronically, and the dramatic stories in which we see those roles playing a part. The notion of identity as narrative-formed is an essential assumption of this study, in that I posit that the rhetorical participation in the dramatic narratives of the Christian Right is a definitional quality of the movement. In other words, I define the Christian Right as a rhetorical movement, a movement defined not by organizational or institutional allegiances but by appeals to these two narratives and, specifically, these narratives' constitution of a subject-position for the receptive auditor which, as Charland would suggest, leads to further stances (whether implicit or explicit) on epistemology, teleology, political theory, and political action.

Walter Fisher expanded and refined the notion of dramatism to posit what he called the "narrative paradigm," a framework for understanding human communication that took as its basis MacIntyre's assertion that human beings are first and foremost *homo narrans*—the storytelling animal. Fisher contrasted this with what he termed the "rational world paradigm," which he suggested understood humans first as *reasoning* creatures who understand the world through the logical progression of propositional truths. Rather than using strict rationality, Fisher suggests a framework in which people make decisions based on *good reasons*—elements which, he suggests, "provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice" of a given text.[41] Fisher also argues that opposing arguments in the public sphere are really competing narratives, and that people decide to accept a narrative based on two elements: its *probability*, or "what constitutes a coherent story,"

and its *fidelity*, which is "whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their own lives."[42]

Fisher suggested the narrative paradigm not only as a descriptive lens for the critic to understand and interpret discourse; to him, it was a universal truth (hence his describing it as a paradigm) with prescriptive implications. He argued that the narrative paradigm applies not only to "public moral argument," but to *all* forms of human communication—political campaigns and poems, advertisements and scientific journals alike—and that this is *the* way human beings understand the world around them, a mode of understanding that all people "culturally acquire […] through a universal faculty and experience."[43]

Barbara Warnick argued against the notion of the narrative paradigm as normative or prescriptive, arguing against Fisher's claim that this "universal faculty" for understanding narrative results in their having a "natural tendency to prefer the true and the just,"[44] and suggesting that Fisher contradicted himself in presenting something akin to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's "universal audience" as an ideal auditor in his logic of good reasons while also suggesting that individual choices are always based in the particular and contextual. She suggested the acceptance in Weimar Germany of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a counterexample; *Mein Kampf* presented an argument that was coherent in providing an explanation for what was happening in Germany at the time, and had a sufficient amount of "ambiguity and implicitness" in what it was claiming that it could account for even facts that seemed to contradict it.[45] "A rhetorical narrative may 'ring true' in the lives of particular audience members, may resonate with their own experience and that of those whom they admire, and nevertheless be a bad story."[46] Fisher's

paradigm, she suggested, cannot present within its own logic a reason for rejecting *Mein Kampf.*

John Lucaites and Celeste Condit suggested that while the narrative paradigm was useful for understanding poetic and literary narratives, in which the author could create "a logically or aesthetically complete vision" of a closed world, the fact that rhetorical communication speaks to a world outside itself and into a specific context makes the criterion of narrative probability—that is, the coherence of the narrative structure— inadequate for assessing a rhetorical narrative's adequacy.[47] Farrell made a similar argument, suggesting that the difference between literary narratives and rhetorical or conversational exchanges is that the literary narrative is closed and complete, with the author capable of controlling time, whereas rhetoric or conversation is incomplete and unpredictable—as rhetorical and conversational exchanges lack a transcendent and omniscient "author" guiding them toward an end. Because of this unpredictability, narrative is an underlying and unstated aspect of rhetorical conversation.[48] Implicit in both of these arguments is the suggestion that while Fisher's narrative view might be appropriate for *some* texts, his critical lens does not apply to *all* texts—or at least, not all in the same way.

In an attempt to revive critical use of narrative and the narrative paradigm after their becoming "virtually dead subjects" in rhetorical scholarship, Kevin McClure offered an alternative interpretation of Fisher's paradigm. He argued that while Fisher was correct in rooting the paradigm in Burke's notion of identification, he erred in using the categories of fidelity and probability, as they "limit[ed] the range and descriptive utility of identification" in the paradigm to texts that were compatible with "good reasons"[49];

this created not only the problems identified by critics above, but also brought the narrative paradigm out-of-step with poststructuralism's critique of the text, subject, and audience. Poststructuralism reveals narratives to be "co-constructions of meanings created by texts and audiences,"[50] a result of a particular audience's encounter with a text and that text's interaction with the other texts and textual fragments in the audience's memory, language, and culture; McClure suggests that Fisher's paradigm does not account for this.

As an alternative, McClure proposes a return to the root of the theory—Burke's concept of identification as the root of rhetoric—which McClure suggests "carries narrativity far beyond Fisher's explicit normative limitations of probability and fidelity."[51] Accepting *narrative identification* as a critical framework enables the critic to recognize that "identification is the prime mechanism through which acceptance of an argument or story works or does not,"[52] enabling him or her to more thoroughly interrogate the ways in which a given narrative interacts with other constitutive rhetorics, narratives, and linguistic constructions that a given audience might bring bring with them. McClure's case study is Young-Earth Creationism, whose acceptance he suggests cannot be accounted for according to narrative fidelity and probability; when viewed through the wider lens of narrative identification, however, the critic's understanding of Young-Earth Creationism and its acceptance in society is strengthened by "reference to its identifications with other Biblically based narratives and its religious and sociological interconnections,"[53] such as the importance of Biblical inerrancy within fundamentalist theology and the supposition that the arc of history is playing out according to a divine plan rather than the randomness suggested by naturalistic evolutionary theories.

I find McClure's vision of narrative identification useful in that it provides for a more fulfilling and flexible means for understanding the interactions between narratives, texts, and audiences than the categories of probability and fidelity. As McClure himself illustrates, the rational-world paradigm (and, by extension, Fisher's categories for narrative interpretation) cannot account for Christian Right rhetoric in particular; the narratives of the Christian Right represent a problem in that they call their audiences to rationally-based actions like voting or campaigning while drawing on the "deeply irrational or non-rational resources" of religious narratives.[54] McClure also demonstrates a much more robust way of bringing narratives into conversation with rhetorical scholarship on identity and subjectivity—particularly Charland's theory of constitutive rhetoric, which is integral to this study.

So how is such a view operationalized into a critical framework? The work of political scientist David Gutterman presents what I see as a useful way forward.[55] Gutterman suggests that critics attune themselves to narratives' power to create and define identity, shape the horizons of temporal and spatial context in which a community is operating, and engage with and relate to other narratives. Narratives have power, he writes, to the extent that they resonate with the underlying "sacred stories" of a culture, functioning as a mediating force between "innovation" and "sedimentation," terms he borrows from Ricoeur to refer to the idea that the narrative innovations of one generation become the sediment of tradition from which the next generation constructs their own narratives.[56] In this way, Gutterman suggests, "'sacred stories' offer not just the stability of tradition but also the horizon within which meaningful and intelligible innovation can occur."[57]

I suggest that these three elements set out by Gutterman—identity, setting, and relationship to other stories—give the critic the tools needed to operationalize McClure's call for deeper analyses of narrative identification. The narratives I identify as foundational for Christian Right rhetoric operate as constitutive rhetorics which, as Charland would suggest, function to define the subject and identify him or her with other subjects in the context of a narrative past, present, and future. These narratives operate by configuring space and time, offering rhetors flexibility in enabling them to operate in two spatiotemporal frames: the frame of chronological history, in which space and time are measured and operate in a linear progression from past to future, and the frame of salvation history or *heilsgeschichte*, which sees time as a series of connected *kairos* moments in which God intervenes providentially to fulfill God's purposes and plans. And their connection to other narratives about religion's place in the nation can be understood through scholarly inquiries into civil religion, which have both descriptively and prescriptively theorized the complex relationship between religion in general and American identity.

Identity and Constitutive Rhetorics

Burke sets out identification as a key term for the function of rhetoric, a role expanded upon by McClure who sees it as the key to a more robust vision of narrative as a paradigm for understanding human communication. A critical exploration of identification first implicates the question of identity itself, and the ways in which rhetorics can form or shape identities; in this project I will be drawing on Maurice Charland's conception of constitutive rhetoric as a critical tool for understanding the role of identity formation in the narratives of the Christian Right.

Charland draws on Michael Calvin McGee's assertion that a "people," rather than enjoying a separate existence, is a construct of rhetoric, called into existence by the rhetor and existent only to the extent that those addressed as a people accept the rhetor's claims about them and their history, present, and future; as McGee puts it, "'the people' *are* the social and political myths they accept."[58] Charland starts with this basic assumption that peoples are socially constructed by rhetorical acts rather than preexistent, and discusses the ideological effects of the constitutive rhetorics that, in addressing (interpellating) their audience, seek to rhetorically construct them as part of a larger constituency in a grand narrative; constitutive rhetorics, he suggests, constitute "a collective subject"[59] that is "transhistorical" (part of a continuity of past, present, and future), and create "the illusion of freedom," so called because while rhetoric must appeal to an uncertain future in order to motivate action from the audience, their acceptance of the subject-positions constructed for them by the rhetorical act necessarily limits them to act in ways prescribed by the rhetor's narrative arc.[60]

Narrativity plays a crucial role in rhetoric's constitutive function; the member of the audience is asked to see him- or herself as the subject of the text, one of the protagonists in the story weaved by the rhetor. This has implications not only for the subject's present, but also creates a new way of understanding the past and future; as Charland writes, "to be constituted as a subject in a narrative is to be constituted with a history, motives, and a *telos*."[61] Further, religious rhetorics in particular have the potential for strong constitutive functions, as Nathaniel Cordova makes plain in his discussion of the religious and political elements of the Puerto Rican *Catecismo del Pueblo*. Cordova roots the appeal of religiously-based constitutive rhetorics not just in their invocation of

the ultimate but also in their invocation of values shared with others, "the life of a community of believers."[62] A shared set of religious beliefs and practices can construct an identity for those who adhere to them; this identity can later form the building blocks of another set of subject-positions.

Charland also suggests that successful constitutive rhetorics "resolve, or at least contain, experienced contradictions" in previous conceptions of identity; the new identity creates a category for conception of the self that transcends the dissonant elements. In his example, French-speaking Canadians experienced a contradiction between their subject positions as citizens of the federal republic of Canada, an "ultimately foreign" government, and as citizens of the province of Quebec represented in provincial government by other francophones.[63] In a sense, if one views the example from a narrative perspective, French-speaking Canadians were asked to see themselves as part of two different, and somewhat contradictory narratives. In one, they were part of the story of Quebec, imbued with a unique culture based not only on the language they spoke but on hundreds of years of development of a culture unique even from other French-speaking cultures. In the other, they were part of the story of Canada, the cultural "leftovers" of the 150-year period of French rule over the nation, a francophone minority among an anglophone minority who were expected to subordinate their unique culture to the nation as a whole for the good of Canada's future. The narrative of the Québécois—a complete and independent nation with its own land and language—creates a new teleological vision for the subject.

This function is heightened when the narrative being told takes on cosmic proportions, as the Cosmic Narrative does; seeing oneself as a member of a unique

people with a history and a future according to a quasi-naturalistic view of history is a potent vision, but seeing oneself as a member of a unique people who have been chosen by God to fulfill God's plans for the entire human race, laid since the beginning of time itself, is a rather more grand one.

James Jasinski's offers a different, more methodologically-oriented perspective on constitutive rhetorics. He draws on Leff's distinction between intentional and extensional aspects of the text—in which a critic views the text in terms of either the intentions of the rhetor (the intentional) or in terms of its "persuasive effect" (extensional)[64]—to suggest that critics look at both the "constitutive potential" that exists within the text itself, as well as the "circulation and discursive articulation" of its forms "in ways that enable and constrain subsequent practice."[65] He and Jennifer R. Merceica expand on this point in a 2010 piece, replacing "intentional" and "extensional" with "interior" and "exterior" (which enables them to avoid the problematic notions of intention and effect) and suggesting that while there has been a great deal of critical work looking at the interior aspects of constitutive rhetorics, there has been far less development in the exterior aspects.[66] This, they write, gives us an incomplete view of the text; while texts do *invite* their audiences to understand themselves in certain ways or adopt certain narratives, a text's circulation into other texts—including its reinterpretation outside its original "intentional" context—can "define, shape, and even transform the utterance's initially inchoate constitutive potential."[67]

Jasinski also set out in his initial piece on constitutive rhetorics in historiography four categories for critical analysis of the intentional dimensions of constitutive rhetorics: their creation of subject-positions, their shaping of time and space, their setting out the

norms of community culture, and their use of linguistic resources within a given culture.[68] Jasinski and Merceica modify these categories slightly in 2009, suggesting that internal analyses focus on a text's invitation to its audience to modify the "key terms" of their culture, to understand public time differently, to reconfigure space, and to "affirm as well as challenge established sources of cultural authority, bonds of affiliation, and institutional relationships."[69] However, they suggest, the categories for understanding exterior rhetorics are "much less fully realized at present." I would suggest that a critic wishing to look at the exterior aspects of a constitutive text could use similar categories to those suggested by Jasinski and Merceica for interior analyses in analyzing the circulation of that text; this project will represent such an exploration, looking at the ways In which the two narratives I set out have circulated throughout the discourse of political and cultural actors who wish to affiliate themselves with the Christian Right's rhetorical vision.

Jasinski and Merceica's notion of exterior analysis proves particularly salient when, as in this case, the text is constructed by the critic from what McGee would call "fragments" from other texts.[70] There is no single source in which both narratives are set out in total—but, often, texts that set out one of these narratives *assume* the other, to the point where the two narratives begin to act upon one another. In other words, this single text, composed of the two narratives and the spaces and interactions between the narratives, which I will argue functions *primarily* constitutively, is *only* seen in "second-degree" forms of circulation; it is from this circulation that I *reconstruct* the full text from its multiple sources, at which point I can then analyze its interior dynamics and the

invitations, tensions, and resolutions within the text itself according to Gutterman's more general criteria.

An alternative vision of constitutive rhetorics is found in Susan Friend Harding's discussion of her own research into the changes in fundamentalism throughout the 1980s. An anthropologist by training, Harding nonetheless draws on the work of rhetoricians to discuss the ways in which the manipulation of narratives by fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell contributed to the rhetorical potency and flexibility of their movement, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, which she suggests were a transitional period between an old vision of fundamentalism in which separation from "the world" and action to "save souls" was the center of the movement and a new vision, led by people like Falwell, which saw a larger place for engagement by fundamentalists in culture, the professional world, and politics. She argues that the narrative flexibility of fundamentalist rhetoric, and particularly its ability to create gaps and spaces for ambiguous interpretation, gave Falwell and his allies the tools they needed to subvert the old way of thinking in favor of the new.

Harding's reading of fundamentalism's view of time problematizes Charland's discussion of the "illusion of freedom" as an ideological effect of constitutive rhetorics. The fact that the end of the story has already been written—not as speculative or dependent on human action, as in the White Paper, but as something that is *certain* to the point where, from God's point of view, it has already happened—*denies* that the individual actor has the freedom to ensure that the *telos* implied by his or her subject-position is fulfilled. This gets at a division made by multiple critics in their discussion of the role of teleology in narrative rhetorical forms. Farrell's and Lucaites and Condit's

critiques of Fisher are echoed by Charland when he writes that "while classical narratives have an ending, constitutive rhetorics leave the task of narrative closure to their constituted subjects,"[71] implying a difference between classical narratives and rhetorical visions like that of Quebec's White Paper. Farrell puts it thus: "narrative in real-life 'talk' must be less an overt creation of any omniscient author and more a background postulate governing the expectations of communicants themselves."[72]

So how do rhetors using the Christian Right's narratives create the "illusion of freedom"? I suggest three ways—one of which is through the manipulation of the Cosmic Narrative alone, and the other two of which occur within the interactions between the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative.

First, in terms of the Cosmic Narrative, the chronology of the future is left intentionally vague. Religious historial Harold Bloom suggests that the Millerite movement, which formed around William Miller's specific prediction that the eschaton would occur in 1843 (leading to a subsequent "Great Disappointment" when the prediction turned out to be wrong), served as a warning to other millennarians, arguing that the "creedlessness" of American millennarianism since then has "learned to make gestures to the End, while taking care not to fall into the Millerite abyss."[73] In keeping not only with avoiding the mistakes of the Great Disappointment but also with Jesus's assertion in the Gospel of Matthew that "nobody knows the day or the hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,"[74] prominent promoters of the Cosmic Narrative do not make exact predictions about dates or years of future End Times events; while the ultimate *outcome* of the story is certain in the Cosmic Narrative, it occurs in a future that is functionally outside of chronological time.

Second, unlike the Cosmic Narrative, which places past, present, and future as part of God's grand master plan, the American Narrative is left incomplete, leaving room for America to be revived by recommitting itself to God or destroyed by a wrathful God who leaves only a faithful remnant. This interaction creates an ambiguity and tension about the future that bleeds together the determinism of the completed book of literature and the uncertainty about the future that motivates action. Harding points to the modifications made by Christian Right rhetors in their discussions of eschatology throughout the 1980s, as they adapted it into a discourse that could accommodate social action.[75] They could have denied the general teleological trajectory of premillennialism held by their fundamentalist forebears, or ignored the subject entirely; however, they instead chose to create a second, smaller eschaton, in which Christians would be judged prior to the final judgment, creating space in which there was the possibility that America could be saved.

Third, the interaction between the narrative creates not *one* subject-position, but *multiple* subject-positions, each with their own teleological vector. Though God invites the audience to *participate* in the narrative as part of God's righteous cause, the audience knows that the choices they make could just as easily cast them in other roles. The Parable of the Sower, found in Mark 4, illustrates the multiplicity of roles available in the narrative. In this parable, Jesus tells the story of a farmer who cast out seeds along the path, with some finding good soil and bearing fruit, and others for various reasons failing to do so, as a metaphor for people's response to Jesus's message ("the word"). Jesus is implicitly calling his audience to ask themselves which of the seeds they are: are they the seed that fell on rocky soil, "hearing the word and at once receiving it with joy" but

ultimately failing when "trouble or persecution" comes because their roots do not go deep enough? Are they the seed sown among thorns, where the word is choked out of them by the "weeds" of worry, wealth, and "desires for other things"? Or are they the seed that falls on good soil and produces a crop yielding even a hundred times what was sown?[76] The Cosmic and American Narratives create even more roles than this, enabling the audience to see themselves not only as God's allies, but also potentially as those who fail under persecution, backslide into their old ways, betray the faith, or unwittingly aid the forces of evil. There is an implied risk here for those who accept these narratives; while they may see themselves as the heroes of the story at this moment, so too were King Saul, Benedict Arnold, Charles Darwin, and Lucifer himself once heroes—before they fell into evil and became villains.

Thus, the "illusion of freedom" Charland refers to as the third ideological effect of constitutive rhetorics is molded by the dynamic interaction between the narratives into a tension between freedom and certainty.[77] While on a "macro" level the end of the story is a certainty, in that God—the author and orchestrator of that narrative—has seen and molded the end from a position outside of time, the individual believer on a "micro" level, with his or her limited perspective, is left with the uncertainty of (a) the chronological non-definition of the eschatology, in which "nobody knows the day or the hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,"[78] (b) what the fate of the American nation will be in light of the two teleological alternatives created by the narrative, and (c) what his or her individual role will be in terms of the *dramatis personae* laid out in the two narratives.

Rhetorical Constructions of History

The argumentative and constitutive work of the Christian Right's narratives is also done by their view of history, which sets up the spatial and temporal boundaries in which the various players in the cosmic and national drama play out their parts. The construction of space and time within these narratives is connected with their identity-forming constitutive function because, as Jasinski suggests, such rhetorics invite their audiences to see themselves as subjects not in a static, propositional state, but rather as part of a narrative. The narratives operate as "general experiential structures" that invite their audience to experience the figurative distance between various points in the past, present, and future in different ways.[79]

E. Culpepper Clark and Raymie McKerrow suggest that contrary to modernist assumptions that positioned the historian as dispassionate narrator presenting history as something akin to "scientific fact," any retelling of history is a construction of that history, "a rhetorical re-presentation of the self or a community."[80] In narrating history, a rhetor "re-creates" it and in doing so implicates his or her own ideological assumptions and arguments, even if he or she does not intend to do so. As Clark and McKerrow suggest, "the language of the historian is closer to that of the raconteur than the scientist."[81] This is particularly true for the narratives I identify here, which rely on history not only for their teleological vision but also in their use of typology, as I discussed above.

Clark and McKerrow's view of the historian's work is complicated, however, by the doubt expressed by outside audiences not only in the Christian Right narratives' *interpretation* of historical facts (as those disagreeing with the White Paper highlighted

by Charland might have done) but in their construction of *the facts themselves*. Clark and McKerrow suggest that history is "simultaneously a real and an invented account," because historical events like the Holocaust or the atom bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki are "undeniable" historical facts[82]; the questionable historicity of the events of the Bible throws a monkey wrench into that conception, as the "facts" are no longer undeniable.

The teleological and epistemological claims of the Cosmic Narrative in particular rely on a view of the events of the Bible not as allegorical tales or even as events whose historicity is indeterminate, but as events that are just as historically *true* as the Holocaust or Lincoln's presidency. As Harding points out, the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy *presupposes* the historicity of the events of the Bible; if there is any disagreement between the data and a literal interpretation of the Bible, then it is the data that must be wrong.[83] This flattens the differentiation made by Clark and McKerrow between fiction and history, in which they suggest that while the historian must "strain for verisimilitude," the fiction writer does not necessarily have to. Rhetors who appeal to Biblical stories—and particularly, stories about miracles, like the healing of the blind or walking on water—as *history*, however, break this distinction down. The very thing that makes a miracle distinctive is that it breaks the conventional rules of verisimilitude; its power depends on its being impossible according to the conventional rules of nature.

The American Narrative also implicates rhetoricians' discussions about history, based as it is on the constructs of civil religion in the United States. This is perhaps more similar to Clark and McKerrow's discussion of history, where there is very little dispute over the broad outlines of the "data," than the Cosmic Narrative which relies on broad

historical claims which are very much in dispute. The American Narrative uses much of the same "data" as secular American histories, but uses that data to tell a markedly different story.

This discussion implicates apocalyptic literature as well, in terms of its construction of temporality as a whole; notable analyses of apocalyptic literature from a dramatistic perspective have been provided by Barry Brummett and Stephen O'Leary, each of whom emphasized at least one text explicitly linked to the Christian Right in their analysis. Brummett argued that rhetoricians need to take apocalyptic rhetoric seriously and treat it as a rhetorical genre, with its own markers in strategy, argumentation, and style.[84] O'Leary's suggestion was that apocalyptic rhetoric "functions as a symbolic theodicy"—a solution to the problem of evil—that accomplishes this explanation "through discursive construction of temporality," by contextualizing present evils within a narrative of cosmic time-frames.[85]

The narrative fuel for rhetorics of civil religion is collective memory, the shaping of the past for the purposes of justifying the order of the present. As Bruce Gronbeck puts it, collective memory's purpose is to create "absolute identification—an interpretation of then and now where the hermeneutic circle spins in exceedingly small rotations," a discourse that seeks to place the contemporary on par with a legendary past.[86] Civil religious rhetorics, then, are not just a collection of symbols, a pantheon of saints, or a liturgy of national rituals, but an invitation to take part and see oneself as part of the narrative of the nation. The collective memorializing that occurs in civil religious rhetorics suggests that the great heroes of the nation's past left present-day citizens a legacy, and calls contemporary audiences to identify not only with the narratives and

rituals of the past but also to emulate their mindset or moral strength. Like saints, the nation's heroes serve as exemplar and inspiration.

However, there is a different historical lens that might shed more light on the Cosmic and American Narratives; although both narratives set the events they describe in the context of a chronological timeline, they also employ what German theologians called *heilsgeschichte*—salvation history. Oscar Cullman, who is described by John Reumann in the *Encyclopedia of Christianity* as having "brought Heilsgeschichte to its fullest expression and, with pupils and allies, its peak of influence in biblical and ecumenical theology,"[87] described *heilsgeschichte* in terms of a linear timeline stretching from the creation to the end-times, punctuated by crucial events called *kairoi*, which Reumann summarizes as "significant moments in the revealing and executing of God's plan of salvation"[88]—or, as feminist theologian Lucy Tatman puts it, "the whole of history is read as a progressive movement toward the realization of God's ends."[89] In Cullman's theology, the most significant of these kairotic moments is the death and resurrection of Christ, "a 'midpoint' in time [with] a unique, absolutely decisive character."[90]

In other words, the *heilsgeschichte* perspective on history implies (a) a massive, sweeping narrative in which each historical event has a place in the vast plan, (b) that the entire narrative centers around a single crucial kairotic "salvation" moment that creates a new nation or a new people, who then are chosen by God in the wake of that moment for God's mission to the world, and (c) that there are a number of smaller kairotic moments that both lead up to the salvation moment and help the community created by that kairotic moment survive and make sense of the moment. This view of history understands God to be at work in the present and future, and uses evidence of God's involvement in kairotic

moments in the past to suggest that there is a massive, divine plan for such moments to continue into the future until the final act.

It is important to note that *heilsgeschichte* is as much about the future as it is about the past; its theological purpose is "assuring the chosen ones of God's actions in the future, albeit at the end of the future."[91] The interpretation of the past in terms of God's salvific acts at key kairotic moments serves an epistemological and teleological purpose, giving the believer an interpretive framework for understanding the present *and* assuring the believer that no matter how bleak the future looks, God is in control of it and all too willing to intervene when God's interests are at stake. Further, as Tatman suggests, while heilsgeschichte originally arose in the context of 19th century bourgeois German theology (in which the "'truth' of historical progress […] was certainly beginning to be felt"[92]), the incorporation of the cataclysmic apocalyptic vision—which Tatman among others links to "the underdogs, the militarily and religiously oppressed and persecuted"—made the notion more rhetorically potent in that it "can accommodate, conceptually, both a smooth sort of man-made (but God-willed) sense of historical progress, *and* a more irruptive, even violent sort of 'progress.'"[93] Just as the familiar saying goes about statistics, it seems that *heilsgeschichte* could be used to prove anything; it can accommodate both setbacks and successes in pointing to its vision of the future. Harding suggests that the future looms so large in fundamentalist readings of history as to shape the past.

The notion of kairotic moments is a shared one between theological and rhetorical scholarship; in both, it describes the sense of the possibilities inherent in a particular moment, a "quality of time" as differentiated from the quantity of measured time,

chronos.[94] *Kairos* is understood in terms of the opportunity to engage in an act that can change the course of events; it "depend[s] more on the forces at work on and in a particular moment than their quantifiable length."[95] The kairotic moment is one of potentiality, a moment seen not in terms of its location on a fixed timeline but in terms of a convergence of forces, ideas, and actions, a moment that creates the opportunity for rhetoric to produce change.

However, the theological and rhetorical understandings of *kairos* diverge in terms of their understanding of the spontaneity of time. Rhetorically, the kairotic moment is one of unpredictability and invention; as Hawhee suggests, a key aspect of *kairos* as understood in classical rhetoric is that, like the athletic acts to which Gorgias compared *kairos*, the results "cannot be known in advance, but rather depend on a particular encounter […] which demands a deployment of skills on the spot, in the heat of the moment, in the blink of an eye."[96] *Kairos*, to the classical rhetoricians, is a situation in which the rhetor can use the skills he or she has learned to affect the moment—but the moment's potentiality for producing effects (the *dunamis*) has the potential to produce destructive as well as constructive events, to spiral out of the rhetor's control.

The theological understanding of *kairos* is a bit different because the agent is not the human rhetor who experiences the flow of time in the same way as his or her audience; rather, the actor in the kairotic moments of *heilsgeschichte* is God, whose omnipotence and omniscience enable God to see the moment as just one piece of a larger linear and planned narrative in which God is entirely in control at all times. While the results of the kairotic moment might be unpredictable to those experiencing it in real time, there is no chance that the event will spiral out of the control of God, who is both

the author of the drama and its key actor. Theologian Paul Tillich describes the *kairos* perspective as "the prophetic view of history," in which the *kairos* represents "the fulfilled moment of time in which the present and the future, the holy that is given and the holy that is demanded meet, and from whose concrete tensions the new creation proceeds in which sacred import is realized in necessary form."[97] Tillich describes *kairos* here as a moment of potentiality in which divine action can occur in order to form "the new creation," to fulfill God's purposes in the world.

The use of the German term *geschichte* as the root of *heilsgeschichte* is significant here; theologians in the mid-20th century suggested a divide between the term *geschichte* and the other German term for history, *historie*. Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen define the difference between the two as the difference between "history as fact, external and verifiable [historie], and, on the other, history as significance, internal and nonverifiable [geschichte]."[98] Since the middle of the century there has been what Soulen and Soulen describe as a "marked decrease in enthusiasm for the distinction"[99] among theologians for the difference between the two, but that is less important for our use of the term *heilsgeschichte* than the notion that *geschichte*, the idea that certain historical moments have theological significance as they represent God's action in the history of humanity, remains an essential part of this reading of history.

Heilsgeschichte remains an essential characteristic of a theological reading of history even if the term for the significance or meaning of a moment is seen as harmonious with the modern chronological and empirical understanding of history; in fact, making no distinction between the terms *strengthens* the association between *chronos* and *kairos*. As Lesslie Newbigin writes: "From the point of view of a theologian

there is one question, perhaps a very simplistic one, which seems unavoidable. If God does not act in history, what meaning can there be in saying that God acts at all?"[100] God acts at kairotic moments, but those moments do not stand apart from chronic history; rather, to this perspective, if you or I had a time machine and traveled back to a certain day in first-century Roman-occupied Palestine, we too would see Jesus healing a blind man, feeding the five thousand, or turning water into wine. The moments described in the Bible in which God acted for the salvation of God's people are seen as no less empirically historical than the Peloponnesian War or the assassination of Julius Caesar, despite their theological significance as moments of God's action in the world.

It is important to note here that the term *heilsgeschichte* was developed by German liberal theologians in the nineteenth century—the very theologians against whom the fundamentalists were reacting in their defense of both traditional and modern conservative theological tenets—and that the further development of the notions of *heilsgeschichte* and *kairos* are also the work of liberal theologians, who used the terms to suggest that the Bible, while historically inaccurate, nevertheless told a story that was spiritually "true." This theological direction was, of course, rejected by fundamentalists and many evangelicals, who believe that the Bible is literally as well as spiritually accurate in its historical narratives.

Nevertheless, I suggest that the narrative structures upon which the Christian Right builds its logic rely on a lens of *heilsgeschichte*—even if they do not use that theological term—in their views of both the cosmic history of the universe and of the history of the American nation. *Heilsgeschichte* is a newer term for a view of history that has long been prevalent in Christian historiography; the term came about only as modern

historical visions that privileged chronos (*historie*) over *kairos* (*geschichte*) rose to prominence, thus requiring some differentiation. The notion of *heilsgeschichte* provides a useful rhetorical lens for understanding the narratives utilized by the Christian Right—in which the historical narrative is seen not only in the chronological sense as a "flat" line in which all moments have equal value, but also as a progression between kairotic moments, which operate in both directions temporally.

Narrative Connection: Civil Religion

Narratives do not operate in a vacuum; rather, society is full of narratives, sometimes competing with one another and sometimes harmonizing with one another. As already mentioned, Gutterman theorizes the development of these relationships by utilizing Ricoeur's "dialectic of sedimentation and innovation," in which new narratives use the "sediment" left from previous generations' sacred and mundane stories as basis for their "innovations," which then in turn, if they resonate and take hold within culture, become the sediments used by future generations to construct their narratives.[101] As Gutterman writes, "innovation develops within and is, indeed, inspired by the necessary tension between the desire for stability and the need for, or inevitability of, change."[102] As the stories of a culture are told, retold, and reshaped within every new generation, they draw on the elements of the sacred and mundane stories that already existed within a culture; part of the narrative critic's role, then, is to rebuild the sacred stories that are being told and subtly altered as their fragments are reconfigured in new mundane stories. As McGee suggests, this is a constructive and inventive role for the critic, standing in opposition to previous conceptions of the critic as working with an existing and discrete text.[103]

The construction of the narrative then necessarily involves relating it to the fragments from previous narrative sentiments—making understanding the relationship between a given narrative and other narratives essential to a critical analysis of narrative's rhetorical function. This can be related to Jasinski and Merceica's suggestion that among the goals of the analysis of constitutive rhetorics should be to analyze "how texts invite listeners and readers to modify the meaning of a culture's key terms" and "affirm as well as challenge established sources of cultural authority, bonds of affiliation, and institutional relationships[104]"—in other words, to explore the ways in which constitutive texts make use of the symbols and systems already in place in the culture and invite their audiences, by way of changing their understanding of who *they* are and where *they* fit in, to see those symbols and systems in a different light. I argue that some of the most significant fragments of narrative sediment used by the Christian Right are the symbols, narratives, institutions, and systems implicated in civil religion, the process by which the state legitimates itself through appeals to religious form; thus, a discussion of civil religion is the third component to the construction of a critical framework.

It has been fifty years since Robert Bellah published the article in *Daedalus* reviving Rousseau's idea of civil religion, which Bellah described as a set of symbols and rituals that, he argued, qualified as a separate religion from Christianity, positing a unitarian God who cares about law and order and who intervenes providentially on behalf of the American people. This religion is the religion of the state, Bellah argued, existing not to compete with or replace Christianity as the *de facto* American religion, but rather to augment it for the purposes of the state, to "build up […] powerful symbols of national

solidarity and to mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals."[105]

For Bellah, the function of civil religion is to legitimize the state through appeals to a transcendent purpose; as he writes, such a construction provides "a higher criterion" than the will of the people for right and wrong so that "it is possible that the people may be wrong," as well as to provide "a transcendent goal for the political process."[106] This provides a crucial means of rhetorical escape for the promoter of American exceptionalism and American democracy when he or she faces something like slavery or Jim Crow, institutions that were very clearly oppressive and which are understood today to have been very clearly immoral, but which nevertheless at one time in American history enjoyed the support of the majority of the populace.

Civil religion also draws from the symbolic storehouses of both nationalism and religion to create rituals and rhetorics that read the nation's history, present, and future through the lens of religious archetypes like death and rebirth, providence, and sin and penance. Bellah suggests that despite civil religion being used to justify civil disobedience, its primary function seems to be priestly rather than prophetic, reinforcing rather than subverting the political and social system. The use of civil religion to create civic rituals like our celebrations of Memorial Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Independence Day chiefly upholds the institutions of the civis as well as the separation between the civil religion and explicitly sectarian religion.

Another key aspect of Bellah's vision of civil religion is that it is universal. To Bellah, civil religion draws not on a specifically Christian God but on a generic, unitarian version of God defined not by God's character, God's personality, or any other categories

that could take on sectarian qualities, but rather on God's salvific acts for the American

people. Thus, the function of civil religion has been to bring together people of disparate

faiths in the narrative of the American nation—a function that has become more

important as the nation has become more religiously pluralistic. Though this often is

more functional in theory than in practice, particularly as atheists, agnostics, and

humanists have become more insistent on their place in the nation's religious landscape

and thus attempted to push civil religion's God-references out of government, civil

religion is more reliant on a belief in America and in the idea of God blessing America

than it is in any specific ontological vision of God.

Roderick Hart's critical examination of civil religion in *The Political Pulpit*

remains a significant piece in rhetoricians' discussion of the topic. Hart focused on

presidential rhetoric, suggesting that rather than civil religion we have instead what he

calls civic piety, a relationship between religion and state best expressed in the metaphor

of a contract—in which both church and state have an unspoken agreement that though

the line between them will continually be negotiated, the agents of neither will tread too

heavily on the other's territory for fear of their transgression resulting in their ostracism

from their chosen (religious or political) arena. Hart's understanding of civic piety is

more pragmatic than Bellah's transcendent notion; for Hart, the language of civic piety

functions entirely in the priestly realm for civic actors, like Presidents, to justify their

own power.

In this contract, religion agrees to confine itself to the rhetorical (as opposed to

the legal) sphere and support the policies of the state; the state agrees that its officials will

"pay tacit homage to religion, [… or else] be branded un-American and declared non-

electable."[107] This creates a role for civic piety characterized by four properties:
expedient complexity, which creates an effectively "polytheistic" system in which piety
can serve any number of political goals; *non-existential content*, in which it "revel[s] in a
world of images rather than with practical policy"[108]; *ritualistic presence*, in which the
discourse of civic piety is at its fullest in national rituals like inaugurations,
commemorations, and the like; and *prosaic animus*, in which it is homocentric (rather
than theocentric) and designed to "short-circuit national difficulties which could arise
between church and state," rather than exacerbate or confront them.[109]

Hart's conception of civic piety is free of any theological content short of that
needed to unite the majority of the populace; pluralistic inclusion and pragmatic
operation are its aims. Its function is fundamentally conservative; it seeks to preserve and
define the nation and its traditions in the service of the system as it exists. As Hart puts it,
"we find no truly prophetic God in America's civil-religious pantheon."[110] When
expressions of civic piety step over the line into opposition to governmental policy, Hart
says, they are shut out of power, "labeled radical and denied an opportunity to offer the
benediction at political gatherings."[111] To Hart's vision of civic piety, then, the sacred is
entirely in the service of the secular, operating as a legitimating and unifying force in a
system-supportive role deployed by those who are already legitimated by the system.
Furthermore, for Hart, civic piety still operates largely in terms of traditional religious
categories—it is found in the reappropriation of symbols, icons, ideologies, and rituals
that are traditionally the sphere of the religious.

Since the publication of Hart's book in 1977, numerous scholars have addressed
its core claims.[112] Most notably, in 2002, Martin J. Medhurst, while acknowledging that

The Political Pulpit was an accurate description of the landscape of the relationship between religion and government from 1925 to 1975, claimed that Hart's model has since become woefully outdated; noting the existence of politically-active groups on the Christian Right, he claims that while civic piety remains largely the same, "a new, more personalized, more religion-specific language" is arising among political actors alongside it.[113] In addition, Donald Lee claims that religious rhetoric in American politics is not as non-specific as Hart claims; there are real references to the sacred in some American civil-religious rhetoric, particularly in the past 25 years. He outlines four references to the sacred in American civil-religious discourse, claiming that they "are not just catch-phrases – not merely salve for soothing the parties to the church-state contract – instead, they represent words that form a powerful American narrative about nation, God, justice, and community."[114] However, they both continue to see civil religion or civic piety largely in the same terms that Hart and Bellah see them—as sets of symbols or appeals to smaller stories, rather than in terms of constitutive narratives that shape subject-positions' views of themselves, of the key terms of society, and of space and time.

Robert Wuthnow's 1989 critique of Bellah draws closer to a constitutive view. He proposes that civil religion's legitimating and unifying function has been diminished due to the increasing divide between what he suggests are two separate civil religious views: a conservative view, in which America is an exceptional nation, Christian in origin, chosen by God to fulfill God's mission on earth; and a liberal view, which draws on theological and religious ideologies not necessarily to legitimate American nationalism, but rather to uphold broader values that both transcend and challenge the national culture. He suggests that "secular mythologies" like freedom and material success "seem to be

gaining a more powerful position" in society than the mythologies of civil religion, because they are more widely accepted than civil religious values.[115]

Wuthnow's critique has much to speak for it, most notably its engagement with the Christian Right (which Bellah's 1967 article predates) in light of their engagement with the symbol-system of civil religion/civic piety; other critics, like those in the 2002 *Journal of Communication and Religion*, engaged the discourse of the Christian Right as something *outside* of the system of civic piety, because of Hart's insistence on civic piety as a rhetorical form deployed by those who hold power within the system. The strength of Wuthnow's engagement is his attention to the ways in which alternative visions of the relationship between religious symbols and the national imaginary function to shift the lines of demarcation that separate them; though the Christian Right operates outside the political system, I will demonstrate that appeals to their worldview appear in discourse within the system as well. Additionally, Wuthnow gets at the depth of the disconnect between conservative and liberal civil-religious viewpoints. If conservative and liberal civil religion see the world through the lens of different narratives—narratives that constitute the "American people" in different subject-positions, with different teleological trajectories and desired endpoints—then that could explain some of the breakdowns and fractures we have seen within our political system in recent years.

Wuthnow also presents civil religious discourse in a frame that I find more accurate than that of Beasley, Bellah, and Hart; the latter three all seem to see civil religion as (in Beasley's words) an "ideological consensus,"[116] a series of propositional statements, rituals, and symbols that Neuhaus has suggested is not a "true religion" compared to the coherent theological and dogmatic systems of the traditional religions.[117]

This notion of civil religion—an adaptation of the same terms that traditional theology and religious studies construct for the more traditional religions, that of the philosophical or propositional core of the religion—does not get at the crucial narrative and teleological core that I maintain is at the center of civil religion as it is understood in America. In seeing the trees of the pantheon of patriotic heroes, the collection of iconic images, the ideologies of shared faith and belief, I suggest that they are missing the rhetorical forest of narrative that ties these elements together and gives American civil religious discourse its power—whether it is unified, as Bellah suggests, or fragmented, as Wuthnow maintains.

Evangelical Christians would surely agree that merely assenting to propositional statements about Jesus Christ does not make one a Christian; among other passages from the Bible they would cite the book of James, in which the author writes that "even the demons believe [there is one God]—and shudder."[118] Similarly, participation in American civil religion is not simply assent to an "ideological consensus," even one that constitutes the American subject. After the Allied armies liberated Paris from Nazi Germany in 1944, the Parisians who lined the streets, cheering and waving American flags at passing tanks and soldiers, might at that moment have assented to the American civil religion's vision of Americans as the messianic liberators of the world—but that does not mean those Parisians were suddenly Americans. It is one's sense of *participation* in this narrative, seeing oneself as the American defending freedom and democracy against all who would fight it, that constitutes the subject of American civil religion. Civil religious discourse, I suggest, functions as a constitutive rhetoric.

Harold Bloom presents an alternative vision of the relationship between religion and the American experience, suggesting that the pervasive religious value in America is not Christianity at all, but rather what he describes as the "American Religion"—which "masks itself as Protestant Christianity yet has ceased to be Christian."[119] He argues that this American Religion has become completely unmoored from the theological traditions of the Christian church as they have been understood for the last two millennia. Most of Bloom's thesis, positing the existence of this American Religion, is on a level with which this study is not concerned; whether or not the American Religion is *in fact* Protestant Christianity, or orthodox Christianity as it has historically been understood for the past two thousand years, is less important here than whether the American Religion *identifies itself* as such—and indeed it does. The fact that American Christians continue to insist that a religious continuum runs from the Apostle Paul through Erasmus, Martin Luther, and John Edwards to Franklin Graham and T.D. Jakes is reason enough for the rhetorician to see American Christianity in light of the Christian tradition as a whole.

However, Bloom does identify several key aspects of American *religiosity* (and particularly conservative American Christianity) that bear discussion in this study. First and foremost, he identifies American Christianity as fundamentally concerned with the *individual* and, further, with the immortal core soul of the individual; in fact, he argues, what he describes as the Gnosticism of the American Religion "consistently leads to a denial of communal concern" and "continues to rejoice in its social inutility."[120] This, I think, is a crucial component of American Christianity; with the atomized individual, standing alone before God, as its heart, there comes a point for all evangelical Christianity at which the communal concern breaks down. At the end of the day (or the

End of Days), we all must stand by ourselves to be judged, with nobody else to help or hurt us.

Bloom's interpretation of American religiosity as a form of Gnosticism also provides an interesting lens; the Christian Right's interpretation of the Scriptural narrative couches its Manichaean worldview as "Christ" versus "the World," as "spirit" versus "flesh." (Christianity has flirted with Gnosticism since its very beginnings as a religious movement; the most well-known apocryphal Gospel, the Gospel of Thomas, is a collection of purported saying of Jesus that make him into a Gnostic of his time.) The strict division of the world into "good" and "evil" called for by the Cosmic Narrative is certainly at least in some sense Gnostic, given its condemnation of the created world as essentially evil since the Fall, even if the narrative itself in many places resists Gnostic characterizations. Eden was the perfect version of the created world, and the primitive church the perfect form of Christianity; both of these would undermine a strictly Gnostic lens, as too would the narrative's insistence on spiritual warfare against evil in the realm of the spirit. Nevertheless, despite these nuances, there is much to suggest that the contemporary Christian Right, at least in some respect, is Gnostic, particularly in its attitudes toward sexuality.

But finally, and perhaps most importantly, Bloom identifies the uniqueness of American religion; even if one does not accept his thesis that his "American Religion" is, in some essential way, not *really* Christianity, it is hard to dispute that American Christianity is in many ways *different*, both historically and in the present, from expressions of Christianity elsewhere in the world. There is something unique about the ways in which American narratives and Christian narratives have been woven together,

not just in the discourses I identify as the "Christian Right" but throughout American religion, to produce a form of religious expression that is qualitatively unlike the historical Christian practices found in Europe and the Middle East, or the more direct extensions of those traditions in Latin America and Asia.

These studies are all somewhat limited, though, by their conception of the "political." I find a great deal of resonance in Jason C. Bivins's summation of most of the landscape of religion and politics, which he suggests have tended to subsume the term of "politics" under that of the "church-state" relationship. He argues that the "church-state" frame "implies that, when we are talking about religion and politics, we are actually talking about two discrete institutions ('church' and 'state'), and that what we mean by politics is government."[121] In its place, he argues, we need a more expansive view of politics that sees religion "in explicit relation to the broad spaces, conceptions, and practices of the political which have historically taken shape in the crucible of specific arguments and struggles—over race, gender, patriotism, public speech, and so forth"[122]— in other words, we need a view of the political not as being subsumed as a function of the state or government, but rather as the process by which church, state, the people, and the political spaces in which they operate are defined and negotiated.

This viewpoint—which Bivins characterizes as "political religion"—forms the basis of the lens through which I will explore the civil-religious constructs and the negotiations of those constructs, the history of which people like Bellah, Hart, and Wuthnow have sought to describe and understand. It offers a conception in which civil religion is seen as a process in which narratives meet, intersect, and intermingle, where boundaries between "American" and "foreign" are defined and negotiated; it enables us

to view the civil religious debate not as an orderly, stately process in which church and state sit down at a table and hash out a negotiated agreement, but rather as a fluid process in which religious narratives, rituals, and philosophies are in a constant state of flux. In short, this terminology enables us to understand and conceptualize relationships between the various interpretations of civil religion I have outlined above: Bellah and Hart's conceptions of the nondescript and providential God of American civil religion, Wuthnow's sociological appreciation of the split between conservative and liberal civil religion, and Bloom's notion of American civic and political life creating a religion unto itself.

Precís

Chapter 2 will be broken into two parts. The first part will represent an effort to construct the whole of these two "sacred narratives" from various texts identified with Christian Right rhetors; I will present detailed accounts of the two narratives, appealing to multiple primary sources in their construction. The second part of the chapter will be what Jasinski and Merceica would characterize as an internal analysis of the space created by these two narratives,[123] focusing on the ways in which these narratives invite their audiences to see themselves, the key symbols and terms of American culture, and time itself in particular ways. Of particular interest will be the epistemological functions of the interactions between the narratives, which I will suggest function to create a complete worldview. The logics created by the two narratives "cross-pollinate"—for example, the Cosmic Narrative takes as a fundamental tenet that the original manuscripts of the Bible as inerrant, which then "bleeds over" into the American Narrative's

understanding of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence and their reading of those documents through their construction of the original intent of their authors.

Chapters 3 through 5 will use the three components of narrative set out by Gutterman—identity, setting, and connection to other narratives—as touchstones for discussing aspects of the interactions between the narratives, looking for the ways in which the apparent contradictions between the two narratives actually serve as sources of flexibility for rhetors appealing to both texts.

Chapter 3 will be a discussion of the ways in which the two narratives create flexibility for rhetors to manipulate the setting, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which the tension between the narratives' views of eschatology enable the manipulation of the variable of time. The two narratives draw on different forms of temporal reasoning, moving in different directions. The American Narrative views time as *chronos*, and reasons from the basis of history; the past affects the present and provides rhetors with a means of interpreting and guiding actions as the nation moves into an unknown future through the rhetorical form of the jeremiad. The Cosmic Narrative, on the other hand, has a kairotic perspective, and reasons from the basis of typology, in which present and future actions fulfill and give meaning to the past; in this perspective, because the whole of the narrative has already been written by God, the past, present, and future can be read and interpreted as a form of literature, with dramatic parallels between past and present events indicating the certainty of future outcomes.

However, the resonances and dissonances between the two narratives allow their perspectives on time to be applied between the narratives, which opens up space for acts of rhetorical creativity. In the American Narrative, the stories of the American founders,

of revolution and civil war, are read not just as history but as typology, placing the contemporary Christian Right auditor in a position where he or she can ultimately fulfill and give meaning to the sacrifices and trials of the generations that came before. The Cosmic Narrative, meanwhile, is reinterpreted as conditional, exploiting the narrative's ambiguity about the immediate future (specifically, the timing and nature of the eschaton) to suggest that while the ultimate end of the narrative is known, the path by which it will be reached will be determined by human actions in the present context.

Chapter 4 is a discussion of the constitutive and identity-forming aspects of these narratives, and particularly the ways in which the two narratives create alternative loci and circumferences of identity. The Cosmic Narrative suggests that religious identity is individual, and that the true Christians are a persecuted minority in a world where temporal authorities will be suspicious, if not overtly hostile, toward the true faith. The American Narrative, on the other hand, suggests that communities and nations can also be imbued with religious identity, and positions the auditor as part of a "silent majority" of "pro-moral" Americans who are being shut out of the nation whose ideals they inherited by a shadowy secular humanist elite.

The tensions between these two visions of identity are mitigated by two strategies. The first strategy is a strong definition of the antagonist of the narrative, which suggests that secular humanist elites are (wittingly or unwittingly) serving the agenda of Satan in the great cosmic war between good and evil. The second strategy is a reinterpretation and reconfiguration of the symbols of civil religion from unitarian universality to sectarian specificity; the God who blesses America is not Bellah's vague and theologically-non-

specific providential deity, but specifically the Triune God as defined by the tenets of evangelical Protestantism.

Both of these strategies appeal to the notion of dual meanings, defining those who are truly inside the circle of circumference as those who have the "ears to hear and eyes to see" what is truly going on. While the general public may see the nation beset by a series of unconnected enemies, those who are inside the circumference of identity understand the ways in which they are all connected under the satanic umbrella; while ordinary Americans may interpret the symbols of civil religion as universal to all Americans of good faith, those with "ears to hear and eyes to see" understand them as a sign that evangelical Protestants are the true heirs to the legacy of the nation's founders.

Chapter 5 will look at the third aspect Gutterman sets out for narratives, that of its relationship to other narratives. The dual-meaning strategies used by Christian Right rhetors to resolve the internal tensions between the Cosmic and American Narratives' visions of identity function to create hierarchies in place of fixed circumferences, with evangelical Protestants at the center as the keepers of the true Christian faith and the true American identity. While those hierarchies resolve the tensions in identity formation between the Cosmic and American Narrative, they also function to create tensions within the larger movements of which the Christian Right is a part. Specifically, if evangelical Protestants are the keepers of true Christianity and true Americanism, where does that leave the other major religious allegiances within American conservatism: Roman Catholics and Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)?

I will briefly review the history of theological and political tensions between each group and the Protestant Christian Right, and then utilize presidential campaigns as a lens

to examine how Christian Right rhetors and members of these other religious groups navigated and negotiated the relationships between their narrative worldviews. I will identify two strategies used by Protestant Christian Right rhetors in particular. First, they strategically differentiated between rhetorical acts intended for an internal audience (within evangelical Protestantism) and those intended for external audiences (other religious communities within conservatism and, ultimately, the general public). Second, they strengthened their appeals to the danger posed by cultural antagonists, suggesting that conservative Christians of all stripes should be consubstantial in defending their religious freedom from incursion by governmental and cultural forces.

I will conclude with a brief reflection on the future of Christian Right rhetoric in the age of Donald Trump, who rose to the presidency by earning widespread support from white evangelical Protestants despite the many aspects of his personality and politics that they would previously have considered disqualifying: his multiple marriages and history of proud adulterous affairs, his ostentatious lifestyle, his alleged sexual assaults, his apparent lack of religiosity, and his ambiguity toward what many Christian Right rhetors have characterized in the past as non-negotiable issue positions. How does the thesis of this project address many evangelical Protestants' consubstantial identification with someone like Trump, with whom they seemingly have very little (if anything) in common?

Notes

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[1] People for the American Way. *Transcript of Entire Robertson - Falwell Interview Available.* Online source, accessed 19 November 2012.

http://www.commondreams.org/news2001/0917-03.htm

[2] Falwell and Robertson were rebuked not only by President Bush—a self-identified born-again Christian whom both Robertson and Falwell had endorsed—but also Albert Mohler, Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Laurie Goodstein, "After the Attacks: Finding Fault, Falwell's Finger-Pointing Inappropriate, Bush Says," *New York Times*, 15 September 2001.

[3] People for the American Way, *Transcript of Entire Robertson - Falwell Interview Available.*

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NRSV)

[7] People for the American Way, *Transcript of Entire Robertson - Falwell Interview Available.*

[8] Ibid.

[9] Qtd. in Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), 133.

[10] Rob Sherman, "Documents at Bush Presidential Library Prove VP Bush Questioned Citizenship and Patriotism of Atheists," *Rob Sherman Advocacy.* Online source, accessed 19 November 2012. http://www.robsherman.com/advocacy/060401a.htm

[11] Diederick Aerts, Leo Apostel, Bart De Moor, Staf Hellemans, Edel Maex, Hubert Van Belle, and Jan Van der Veken, *World Views: From Fragmentation to Integration,* internet edition (Brussels: VUB Press, 2007), 9.

[12] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 244.

[13] Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 22.

[14] Susan Friend Harding contends that the Reverend Curtis Lee Laws coined the term "fundamentalist" in a 1920 editorial using these words. Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, 64.

[15] William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America,* Revised Trade Paperback ed. (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 11.

[16] Martin, *With God on Our Side,* 15-16.

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[18] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xx.

[19] Christian Lundberg, "Dueling Fundamentalisms," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4:1 (2007), 108.

[20] Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America, an Evangelical's Lament* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), xxvii.

[21] Barry Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric* (New York: Praeger, 1991); Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Randall A. Lake, "Order and Disorder in Anti-Abortion Controversy: A Logological View," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984), 425-43; Kevin McClure, "Resurrecting the Narrative Paradigm: Identification and the Case of Young Earth Creationism," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2009): 189-211.

[22] Jennifer Young Abbott, "Religion and Gender in the News: The Case of Promise Keepers, Feminists, and the 'Stand in the Gap' Rally," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 29 (November 2006): 224-61; Jennifer Young Abbott, "The Positive Functions of 'Negative' Rhetoric: Feminists' Expository Campaign against the Promise Keepers," *Women's Studies in Communication* 30, no. 1 (2007): 1-33; Michael E. Eidenmuller, "American Evangelism, Democracy, and Civic Piety: A Computer-Based Stylistic Analysis of Promise Keepers' Stadium Event and Washington D.C. Rally Discourses," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002): 64-85; Steven R. Goldzwig, "Official and Unofficial Civil Religious Discourse." *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002): 102-14; Eric Gormly, "Peering beneath the Veil: An Ethnographic Content Analysis of Islam as Portrayed on the 700 Club Following the September 11th Attacks," *Journal of Media and Religion* 3, no. 4 (2004): 219-38; Jim A. Kuypers, "From Science, Moral-Poetics: Dr. James Dobson's Response to the Fetal Tissue Research Initiative." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86, no. 2 (2000): 146-67; Nancy E. Mitchell and Kim S.

Phipps. "The Jeremiad in Contemporary Fundamentalism: Jerry Falwell's Listen America," *Religious Communication Today* 8 (1985): 54-62; David S. Olsen, "The New Religious Right Versus Media Wrongs: AFA Fights Temptation," *Journal of Film and Video* 53, no. 2 (2001): 3-22; Melissa M. Wilcox, "Discourse Bless America: Rebuilding the National Mythos after September 11," in *Religion, Politics, and American Identity: New Directions, New Controversies*, David S. Gutterman and Andrew R. Murphy, eds. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006).

[23] Edward C. Appel, "The Perfected Drama of Jerry Falwell," *Communication Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1987): 26-38; Tim Detweiler, "Viewing Robertson's Rhetoric through an Augustinian Mirror," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 11, no. 1 (1988): 22-31; Stephen O'Leary and Michael McFarland, "The Political Use of Mythic Discourse: Prophetic Interpretation in Pat Robertson's Presidential Campaign," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75 (1989): 433-52; Dave Tell, "Jimmy Swaggart's Secular Confession," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2009): 124-46; David M. Timmerman and Larry David Smith, "The World According to Pat: The Telepolitical Celebrity as Purveyor of Political Medicine," *Political Communication* 11 (1994): 233-48.

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Right's Fight to Redefine America's Public Schools* (New York: New York University

Press, 1999); Lake, "Order and Disorder in Anti-Abortion Controversy"; Christian O.

Lundberg, "Dueling Fundamentalisms," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4,

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and Russel R. Windes, "The Progay and Antigay Issue Culture: Interpretation, Influence

and Dissent," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 28-48.

[26] Sharon Crowley, *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 145.

[27] Ibid., 147.

[28] Ibid., 145.

[29] Ibid., 170.

[30] Lundberg, "Dueling Fundamentalisms," 106.

[31] O'Leary and McFarland, "The Political Use of Mythic Discourse: Prophetic

Interpretation in Pat Robertson's Presidential Campaign."

[32] Susan Biesecker-Mast, "Fundamental Gaffes," *Communication and Critical/Cultural

Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007), 98-99.

[33] Ibid., 99.

[34] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, 15.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 29.

[37] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 187.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 197.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 47.

[42] Ibid., 64.

[43] Walter R. Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984), 15.

[44] Ibid., 9.

[45] Barbara Warnick, "The Narrative Paradigm: Another Story," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987:172-82), 176.

[46] Ibid., 179.

[47] John Louis Lucaites and Celeste M. Condit, "Re-Constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective," *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985), 101.

[48] Thomas B. Farrell, "Narrative in Natural Discourse: On Conversation and Rhetoric," *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985): 109-27.

[49] McClure, "Resurrecting the Narrative Paradigm," 191.

[50] Ibid., 199.

[51] Ibid., 198.

[52] Ibid., 200.

[53] Ibid., 206.

[54] Ibid., 209.

[55] McClure acknowledges that while narrative and the narrative paradigm were "virtually dead subjects" in rhetorical criticism, other fields were discussing narrative in a much more robust way; Gutterman's political-scientific work, published four years before McClure's account and yet providing a useful way forward that draws on deep engagement with narrative from both political scientists like Arendt and theologians like Stephen Crites and Hans Frei, is further evidence in favor of McClure's claim.

[56] Gutterman borrows here from Stephen Crites' differentiation between "sacred" and "mundane" stories. To Crites, sacred stories are the foundation of a culture's consciousness, so deep that they cannot be told, as they "form consciousness rather than being among the objects of which it is directly aware." Crites uses "mundane" not in its pejorative sense referring to boring or insignificant, but rather in its original sense—in which settings, characters, etc. are concretized and thus brought into the world, the "phenomenological mundus, which defines the objective horizon of a particular form of consciousness." Mundane stories are "all stories directly seen or heard"—the places in which we see sacred stories and can attempt to critically reconstruct them. Stephen D. Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39, no. 3 (1971), 295-96.

[57] David S. Gutterman, *Prophetic Politics: Christian Social Movements and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 32.

[58] Michael Calvin McGee, "In Search of 'the People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61, no. 3 (1975), 247.

[59] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987), 139.

[60] Ibid., 140-41.

[61] Ibid., 140.

[62] Nathaniel I. Cordova, "The Constitutive Force of the *Catecismo Del Pueblo* in Puerto Rico's Popular Democratic Party Campaign of 1938-1940," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 2 (2004), 216.

[63] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 142.

[64] Michael C. Leff, "Things Made by Words: Reflections on Textual Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992), 223.

[65] James Jasinski, "A Constitutive Framework for Rhetorical Historiography: Toward an Understanding of the Discursive (Re)constitution of 'Constitution,'" in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, Kathleen J. Turner, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 74.

[66] James Jasinski and Jennifer Merceica, "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics: The Virginia and Kentucky *Resolutions* and the 'Principles of '98,'" in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 319.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Jasinski, "A Constitutive Framework for Rhetorical Historiography," 75.

[69] Jasinski and Merceica, "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics," 320.

[70] Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990).

[71] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 143.

[72] Farrell, "Narrative in Natural Discourse," 115.

[73] Harold Bloom, *The American Religion,* 2nd ed. (New York: Chu Hartley Publishers, 2006), 63.

[74] Matthew 24:36.

[75] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, 241.

[76] Mark 4:13-20.

[77] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 141.

[78] Matthew 24:36

[79] Jasinski, "A Constitutive Framework for Rhetorical Historiography," 76.

[80] E. Culpepper Clark and Raymie E. McKerrow, "The Rhetorical Construction of History," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, Kathleen J. Turner, ed. (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 35.

[81] Ibid., 44.

[82] Ibid., 36.

[83] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell,* 224-25.

[84] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 15.

[85] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse,* 14.

[86] Bruce Gronbeck, "The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument, and Collective Memory," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, Kathleen J. Turner, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 59.

[87] John Reumann, "Salvation History," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Erwin

Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 833.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Lucy Tatman, "I'd Rather Be a Sinner Than a Cyborg," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 10 (2003), 55.

[90] Reumann, "Salvation History," 833.

[91] Tatman, "I'd Rather Be a Sinner Than a Cyborg," 55.

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[93] Tatman, "I'd Rather Be a Sinner Than a Cyborg," 56.

[94] Debra Hawhee, "Kairotic Encounters," in *Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention*, Janet

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[97] Paul Tillich, "Principles of Religious Socialism," in *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries*, Mark K. Taylor, ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1987), 57.

[98] Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism,* 3rd ed.

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 69.

[101] Gutterman, *Prophetic Politics,* 34.

[102] Ibid., 33.

[103] McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," 274.

[104] Jasinski and Merceica, "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics," 320.

[105] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967), 13.

[106] Ibid., 4.

[107] Roderick Hart, *The Political Pulpit* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1977), 43.

[108] Ibid., 73.

[109] Ibid., 99.

[110] Ibid., 81.

[111] Ibid., 41.

[112] An entire 2002 issue of Journal of Communication and Religion was devoted to retrospectives and critiques of Hart's The Political Pulpit. I will discuss only a few of the articles here, but offer them all as excellent engagements with Hart's work: Eidenmuller, "American Evangelism, Democracy, and Civic Piety"; Robert V. Friedenberg, "Rhetoric, Religion, and Government at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002); Goldzwig, "Official and Unofficial Civil Religious Discourse"; Mark A. Gring, "Broken Covenants and the American Pantheon: Church and State 25 Years after the Political Pulpit," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002); Ronald Lee, "The Force of Religion in the Public Square," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002); Carolyn Marvin, "A New Scholarly Dispensation for Civil Religion," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002); Martin J. Medhurst, "Forging a Civil-Religious Construct for the 21st Century: Should Hart's 'Contract' Be Renewed?" *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002); Nneka Ifeoma Ofolue, "President Clinton and the White House Prayer Breakfast," *Journal of Communication*

and Religion 25 (2002). In addition, Bethany Keeley critiques Hart's analysis of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s rhetoric, suggesting that King problematizes Hart's suggestion that civic piety does not admit the prophetic voice. Bethany Keeley, "I May Not Get There with You: 'I've Been to the Mountaintop' as Epic Discourse," *Southern Communication Journal* 73, no. 4 (2008).

[113] Medhurst, "Forging a Civil-Religious Construct for the 21st Century," 93.

[114] Lee, "The Force of Religion in the Public Square," 18.

[115] Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion,* paperback ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 266.

[116] Vanessa B. Beasley, *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric,* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 63.

[117] Richard John Neuhaus, "From Civil Religion to Public Philosophy," in *Civil Religion and Political Theology*, Leroy S. Rouner, ed. (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 100.

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[121] Jason C. Bivins, *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

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Chapter 2: Two Narratives

On page 110 of the paperback version of Tim LaHaye's 1994 book *Faith of our Founding Fathers*, there is a notable typographical error:

> That President George Washington was a devout believer in Jesus Christ
>
> and had accepted Him as His Lord and Savior is easily demonstrated by a
>
> reading of his personal prayer book (written in his own handwriting),
>
> which was discovered in 1891 among a collection of his papers.[1]

The capitalization of pronouns describing God (and Jesus) is not uncommon among Christians from various backgrounds who believe that it is an appropriate way of showing reverence for God. However, this practice is generally not used for pronouns referring to George Washington.

Obviously, this is a typographical error and represents no attempt on the part of LaHaye to equate Washington with Jesus—but it does serve as something of a representative anecdote (if an unintentional one) for the ways in which the mixture of the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative creates resonances that imbue elements of one narrative with themes and concepts from the other. Presenting Washington as a devoted Christian whose faith is described in the same way as an evangelical might describe his or her own relationship to Jesus Christ ("accepted [Jesus] as His [sic] Lord and Savior"), the Freudian slip only serves to emphasize the thesis of LaHaye's book, inviting the reader to imagine Washington as a type of holy figure whose words and deeds exist in the same mythological, kairotic space as the words of Jesus Christ.

As Michael Calvin McGee pointed out, all rhetoric is built from fragments of what has come before, fragments which implicate the whole of the culture in which a

given rhetorical act comes into being, so that "all of culture is implicated in every instance of discourse."[2] If the two narratives I identify are indeed significant if not definitional sources for those whose rhetoric we identify as the Christian Right, then they cannot stand in isolation from one another, either in the formation of rhetorical identity that proceeds from the texts or in the reverberations and reformulations that proceed as other rhetors within these narrative traditions respond and react to these texts.

While the seeming contradictions between the two narratives themselves create ample space and energy for the formation of new texts, there are also ways in which they reinforce and harmonize with one another, amplifying certain aspects of the worldviews to which the narratives invite their audiences. This chapter will focus on those resonances. First, I will lay out in more detail my reconstruction of the Cosmic and American Narratives from a variety of source texts, focusing particularly on the American Narrative and the ways in which it "borrows" some aspects of the Cosmic Narrative's overall historical hermeneutic to cast the history of the European-descended peoples in North America in a more theological and more presentist light. Second, I will discuss the ways in which the two narratives harmonize with one another particularly in their epistemological outlook—a harmony that sets the stage for the productive tensions in identity and time that I discuss later.

The Two Narratives: Sources and Authors

In reconstructing the Cosmic and American Narratives, I have chosen a variety of sources from across the spectrum of what would be described as the "Christian Right." Some of these sources, like Schaeffer, Falwell, and LaHaye, were chosen for the influence of their work on other Christian Right advocates and political figures, or their

prominence in the media as figureheads of the Christian Right. Others, like Kennedy and Whitehead, are influential thinkers and writers in their own right, even as they are not nearly as heavily cited as the first group; these were chosen more because their works are representative of those whose work has been influenced by the major Christian Right thought leaders. One of the major challenges of a work of this kind is the sheer volume of rhetorical material produced by Christian Right figures of major and minor provenance; this represents an attempt to make that large volume of work manageable.

In addition to these major sources, I also access a variety of minor sources from the past decade, to demonstrate the continuing resonance of these narratives in rhetoric associated with the Christian Right movement. Notably, in my research on this subject, I found no sources that directly contradicted the dual-narrative construct I have proposed here; some sources certainly emphasized one narrative over the other, and there exist subtle differences as to the extent to which the Cosmic Narrative in particular is viewed literally, but the broad thrusts of the two narratives are remarkably consistent throughout the rhetoric associated with the Christian Right movement.

Mention the Christian Right to most Americans and one of the first names that inevitably emerges is Jerry Falwell (1933-2007). A Baptist pastor and founder of Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University (both in Lynchburg, Virginia), Falwell was one of the first prominent figures to arise from the new Christian Right movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s via his leadership of the Moral Majority. Even after resigning from the Moral Majority's leadership in 1987 (after the controversy over his assumption of leadership of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's PTL Ministries[3]), he continued to be a

prominent media figure for the Christian Right, as well as carrying on his influence through Liberty University and its various associated organizations.

The other name that inevitably arises in discussions about the Christian Right is Marion "Pat" Robertson (1930-), a Pentecostal Baptist media figure and founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). Robertson, the son of Virginia U.S. Senator A. Willis Robertson, rose to prominence along with CBN's expansion throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as host of its news program *The 700 Club*. After losing the 1988 Republican presidential nomination to George H.W. Bush, he founded the Christian Coalition, a national network of Christian Right organizations whose explicit aim was to be more politically-savvy than organizations like the Moral Majority or Christian Voice that preceded it.[4] The Christian Coalition was arguably the most prominent of the Christian Right organizations throughout the 1990s.

Timothy LaHaye (1926-2016) is best known in popular culture for the *Left Behind* series of novels, coauthored with novelist Jerry Jenkins, which topped bestseller lists and spawned several films. Those novels are based in large part on LaHaye's theological works on eschatology, where he outlines a premillennial dispensationalist viewpoint in which the end of the present age will come with the rapture of believing Christians, terrible cataclysms leading to the rise of the Antichrist as a world dictator aided by Satan himself, and Jesus's ultimate return at the head of a conquering army to defeat the forces of evil in a bloody battle and inaugurate a millennial reign of peace under his direct rule.

In addition to his eschatological works, LaHaye, wrote a series of books, heavily influenced by evangelical scholar/critic Francis Schaeffer (who will be discussed shortly), purporting to show the dangers posed by "secular humanism" for the souls of

individuals, the family, and society as a whole. LaHaye has also been a prominent figure in the Christian Right organizationally, sitting on the Moral Majority's board of directors, founding the Center for Traditional Values and organizing the conservative Center for National Policy.[5] His wife and frequent coauthor, Beverly LaHaye, is the founder of Concerned Women for America, a conservative advocacy group.

D. James Kennedy (1930-2007) was a Presbyterian pastor who rose to significance among evangelicals after the church he founded, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Florida, sustained explosive growth by adopting a set of evangelism techniques he devised. In 1978, he turned his church's success into a television ministry and became a prominent media and political figure among the Christian Right, authoring or coauthoring numerous books defending his Christian faith and arguing for political activism and involvement by conservative Christians.

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) was one of the most significant influences on the thought history of the Christian Right; virtually every other rhetor I have selected here cites him directly at least once, and shows the influence of his work in many more places. Schaeffer studied under prominent fundamentalist Presbyterian Carl McIntyre and was the first clergyman ordained by the Bible Presbyterian Church, a new fundamentalist denomination that broke away from the already-fundamentalist Orthodox Presbyterian Church. After a decade in American ministry, Schaeffer and his family moved to Switzerland, where they founded the L'Abri community (French for "the shelter") in the Swiss Alps.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Schaeffer became popular among American evangelicals for his intellectual apologetics asserting the superiority of Christianity over

humanism. Christianity, he claimed, was the only consistent and coherent worldview. His political thinking stemmed from his view of Reformation theology and its *sola scriptura* theological epistemology; only in a society with a "Christian base," he claimed, could there be true "freedom without chaos,"[6] and contemporary society's abandonment of the Christian consensus in favor of humanism was the cause of the chaotic social unrest of the era. His political thought led him to be one of the few Protestants who sided with the Roman Catholics in opposing the *Roe v. Wade* decision when it came out in 1973; Schaeffer, who saw the legalization of abortion as another sign of humanism's lack of value for human life, is credited by many scholars as one of the primary influences behind abortion becoming a major issue for the Christian Right.[7]

John Whitehead (1946-) is a lawyer, constitutional scholar, and founder of the Rutherford Institute, a legal advocacy organization (one of the right-wing answers to the ACLU) that provides free legal aid in support of public monuments to Christianity, religion in public schools, and other similar causes. Whitehead's work draws heavily on the work of Schaeffer as well as work by Reconstructionist theologian Rousas J. Rushdoony in making the case for basing all laws in Reformed Christian thought and for a return to the "Christian consensus."[8]

David Barton (1954-) is a self-trained historian from Texas whose historical works advance the claim that America's founders intended for the United States to be a Christian nation, and did not intend the separation of church and state. Barton has served in official roles for the Texas Republican Party and the Republican National Committee, and has been cited by numerous Christian Right-associated politicians like Mike Huckabee and Michele Bachmann as an authority on American history. Barton is not

well-regarded among academic historians, though; many such historians, including prominent evangelical historians like Warren Throckmorton and George Marsden, have criticized Barton for using quotations from the nation's founders out of context and, in some cases, possibly even fabricating them.

Peter Marshall (1940-2010), a pastor, and David Manuel (1936-2013), a professional writer, were the co-authors of *God's Plan for America*, a three-book series claiming that "that God had a definite and discoverable plan for America"[9]—to be revealed by Protestant Christians who would found a free and Christian nation to serve as a blessing to the world for centuries to come.[10] Starting with Columbus's "discovery" of the New World in 1492, they trace American history up to and through the Civil War, claiming that a serious study of that history reveals the influence of divine providence in sustaining America with the Puritans' vision of a covenant between the nation and God. Social unrest in the present, they claim, is a result of contemporary Americans' forgetting that history.

In addition to the authors mentioned, I also will draw from several history textbooks intended for Christian schools or for conservative Christian homeschooling families; these textbooks are representative of the American Narrative as it is presented to children and youth who grow up in households where the Christian Right's influence is prominent. The whole of the theological/political construct I present here is reinforced across multiple media spanning the evangelical Christian subculture in America; for example, Marshall and Manuel's *God's Plan for America* series has been adapted into a series of children's books[11] and a study guide for Sunday school teachers.[12]

The Cosmic Narrative

The overarching narrative for the Christian Right, what I am characterizing as the Cosmic Narrative, is one of a vast battle between the forces of good (led by God) and the forces of evil (led by Satan). This narrative envelops, encompasses, and contextualizes the American Narrative; to the extent that the story of America appears at all in the Cosmic Narrative, it plays a minor role at best, serving as the site of further theological and spiritual revival in the age of the Reformation and as a base for missionary activity as the End Times approach.

It is also important to note that parts of this narrative—such as the valorization of the early church, the corruption of Roman Catholicism, and premillennial dispensationalism—are not universal even among theologically-conservative Christians. Rather, those who espouse it tend to be theologically-conservative Protestants from the fundamentalist or evangelical traditions. Notably, conservative Roman Catholics, theologically-conservative mainline Protestants without ties to the fundamentalist movement (such as the Dutch Reformed traditions), and Latter-Day Saints break from or reject portions of this narrative.

I also maintain that it would also be an error to overemphasize the differences among theologically- and politically-conservative Christians within the Christian Right. While the contemporary Christian Right is more religiously-diverse than its origins— particularly in its acceptance of conservative Roman Catholics and Latter-Day Saints as partners—most of the major thinkers and theorists of the Christian Right have been conservative Protestants in the theological tradition of evangelicalism and/or

fundamentalism. Furthermore, those outside the evangelical or fundamentalist tradition emphasize some of the same themes in their own versions of the Cosmic Narrative.

In this narrative, the Christian Bible is seen as the foundational text laying out the terms and characters; Christians see the current era as one chapter in a great cosmic story, whose beginning is the Creation and Fall of humanity and whose ending is the descent of the world into chaos followed by the great cosmic and cataclysmic battle of the Apocalypse, in which God finally triumphs over Satan and inaugurates the eternal heavenly Kingdom for all true Christians to inhabit. This long struggle, which extends literally from the beginning of time to its end, is seen in terms of ongoing "spiritual warfare" (a concept from Paul's letter to the Ephesians)[13] with God and God's followers (including angels) on one side, and Satan and Satan's followers (including demons) on the other. However, it is important to note that despite the frame of a "battle," there is no point where the outcome is anything less than certain; God remains in control of the whole narrative, including deciding when God will win the final victory over Satan.

The Beginning: A Vast Cosmic War

The narrative starts with a tale that is commonly accepted among Christians despite the fact that it does not appear in its totality in canonical Scripture (there are allusions to it in the Bible, but most of the material comes from non-canonical works like the book of 2 Enoch[14] and the Book of Adam and Eve, as well as in the early teachings and writings of Christianity) in which the archangel Lucifer (who according to the tradition was God's lieutenant, considered the most beautiful angel or "morning star"), believing that he could usurp God, gathered followers among the angels and rebelled against God. After a battle in Heaven, Lucifer was defeated by God and banished from

God's presence—at which point he and his followers became Satan and the demons, eternally contending against God and seeking to damage or destroy that which God created.

At some point after that (to the extent that time had any meaning before the creation of the world) God created the world in six days not through a process of evolutionary change but by divine fiat, and created the first man, Adam. Adam was forbidden from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, under penalty of death, but otherwise was given dominion over all of the earth and its creatures. Not liking that Adam was alone, God created out of Adam's rib the woman, Eve, who was to be a "help meet"[15] to Adam; Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, to tend the Garden of Eden. As Adam and Eve did not know sin, they were designed to live forever in the garden, walking naked freely with God because they knew no shame.

However, a serpent—understood as Satan even though the book of Genesis does not explicitly state this—tempted Eve by causing her to doubt God's command and by telling her that God forbade their eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because God was afraid of the humans' power. Eve ate from the tree and gave some of its fruit to Adam, who also ate it; when God found out, God cursed Adam, Eve, and the serpent, and cast the humans out of the Garden.

This story is generally known as the "fall," by which sin entered into the world; prior to Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit, the world was perfect and death was unknown, but after the Fall, death entered into the world. In Christian doctrine, the Fall creates the gulf between humans and God, because humans, knowing the difference between good and evil, now have sin in their nature. Human sinfulness, incompatible

with God's holiness and perfection, creates the need for reconciliation between humans and God by blood sacrifice; if human sinfulness is not addressed, humans are unworthy of God's kingdom, and they are thus condemned to hell in the end.

The Patriarchs and Israel

The narrative follows through the Patriarchs, the fathers of the Hebrew people; Abraham, the first Patriarch, made a covenant with God whereby Abraham promised to follow God and God, in return, granted the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants. Abraham's grandson Jacob and his sons settled in Egypt fleeing a famine, and four hundred years later (when the narrative rejoined them), they were enslaved to Pharaoh. God raised up Moses, who confronted Pharaoh; after the ten plagues, Pharaoh released the Hebrews, who then spent forty years wandering the Sinai Peninsula. During this time, the Hebrews received the Ten Commandments from Moses, who encountered God face-to-face on Mount Sinai, as well as the ceremonial and ritual law centered on blood sacrifice at a single central location where the nation's spiritual leader would encounter God: the tabernacle (later replaced by the temple in Jerusalem).

After Moses's death in the wilderness, his successor Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham's descendants, and the people gradually conquered the land, demanded and received a dynastic line of kings from God, and eventually were politically divided into a Northern Kingdom (whose capital was Samaria) and a Southern Kingdom (whose capital was Jerusalem). A recurring pattern developed where the Israelites would fall into idolatry and syncretism, abandoning God's law for their neighbors' worship of gods like Ba'al and Ashtoreth. God, growing tired of this idolatry, would allow Israel's neighbors to attack, and the people, prompted by

prophets sent by God, would repent and return to God. This pattern culminated in the conquest of all of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians (after which point they faded from the narrative) and all of the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians, who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and sent the Israelites into exile. During the exile, some of the people remained faithful to God's law and—after the Persians had conquered Babylon— were permitted to return to Jerusalem and, eventually, to rebuild the Temple. The Greeks then conquered Israel from the Persians, and then the Romans conquered it from the Greeks.

A recurring theme throughout this period of the narrative is God's special relationship with the people of biblical Israel; Israel is symbolically characterized as a wayward wife to God, pledged to remain faithful to God but continually straying to worship other fertility gods like Ba'al or Ashtoreth. However, God continues to love Israel and to honor God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants; whenever God disciplines Israel for their unfaithfulness, God preserves a remnant of the faithful to remain and build a new generation who will follow God. Another key theme in this period is God's use of other nations to punish Israel through war and conquest; the other nations are seen as instruments of God's plan to draw Israel back to God. However, this period is also understood as setting up the main act in the drama: the birth, life, execution, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Incarnation

The Jesus story is the pivot of the larger narrative; in this view of history, it is the single most consequential moment between the creation of the world and the end of time. Though the crux of the story is the death and resurrection of Jesus, the entirety of his

lifetime is considered to be of great significance within this narrative. The narrative of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection is found in the four Bible books called the Gospels; tradition holds that two were written by the apostles Matthew and John, and the other two by early Christians named Mark and Luke.[16]

The broad outlines of the Jesus story are relatively straightforward. Jesus was born to Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph but still a virgin,[17] in a stable in Bethlehem amid a chorus of angels, a visit from shepherds,[18] and gifts from sages who saw him as the fulfillment of an astrological prophecy.[19] Once Jesus came of age, he was baptized by John the Baptist, a local itinerant prophet,[20] and commenced his ministry, gathering disciples together and traveling the countryside, preaching, performing miracles, and enraging the religious authorities with his emphasis on loving God and one's neighbor rather than strictly adhering to religious law. This culminated in his journey to Jerusalem, where Jewish religious leaders and Roman political leaders conspired against him, finally arresting him (with the aid of Jesus's disciple Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus[21]), and trying and sentencing him to death by crucifixion under Roman authority.[22]

At the moment of Jesus's death on the cross he cried out to God, the sky went dark, there was a great earthquake, and the curtain in the Temple which separated the people from the Holy of Holies which contained the seat of God was split in two.[23] Jesus was buried by a wealthy patron before sundown on Friday (as Saturday was the Sabbath), and on Sunday morning, when several of Jesus's followers went to visit the tomb, they discovered it empty.[24] Jesus appeared to his disciples on several occasions, staying with them for another forty days before commissioning them to spread the Gospel over the

whole world, promising them that the Holy Spirit would come to help them and that he would return soon to initiate the end of the world, and then ascending into heaven.[25]

It is significant for this study that the religious and political leaders are characterized as threatened by Jesus and Jesus's message; the Bible's promise that his followers would be persecuted for their faith and the Biblical narratives of the persecution of early Christians suggest to those who subscribe to this narrative that persecution is a sign of faithfulness.[26] Another significant aspect to the narrative is the notion of Jesus's sinlessness; the theology of substitutionary atonement requires that Jesus be the "spotless lamb" sacrificed for the sins of all, having never overtly sinned and having been born without original sin.[27]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the miracles Jesus performs throughout the narrative—healings, mass feedings, casting out demons, and supernatural acts like walking on water—are significant in that they are seen as proof that Jesus is who he says he is. The historicity of the Gospels—in which they are seen as being just as historically and literally true as any other account of history, if not even more so due to their divine authorship and inerrancy—is an essential component of this narrative's potency among the Christian Right; to them, everything laid out in the Gospels actually happened in Palestine during the first half of the first century of the common era, and these miracles are just as historically certain as any more mundane event from that era that is assumed to be historically true by the rest of the world (like Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE). Among their many other functions, the Gospels are understood to be accurate historical records.[28]

The Church Age

After Jesus's ascension into heaven, the narrative continues to follow the stories of the disciples, who gathered in Jerusalem to figure out the next move. On the day of Pentecost (fifty days after Jesus's crucifixion), the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and they began preaching; devout Jews and God-fearers (those who believed in the Jewish God but were not themselves Jewish) from throughout the world, gathered in the city, heard the disciples speaking in their own languages. This kicked off a dramatic expansion of the Christian community in Jerusalem—one which led to the first wave of persecution against the nascent Christians. However, Christianity continued to thrive throughout the whole of the Middle East and the Roman Empire despite the persecutions as the disciples spread out, converting Jews to Christianity and starting communities of Christian believers wherever they went.

One Pharisee who had been persecuting Christians, Saul, was traveling to Damascus when he had a dramatic conversion experience and began a series of missionary journeys that would result in his bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles (previously, the disciples had only been preaching to diasporic Jews) and planting churches throughout the whole of the Mediterranean region. Known as Paul (part of the Roman version of his name), he also wrote a series of epistles to the churches he planted, advising them on points of theology and practice; these letters would form much of what would later be collected as the New Testament. The biblical book of Acts relates numerous incidents in which Christians were persecuted; tradition holds that most of the apostles, and many other followers of Jesus in that early day, were martyred for their faith.

The Cosmic Narrative presents the early church era as a golden age of Christianity, with the implication that because the original disciples had actually known Jesus and had personally experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit, their way of practicing Christianity was the ideal form of the religion. Harold Bloom suggests that the search for "primordial" Christianity is one of the hallmarks of American religion in general; as he points out, not only evangelicals but also Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) valorize the early church and suggest that their practices mirror most closely those of the earliest Christians (even as the Mormons suggest that their added revelation supersedes the early Christians' practices).[29] Some evangelical churches in the Campbellite Restorationist tradition take their emulation of the early church to the point of not using musical instruments in worship (since the early church did not have instrumental music), or by modeling their church structure after that presented in the epistles of Paul.

According to the Cosmic Narrative, the golden age of the early church was followed by a steady decline, with the implication that the church's increasing respectability in Roman culture (culminating in Constantine's conversion in 313 CE and the subsequent adoption of Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire) came at the cost of its purity and holiness. LaHaye writes, for example, that "as the Church became married to governmental authority and elevated to a place of acceptance, it declined in spiritual blessing and power."[30] The narrative suggests that this corruption expressed itself liturgically in the church's adaptation of pagan Roman ritual into the practices of the Roman Catholic Church,[31] philosophically in the church's gradual acceptance of Greek and Roman thought and the valorization of human reason, and theologically in the emphasis on ritual and works rather than faith.

Another effect of this corruption, the Cosmic Narrative suggests, was a shift in Christian eschatology. Prior to Constantine, Christians were largely premillennial in their eschatology, seeing the imperial structure as irredeemable in its persecution of Christ's chosen, ready to be wiped off the face of the earth with Christ's sudden and unexpected second coming. However, when church and state united under Constantine, the idea of Rome as a hostile enemy of God obviously could not be maintained; thus, the Cosmic Narrative suggests, Christian eschatology shifted from a literal interpretation of Scripture's End Times prophecies to an allegorical interpretation, culminating in Augustine's doctrine of amillennialism—that the millennium prophesied by the Bible was a symbol for the age of the church, rather than a literal millennium ushered in by supernatural events.[32]

In the Cosmic Narrative, the church continued in this declined state, growing more corrupt and more mixed with worldly philosophies, for over one thousand years; though the narrative acknowledges the devotion of some individual Christians during this period, it suggests that their devotion was *despite* the church's influence, not because of it.[33] This steady decline ended with the Reformation, which started with rebels like John Wycliffe and Jan Hus but took on full steam as Martin Luther broke from the Roman Catholic Church. Other heroes of the faith followed behind Luther: Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and William Tyndale, to name but a few.

The Reformation is seen as arresting the decline of the church in several important ways. First, there was the return to the notion of individual salvation—not only in Luther's famous emphasis on salvation by faith alone (rather than by works), but also in highlighting the need for each individual to have his or her own relationship with God.

Parallel with the emphasis on individual salvation was an emphasis on an individual's relationship with the Bible, where the common person could now read the Bible in the vernacular language—as opposed to Scripture being restricted to the clergy reading in Latin. As Barton writes, "since the common man was not permitted to read the Scriptures for himself, his knowledge of rights and wrongs was limited to what his civil leaders told him."[34]

The increased emphasis on the Bible as the sole source of theological knowledge (rather than filtered through the traditions of the church) was famously described by Luther as *sola scriptura*; for Francis Schaeffer, even more important than flushing out the traditions of the church in theological reasoning, the Reformation's emphasis on the authority of the Bible was instrumental in recovering the concept of total depravity, over against the Roman Catholic Church's adoption of Thomist optimism about human reason, and "removing [...] the humanistic distortions which had entered the church."[35]

Some of the more eschatologically-minded rhetors in the Cosmic Narrative tradition—such as Tim LaHaye—also see the Reformation as the beginning of the recovery of premillennial eschatology. Though the first generations of Protestants (like Luther and Calvin) retained the amillennialism of Augustine, the emphasis on individual Bible reading and "the natural tendency of the ordinary individual to take the Bible literally"[36] led to a renewed interest in premillennialism during the nineteenth century.

The Cosmic Narrative also puts forth the notion that all Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare. Christians, equipped with the Holy Spirit and various spiritual disciplines and practices including prayer, Scripture, and righteousness, are to stand alongside God's armies of angels doing battle "against the powers of this dark world and

against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."[37] When spiritual warfare is coupled with premillennial eschatology (which suggests that the End Times are imminent), Satan becomes a very real presence, prowling "like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour"[38] the souls of those who fall away, continually undermining Christianity and morality at a crucial kairotic moment in time.

The Final Act: The End Times

The End Times are the final act of this grand drama—and for many of the most significant proponents of the Christian Right's vision, the End Times take the form of "premillennial dispensationalism," a theological vision first developed by an English pastor named John Nelson Darby in the late 1800s. Premillennialism is defined by rupture rather than continuity; after God suddenly and unexpectedly raptures all true Christian believers into heaven, the world will descend into chaos and a single world government, led by the Antichrist and masterminded by Satan himself, will rise to oppress the world for seven years (killing much of humankind in the process). At the end of that seven-year period, Christ will return to make war against Satan and his forces; Christ will violently slaughter Satan's minions and bind Satan for a thousand years while Christ reigns over a peaceful millennial kingdom. At the end of that millennium, Satan will be unbound for the final climactic battle between good and evil, but Christ's forces will prevail again and God will create a "new heaven and new earth,"[39] where all Christians will live eternally in God's glory.

The American Narrative

The second narrative of the Christian Right, nested inside the first, is a historical narrative about the United States. In this narrative, Europeans who came to North America were guided there by God and charged with the founding of a Christian nation. The founders of the country, steeped in this ethos, were inspired by God on some level to write the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution based on Protestant Christian ideals and with the intention that the nation remain Christian in character. However, as the nation's history progressed—and particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century—secular humanists, who sought to separate religion and morality from government, took over cultural institutions and indoctrinated Americans into abandoning Christian morality and government, leading to massive social chaos and decline.

In the Cosmic Narrative, the outcome is certain; the world will grow worse and worse until Christ returns to finally triumph over evil and inaugurate the eternal kingdom. However, the American Narrative is left open-ended; either Christians will retake the nation, spark a national revival, and return America to God's values and prosperity, or the nation will continue along its moral decline until it collapses (either naturally as a result of its sins, or supernaturally by God's wrath) or the world ends.

Columbus and the Puritans

The American Narrative begins with the European discovery of the Americas—which the narrative suggests was itself a product of divine providence, particularly in its timing:

God had withheld knowledge of this place from Europeans for centuries.

He had stocked it with an abundance of game and fertile soil, natural

resources and beauty—all that a people would ever need—as a fitting

abode for the followers of His Son. And He had chosen Christopher

[Columbus] to point the way.[40]

Christopher Columbus, the first European to discover the New World, is presented in

several ways.[41] In some Christian Right retellings of the American Narrative, Columbus

is a hero who set out against all odds to spread the Christian faith to the New World, and

historians who malign him are the agents of rampant political correctness. Barton, for

example, presents a long passage from Columbus's writings in which Columbus claims

that the Holy Spirit convinced him that his journey would be successful,[42] and Robertson

claims that attacks against Columbus are "propaganda"[43] that reflect the "hostility and

divisiveness"[44] of liberals.

Others, like Marshall and Manuel, present a more ambiguous picture of Columbus

as a hero of the faith gone wrong; while he initially was "the Christ-bearer"[45] to the

native peoples of the Americas, he was corrupted by his avarice into taking slaves and

gold, a bad start to the European adventure in the New World. Columbus is also

portrayed as corrupted by his Roman Catholicism, which was reason enough for God to

providentially keep him away from North America, which God was setting aside for

Protestants. Kennedy and Newcombe relate a story of Columbus being led by a cloud and

a flock of birds to the West Indies instead of to the North American coast:

And to think, if it had not been for the flight of some birds [leading

Columbus to the West Indies], America would probably have the same

culture and religion as that of South and Central America today. Were the

cloud and those feathered creatures just a coincidence, or the hand of

God? I believe that just as God used a talking donkey to set Balaam straight (Num. 22:21-31), so He used a cloud and a flight of birds to change Columbus's destination.[46]

If Columbus's role in the story of America is left somewhat ambiguous, that of the Puritans is much less so. They are presented as the community that God truly intended to colonize the North American continent from the very beginning of history:

I believe that God set our continent apart—separating it by two oceans—not to be discovered until around the time of the Reformation. Here God established a certain sort of nation, a nation that was founded by the Pilgrims and the Puritans and others who came with evangelical Christianity. Here the Bible was believed and the gospel was preached. It was an evangelical nation. […] [I]f God, in His providence, ordained that this is what this nation should be, then all down through the ages, in fact from all eternity, God intended that it would be so. He guided our path and led us to this end.[47]

The Puritans exemplify the ideal starting-point for the American Narrative; unlike the morally compromised (and Roman Catholic) Christopher Columbus, the Puritans represent not just Protestantism but Protestantism on a *mission*—the "city on a hill" of John Winthrop's famous *Arbella* sermon, which Kennedy and Newcombe suggest "helped create the template for a uniquely free and Christian America."[48] The Puritans were not in the New World to mine gold or enslave the native population, but to serve as "a model of the Kingdom of Christ upon earth" and "living proof to the rest of the world that it was possible to live a life together that reflected the commandments of Christ"[49]—

a community, Marshall and Manuel write, "who, more than any other, made possible America's foundation as a Christian nation."[50]

The Puritans explicitly saw themselves as a type of Israel, a people sent by God from their home into a new Promised Land—with the implication that God's covenant with Israel in the Bible, including its conditional blessings and curses, applied to their communal life as well.[51] This covenant is understood within the American Narrative not simply as a rhetorical device or as a way for the Puritans to understand and channel their religious devotion, but as being every bit as real as the Puritans supposed it to be. Marshall and Manuel suggest that Puritan history bears witness to the validity of their beliefs:

> Few Biblical principles are more compelling than this: that God blesses repentance. And, in the early days of our history, it was frequently proven that when people began to earnestly repent, what followed was the return of God's grace. That a drought could be broken or an Indian attack averted by corporate repentance is an idea that sounds alien to many Christians today. Yet it was central to the faith that built this country, and it is a prominent, recurring theme in the Bible.[52]

In fact, they write, God's blessing on the Puritans and their devotion to communal religious life was so great that its effects may be felt even to this day: "How much of the grace that continues to cover this country today and how many of the incredible blessings that have been poured out upon this land are a direct result of their obedience and willingness to die to self? Only God knows for certain."[53]

The Puritans are also held up as an example of the necessity for religion and morality in civil government. While the American Narrative differs from the narrative offered up by explicit Christian Reconstructionists in suggesting that the Constitution's separation of explicit religious and civil authority is superior to the Puritan theocracy, the American Narrative nevertheless holds that the Puritans understood that civil government could not function in the absence of religion—and that a shared communal teleology was necessary to the health of the community. As Falwell writes (confusing the Puritans and Pilgrims), "time and again, our Puritan Pilgrim heritage was centered around advancing the Kingdom of God. Liberty was directly related to this end."[54]

The American Narrative particularly emphasizes the Puritans' example of religion and civil government in the realm of education. The Puritans, aware of the abuses of the institutional church in England and on Continental Europe, believed that (as Barton writes) "the proper protection from civil abuses in America could be achieved by eliminating Biblical illiteracy. In this way, the citizens themselves (rather than just their leaders) could measure the acts of their civil government compared to the teachings of the Bible."[55] LaHaye also writes:

> One of the Pilgrims' greatest passions next to religious freedom was the
> education of their young so they could read the Bible for themselves. [...]
> For that reason, school committed to teaching reading sprang up almost as
> fast as villages, and many of the first teachers were ministers. As long as
> the town had a minister, the people had a teacher for their young. No one
> suggested the Bible was not an appropriate textbook in the community or

common school, and, of course, it was automatically found in the many

church-sponsored schools.[56]

The use of the Bible in the educational system was so widespread and systemic, Kennedy

and Newcombe write, that America is "a nation that was born of the Bible"[57]—and

particularly of the idea that the people should be equipped and encouraged to read the

Bible for themselves.

The Puritans' religiosity and commitment is presented as an ideal for today's

Christians to strive toward, not only because of the great personal risk they endured for

the sake of their religious vision, but also because they understood religion not just as

individual but also as communal. As Whitehead writes, "the church must learn to

externalize the principles of its faith as practiced by Christians [...] in early America."[58]

Marshall and Manuel similarly lament the present condition as compared to the Puritans,

writing that today, "privacy has become our religion, with the home as the foremost place

of worship,"[59] where the Puritans understood the necessity of a "Christ-centered and

covenanted community"[60] where neighbors feel responsible not only for the state of their

own souls, but for the religious health of the whole community.

Finally, the contemporary portrayal of the Puritans also serves another purpose in

the American Narrative, as further evidence of American decline over the past century.

Marshall and Manuel suggest that the Puritans were well-regarded by historians before

the twentieth century, but fell victim to "sudden prejudice" from the secular humanist

elites.[61] The historical revisionism of the elites, they suggest, has roots in the secular and

the spiritual. On the secular side, the "spirit of rebellion"[62] has taken hold of Americans

who no longer not want to live by "social customs that have been acceptable in this

country for more than three centuries," including "work ethic, chastity before marriage, modesty in decorum and dress, traditional lifestyles, regulations against obscenity in the media, or legislation against immorality."[63] On the spiritual side, Satan himself is behind the "monstrous misrepresentation"[64] of the Puritans because they stand for everything he stands against: "If there is one group of people in the history of the country whose example Satan hates more than any other it is the Puritans."[65] LaHaye is more explicit in attributing the vilification of Puritanism to the elites, writing that "today the humanists ridicule the Puritan work ethic, free enterprise, private ownership of land, and capitalism."[66]

The ideal society of the Puritans underwent spiritual decline after the enthusiastic first few generations overcame the difficulties of establishing a settlement, and left their children a stable, functioning, and largely self-sustaining society. The narrative suggests a direct link between comfort and spiritual malaise, further reinforcing the notion of persecution (either by the powers of this world or by demonic forces) as a sign and a cause of spiritual strength. The spiritual malaise experienced by the Puritans, combined with the continuing success and growth of the American colonies, led to gradual evolution from the Puritans' vision of a complete unity between religious and spiritual authority to the more generalized "Christian consensus" lauded by writers like Schaeffer and Whitehead, in which an active Christian faith was no longer a prerequisite for enfranchisement.

There is an ambiguity about the effects of this evolution in the American Narrative, even within individual retellings. Marshall and Manuel illustrate this ambiguity. On the one hand, they bemoan the Half-Way Covenant and the spiritual

malaise that led to it as a sign of the failure of Puritan parents to inculcate their children with their spiritual zeal—"a halfway covenant for halfway committed Christians."[67] On the other hand, they laud Connecticut founder Thomas Hooker for his vision of a civil covenant, in which religious faith was not a prerequisite for enfranchisement, suggesting that it was the "next step in the evolution of American civil government" given to him directly by God.[68]

Embedded in the overall pattern of a decline in spiritual zeal during the colonial period before the Great Awakening is a smaller, cyclical pattern as well, as Marshall and Manuel write:

> For God was now warning them directly—with droughts, with plagues of locusts and caterpillars, with smallpox epidemics, and with all the myriad and seemingly unconnected things that start to go wrong when grace is lifted. […] Repeatedly His people would turn back to Him, and pray and call His name and humble themselves, and He would gladly relent and return blessings. But each time they turned away a little quicker, and each time their repentance was a little more perfunctory—going through the motions, with not everyone bothering to observe the fast days or attend the services. There may indeed have been repentance, but it did not reach deeply enough to affect an amending of lives, for their hearts were turning hard and dry like those of the people in Israel of old. And so the droughts did not lift so quickly, nor did the pests entirely disappear.[69]

While Marshall and Manuel's narrative makes brief reference to droughts and pests as signs of God's displeasure with the Puritans' spiritual malaise, they go into more explicit

detail in their retelling of King Philip's War, the series of battles between the Puritan colonists and American Indians, presenting it as a direct response to the Half-Way Covenant. The American Indians in this narrative are Satan's "obedient servants [doing] their savage best to make up for all the ground lost and the insults taken" by the Dark Lord, but allowed to act by God in order to call the people back to repentance and covenant.[70] The spiritual dimension of King Philip's War, Marshall and Manuel suggest, made spiritual revival a patriotic as well as a religious duty, until "there was scarcely a man or woman in all of New England who was not diligently searching his or her own soul for unconfessed or unrepented sin. In fact, it became unpatriotic not to do so—as if one were not doing one's part for the war effort."[71]

Marshall and Manuel also explicitly draw the parallel between the downward spiral of decline, adversity, and repentance among the Puritans and that of the people of Israel in the Old Testament narrative—part and parcel of their contention that America is a nation uniquely covenanted with God to a specific purpose, just as the Old Testament Israelites were. Similar to the parallel Israelite story, the downward-spiral narrative ends in the kairotic moment of truth, the fulcrum around which the rest of the narrative turns; however, unlike the story of the Israelites, in which they were finally defeated and exiled, and only returned to the land as a conquered foe, the protagonists of the American Narrative were prepared for the kairotic moment by a true spiritual rebirth and an era of prosperity.

The Great Awakening and the Revolution

That moment of spiritual rebirth and prosperity was the Great Awakening, a Christian revival that swept through the American colonies during the eighteenth century.

The American Narrative gives the Great Awakening a great deal of credit for sparking, fueling, and sustaining the American Revolution. Politically, the Great Awakening is credited with unifying the colonies and creating a sense of American identity independent from Great Britain,[72] as well as with building up a foundation of moral leadership that placed great men into key roles leading up to the revolutionary period and with reawakening a sense of shared, communal spiritual responsibility.[73] As Marshall and Manuel write:

> Through the universal, simultaneous experience of the Great Awakening, Americans began to become aware of themselves as a nation. They began to see themselves as God saw them: as a people chosen by Him for a specific purpose—to be not only 'a city upon a hill,' but a veritable citadel of light in a darkened world […] Now, through the shared experience of coming together in large groups to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Americans were rediscovering God's plan to join them together by His spirit in the common cause of advancing His Kingdom. Furthermore, they were returning to another aspect of his plan—they were not to operate as lone individualists but in covenanted groups.[74]

Spiritually, the Great Awakening "provided the colonists with the mental and moral toughness to declare their independence from England and endure the rigors of the Revolutionary War,"[75] as LaHaye puts it—a psychological effect that increased the colonists' perseverance through the trials of independence and war.

The narratives also imply, by connecting the Great Awakening to the malaise-adversity-repentance cycle of the Puritans, that the revival of the Great Awakening,

national instead of regional in scope, created the spiritual conditions necessary for the American people to withstand the spiritual assault of the American Revolution. Marshall and Manuel describe the pattern of Puritan history as a demonstration that "when people began to earnestly repent, what followed was the return of God's grace"[76]; when this is extended as a pattern for the whole of American history (as Marshall and Manuel clearly intend), the implication is clear that the Great Awakening gave the American people not only the psychological wherewithal to maintain their faith through the trials of the Revolution, but also the spiritual wherewithal to continually repent and seek God's favor, thus inviting God's supernatural intervention in the cause.

> Incredible as it may seem today, the Congress acknowledged that the war against our powerful enemy could be won only through a continuing willingness to face up to and deal with sin, both personal and national. Hence, throughout the eight-year conflict they continually called for days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer (or thanksgiving, if events warranted)—sixteen of them in all.[77]

The American Revolution thus contextualizes and adds significance to King Philip's War, which was described in detail as a spiritual war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, the success of which was dependent on the colonists' repentance and covenant renewal; read in light of the Revolution, King Philip's War is seen as a typological forebear of the American Revolution. Like King Philip's War, "there could be little doubt that the struggle against Britain [in the Revolution] was fundamentally a spiritual one."[78]

George Washington looms large during this period in the American Narrative as the hero of the Revolution and of the early republic; Washington is "God's man, chosen for America's hour of greatest crisis,"[79] preserved by God for the purpose of leading the revolutionary cause and guiding the new nation through its formative years. Numerous retellings of the narrative emphasize his "miraculous" survival through a particular battle in 1755, during the French and Indian War, in which Washington "had two horses shot out from under him and four musket balls pass through his coat"[80]; one of Barton's short books is titled *The Bulletproof George Washington* in reference to this battle.[81] In the American Narrative, Washington is not just an extraordinary man or even "the greatest man in the colonies"[82]; he is an anointed man, compared to biblical heroes like Gideon[83] and Moses[84], chosen by God as the leader of his people.

The American Narrative also portrays Washington as a deeply committed practicing Christian, drawing an explicit contrast to contemporary historians who suggest that while he was a member of the Anglican Church, he rarely attended services and his faith was (as a book by several prominent evangelical historians put it), "not particularly Christian."[85] The narrative presents him as well-read in the Bible, reading it for two hours daily,[86] as well as prayerful in private.[87] Washington is also portrayed as an intensely moral man, disciplining himself and demanding that his soldiers also engage in spiritual discipline in order to win God's favor, as Marshall and Manuel relate in describing his general order requiring Continental Army soldiers to attend religious services and prohibiting swearing:

> Why did this matter so much to Washington? Partly because the vastly
> out-numbered, out-supplied, and out-generaled American armies could

never expect to defeat the armed might of Great Britain without divine

intervention on their behalf. He knew that because God does not bless

immorality, a superior morality was required of his soldiers.[88]

All of these aspects are combined to make Washington into the ideal Christian soldier, not only for his time but for the present as well; LaHaye writes that if Washington were alive today, "he would freely identify with the Bible-believing branch of evangelical Christianity that is having such a positive influence on our nation."[89]

Similarly, the time of the nation's founding is presented as kairotic rather than chronic; it is the culmination of a typological succession of expanding liberty stretching back to the Protestant Reformation, occurring in God's time and with a unique outpouring of God's guidance and providence. Marshall and Manuel provide an expansive view of the Constitution as a culmination of kairotic history:

When one considers the major events swirling slowly around the biggest

gears—the American Revolution, the Age of Reason, the Industrial

Revolution, the rise and wane of empires, the gradual aligning of the

forces of darkness and light, and the gradual dimming of the brightest

Light—time seems much compressed. It becomes apparent what the Bible

means when it says that to God a thousand years is as a single day.

Knowing human nature and knowing how few would freely choose His

way, God knew what the twentieth century would hold in store—the

totalitarian darkness that would arise out of Europe, Russia, and Asia—

and knew that England alone would never have the spiritual power to stop

it. And so, early in the seventeenth century He planted the seeds of Light

that would make a difference hundreds of years later.[90]

Similarly, Falwell directly juxtaposes the Constitution and the Bible, implicitly bestowing

the latter's divine inspiration on the former:

I am positive in my belief regarding the development of the Constitution

that God led in the development of that document, and as a result, we here

in America have enjoyed 204 years of unparalleled freedom. The most

positive people in the world are people who believe the Bible to be the

Word of God. The Bible contains a positive message. It is a message

written by 40 men over a period of approximately 1,500 years under

divine inspiration. It is God's message of love, redemption, and

deliverance for a fallen race. What could be more positive than the

message of redemption in the Bible? But God will force Himself upon no

man. Each individual American must make His [sic] choice.[91]

In this historical narrative, the first Great Awakening is seen as a necessary precursor to

the American Revolution; as Americans began to understand themselves as individuals

before God and began seeing themselves in terms of their personal relationship with

Jesus, the narrative suggests, they began to chafe at the King's sovereignty over them.

Thus, when the King and Parliament continued to tax them without representation, they

rebelled—first with the Boston Tea Party, then at Lexington and Concord, and finally

with the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration, in this narrative, is as much a

theological document as a diplomatic or political statement; the assertions in the

Declaration that "the laws of Nature and Nature's God" are being violated by the British,

and that we are "endowed by our Creator" with inalienable rights, are understood to be essential acknowledgements by the founders of the nation that rights cannot exist without reference to God.

The American Revolution, fought in defense of the God-given rights of the American people, was blessed by God throughout; at certain key points, like Washington's raid on Trenton or his army's successful retreat from Brooklyn, the narrative suggests that supernatural intervention—not just fortuitous coincidence—was responsible for key elements in the Americans' success. Without these interventions, the Americans would have been doomed; this is evidence that God was on the side of the Americans, that the success of the Revolution was part of God's plan. In the wake of the Revolution and the failed Articles of Confederation, the founders of the nation gathered to write a Constitution; evangelical authors point out that several states had, as qualifications for state delegates to the Continental Congress, that the delegate in question be not only a theist but a trinitarian. Evangelical authors also point to several other religiously-significant stories from the composition of the Constitution; they claim that many of the Constitution's authors were clergy and most were active in their local churches, and also point to an anecdote suggesting that Benjamin Franklin (who is described by secular historians as a deist) called for a prayer to open the daily sessions during a particularly difficult moment, in hopes of invoking divine guidance.

The era of the nation's founding is extremely significant in this narrative, in that the narrative suggests that the founders of the nation universally intended for America to be an explicitly Christian nation. The First Amendment is explicitly understood not to erect the "wall of separation between Church and State," as Jefferson would later write in

his letter to the Danbury Baptists, but rather to forbid the federal government from establishing any one Christian denomination over another. In this view, the founders intended only for Christians to have the right to freely exercise their religion in this new Christian nation; while others might be permitted to exercise their religions, it was not because they had the right to do so, but rather because the Christian government graciously allowed it. Furthermore, the narrative suggests, the Constitution's original purpose was to limit the federal government; those who use the narrative point out that individual states had established state religions long after the passage of the First Amendment (in Massachusetts, the church remained established until 1833).

Furthermore, the nation's founders loom large in this narrative, where they are portrayed as having a sort of timeless wisdom for understanding what makes a successful state; their words are used in this narrative not only as statements of the intentions of the nation's founders, but function prophetically as words for future generations to heed. Their intentions for the United States are seen as binding on the nation; the founders' understanding of the United States as "a Christian nation," and the intent on some of their parts to see that the children of the non-elite were educated in the reading of the Bible, is seen as a sort of legal proof that twenty-first century America should continue to be bound to their wishes. John R. Pottenger describes this as the "genetic fallacy."[92]

The American Revolution and the French Revolution

The American Narrative also draws a sharp contrast between the American Revolution and the French Revolution, using the terrors of the latter to introduce into the narrative the theme of the dangers of the Enlightenment and its intellectual heir, secular humanism. American Narrative retellings emphasize the "amorality and atheism" of the

French Revolution, suggesting that "more than a century of secularistic thinking" had led

to a revolution that ended in the terror of Robespierre and the tyranny of Napoleon, while

the American Revolution and subsequent constitutional process led to a republic that has

lasted for more than two centuries. [93] I will highlight three major themes in the contrast

drawn by the American Narrative between the American and French Revolutions.

First, the French Revolution's leaders are characterized as "proponents of

amorality and atheism," partially because of France's historic Catholicism:

> History affirms that many skeptics and rationalists were educated in Jesuit
>
> colleges. Being thus exposed to a characterization of Christianity through
>
> Catholic dogma and never exposed to the living Christ, these men turned
>
> to atheism and a resultant humanism that has deified the human race as
>
> proud and arrogant.[94]

Voltaire and Rousseau are held out as the prime figures of the French Revolution,

characterized as arrogant atheists[95] who were "antagonistic to all religion."[96] The

American founders, in contrast, are presented as not just overwhelmingly Christian, but

overwhelmingly *Protestant* Christian; Protestantism not only influenced their

anthropological views (as we will see below) but also stressed the importance of an

education in Scripture, with the result that "virtually every one of them knew the

Scriptures and was positively influenced by them."[97] The influence of Protestantism on

the American colonies and early republic was great enough that it resulted in what

Schaeffer describes as a "Christian consensus," in which even those who did not

personally subscribe to Christianity or held a nominal faith could not but have been

influenced by the Protestant worldview. (Schaeffer's argument that non-Christians can

hold beliefs influenced by Christianity will become important in differentiating him from the Reconstructionists.)

> But we should realize that the word Christian can legitimately be used two ways. The primary meaning is: an individual who has come to God through the work of Christ. The second meaning must be kept distinct but also has validity. It is possible for an individual to live within the circle of that which a Christian consensus brings forth, even though he himself is not a Christian in the first sense. This may be true in many areas—for example, in the arts or political thought. Many of the men who laid the foundation of the United States Constitution wee not Christians in the first sense, and yet they built upon the basis of the Reformation either directly through the *Lex Rex* tradition or indirectly through Locke.[98]

The French Revolution's godlessness led to the second major contrast, which was the root of the two revolutions' moral codes. The French Revolution is characterized by "'natural law' [which] excluded all Divine revelation and was man-centered not God-centered,"[99] a belief that "man is […] free to do his own thing."[100] The French notion of freedom was actually license; Schaeffer writes of Rousseau that "the freedom he advocated was not just freedom from God or the Bible but freedom from any kind of restraint—freedom from culture, freedom from any authority, an absolute freedom of the individual—a freedom in which the individual is the center of the universe."[101] Without a frame of reference in moral absolutes, this notion of freedom inevitably resulted in "rights" becoming nothing more than an exercise in power, as Whitehead writes: "The argument for rights, separated from any basis in a reliable frame of reference, becomes capricious

and merely a matter of definition of terms by whoever has the power to make the definition stick."[102] The chaos of the French Revolution is presented as a natural result of a moral code centered around humanity and without a place for God.

The American Revolution's notion of morality, on the other hand, is presented as being based on the notion of absolute divine standards, which could only be known by those who read and understood the Bible. The narrative roots this moral viewpoint in three sources: Samuel Rutherford, John Locke, and William Blackstone. Schaeffer heavily emphasizes the role of Samuel Rutherford, a Scottish political theorist who argued that civil authorities should be restrained by God's law, and that those authorities whose laws violated God's law lost their authority. Because most historians do not attribute such a significant role to Rutherford in shaping the American founders' worldview, scholar Barry Hankins argues that rhetors who emphasize Rutherford's influence are indicating that their own views of American history were influenced by Schaeffer.[103]

John Locke's work follows from that of Rutherford; Schaeffer, in fact, argues that Locke simply secularized the views of Rutherford with his emphasis on universal and transcendent liberties rather than universal and transcendent moral laws.[104] Whitehead identifies William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* as "the basic legal treatise" throughout much of the history of the early Republic; Barton suggests that the founders shared Blackstone's view that "civil laws could not contradict the laws of God revealed either through nature or the Bible,"[105] while Whitehead writes that Blackstone "took it as self-evident that God is the source of all laws, whether they were found in the Holy Scriptures or were observable in nature."[106]

Rooting the founders' political views in Rutherford and Blackstone's specifically

sectarian views enables the American Narrative to reframe some of the key linguistic

emphases held in common by the American and French Revolutions; the two revolutions'

differing moral worldviews led to profoundly different understandings of the meanings of

the terms *natural law* and *liberty*. First, the emphasis on Rutherford and Blackstone's

influence in the American Narrative reframes the Declaration of Independence's

reference to the "laws of Nature and Nature's God" as a reference to an explicitly

religious vision. The American Narrative suggests that because the founders held with

Rutherford and Blackstone that God's moral law was universal and absolute, and that

God's moral law found its highest or perfected expression in Christian morality, "the laws

of Nature" were not universally-discernible moral principles, and "Nature's God" was not

the nonsectarian God of Hart's civic piety[107] or Bellah's civil religion.[108] Rather, "the

laws of Nature" were *Christian* moral laws, and "Nature's God" the *Christian* God—

references that lead both Barton and Whitehead to conclude that any American law or

system that contradicts Christian moral principles is not valid.[109] Further, the Declaration

of Independence's statement about natural law is understood as binding on the

Constitution; Whitehead writes, for example, that "the Constitution presupposes the

Declaration and the higher, fundamental law to which the Declaration witnesses."[110]

The founders' emphasis on universal morality shifted the meaning of the language

of liberty as well. While both American and French revolutionaries used the language of

liberty and freedom, the French revolutionaries' view of liberty as license is contrasted

with "liberty as the founders understood it [that] meant liberty under God—the freedom

to do what is right."[111] Or, as Falwell writes, "true liberty is found only in obedience to

law."[112] This emphasis on the liberty *to* act, rather than the liberty *from* restraint, is at the root of Schaeffer's argument that while the Enlightenment worldview of license led to anarchy, the Reformation worldview at the root of the American founding could produce "freedom without chaos.[113]" Liberty without the self-restraint and social restraint imposed by a widespread agreement on a universal moral code would lead to confusion.

In the American narrative, this vision of positive liberty also animated the founders' views on the purpose of education; in this model, children were taught to read, write, and think not primarily for economic success or the attainment of knowledge about the world (though these were certainly additional purposes), but rather for the purpose of their understanding for themselves the moral laws of the universe as found in the Bible. As Barton writes, "the Founders understood that Biblical values formed the basis of the republic and that the republic would be destroyed if the people's knowledge of those values should ever be lost."[114] American freedom is dependent on education in this narrative not because education teaches children to think critically or because it empowers them to take part in the public discourse, but rather because it teaches them the moral values that produce a hierarchy of authorities, including family, church, and business—thus obviating the requirement for excessive control of their moral behavior by the external force of the state.

The third major point of contrast drawn in the American Narrative between the American and French Revolutions is in their view of human agency. The French Revolution is characterized as overly optimistic about humanity's capacity for pro-social behavior without the restraint of religion or morality; Marshall and Manuel characterize them as believing that "the potential power of man's mind and virtue of his heart made it

possible to have the Brotherhood of Man without the Fatherhood of God."[115] The result

of this worldview was a life without any form of restraint, both corporately and

individually. Corporately, this meant that the state would be freed to act without limits,

and because people could be trusted to act in pro-social ways, there was no need for

internal or external checks on the state's power. Individually, this meant that people

would be free to act however they wanted—for each to "do whatever is right in his [sic]

own eyes"[116]—so long as it did not violate the rights of another, without being constricted

by sectarian religious moral codes, whether those codes were externally imposed or

internalized.

The American founders, on the other hand, are portrayed as holding a more or less

Calvinist view of human moral agency; the fact that the founders "understood the reality

of man's fallen nature" meant that they knew that human beings could not be trusted to

act in pro-social ways without some kind of internal or external restraint. As Marshall and

Manuel write,

> Why does [the Constitution] work so well? Aside from the Divine origin
>
> of its inspiration, the Constitution was the culmination of nearly two
>
> hundred years of Puritan political thought. The earliest church covenants
>
> started with the basic, underlying assumption central to their faith: the
>
> sinfulness of humanity's fallen nature, in which 'dwells no good thing.'
>
> That may appear depressingly negative to anyone who wants to believe in
>
> the innate goodness of man.[117]

The founders' views of human depravity led them to include checks and balances into the

nation's governmental system; these checks and balances were both internal (between the

various branches of government) and external (the Constitution, the states, and ultimately the people themselves as a bulwark against the expansion of government into areas where it did not belong[118]). Furthermore, the American Narrative's characterization of the founders' notion of human depravity reinforces the contrast between the American and French visions of liberty. The American vision of liberty is framed as a positive right: the freedom to exercise self-restraint, based on one's awareness of one's own depravity, in pursuit of doing good. The Enlightenment vision of liberty, by contrast, is portrayed as the freedom from any limits or constraints on one's own depravity.

The Golden Age: The Early Republic

The post-revolutionary period serves as the introduction to America of the conflict that will define the remainder of the American Narrative, between the Enlightenment (and, later, secular humanism) and Christianity, particularly evangelical Protestant Christianity. The contrast between the French Revolution and the American Revolution bleeds over to American soil, concurrent with the formation of political parties. On the one side of this divide were those Americans who adopted Enlightenment values, such as the Unitarian and Transcendentalist movements in New England[119] and the Jacobins, like Jefferson, who valorized France during the Revolution.[120] On the other were established evangelical Protestants like Timothy Dwight and the evangelizers of the Second Great Awakening, seeking to preserve the nation's Christianity against the first steps of the humanist onslaught.

Antebellum slavery and the Civil War present an interesting dilemma for the American Narrative even more than for many other narratives about the nation's history. First, the historical base of the Christian Right was white Protestants in the southeastern

United States—many of whom trace their history back to those who took up arms for the Confederacy during the Civil War. But the more significant complication is the heroic portrayal of the nation's founders, many of whom were slaveowners, in the narrative about the nation's origins—particularly the portrayal of Washington, who held slaves throughout his life, as a Christian moral titan and leader of the founding generation.

This complication is only heightened by the *argumentative* purpose of the American Narrative's portrayal of the nation's founders in defining present-day identity, where American Narrative rhetors present the narrative of heroic Christian founders as the *true* history of the nation, over against contemporary critical historical revisionists who deemphasize the founders' religiosity or critique their practice of slaveholding.[121] Contrary to those "educational elites" who seek to discredit or even remove the founders from American history classes in order to sap the younger generation's patriotic spirit,[122] American Narrative rhetors seek to preserve the memory of the founders as patriotic, moral Christian heroes.

In order to escape this contradiction, the narrative suggests that the nation's founders—even those who owned slaves—personally deplored slavery and wished to be rid of it, recognizing the moral deterioration that came with the owning of slaves and resenting the colonial European origins of the practice.[123] In this reading of history, the Declaration of Independence's statement that "all men are created equal" is not an indictment against the hypocrisy of the founders, but rather represents an effort by the founders to realize those claims. Barton, for example, credits the nation's founders with "planting and nurturing the first seeds for the recognition of black equality and for the eventual end of slavery,"[124] and suggests that "the Revolution was the turning point in the

national attitude [toward slavery]—and it was the Founding Fathers who contributed greatly to that change."[125]

Slavery and Abortion

The more significant rhetorical role of the slavery debate in the American Narrative, though, is typological, in which slavery in the antebellum United States is presented in parallel with abortion in the contemporary United States. First, both slavery and abortion are presented as forms of national sin—a failure of American government, religion, and society to truly acknowledge the humanity of the oppressed which put the nation in deep spiritual peril. Marshall and Manuel are illustrative in this regard; while they are eager to present northern abolition as a result of the Puritan influence (as part of their overall thesis of the Puritans as the ideal Americans), they also suggest that "the blame for the [spiritual] condition lay as much with the North, as with the South. [...] The list of missed Northern opportunities went on endlessly. The responsibility was nationwide.[126]" Similarly, the whole of the nation is responsible for the sin of legalized abortion; as Falwell writes, "Abortion stands as an indictment of murder against America for killing unwanted babies."[127] Schaeffer suggests that just as the nation sinned by allowing the law to define Dred Scott as a non-person in 1857, so too the nation sins today by allowing the law to define fetuses as non-persons:

> By the ruling of the Supreme Court [*Roe v. Wade*], the unborn baby is not counted as a person. In our day, quite rightly, there has been a hue and cry against some of our ancestors' cruel viewing of the black slave as a non-person. This was horrible indeed—an act of hypocrisy as well as cruelty. But now, by an arbitrary absolute brought in on the humanist flow,

millions of unborn babies of every color of skin are equally by law

declared non-persons. Surely this, too, must be seen as an act of

hypocrisy.[128]

By defining slavery as a national sin, the American Narrative suggests that the

fundamental cause of the Civil War was not southern intransigence or economic

differences, but rather a form of spiritual and moral rupture in which the nation reaped

the inevitable results of that sin: "a nationwide day of judgment, when God's wrath would

fall on the North, as well as the South."[129] God had given the people numerous

opportunities to turn from their ways, Marshall and Manuel write; "the purging of slavery

from the land could have taken place through nationwide repentance and revival,"[130] as it

did in England. But despite the waves of revival that swept through the land during the

Second Great Awakening, the American people did not take that opportunity to fully

comprehend the evil of slavery or repent of their role in it.

The typological parallel suggests similar judgment in America's future, should the

nation not similarly avail themselves of the contemporary opportunity to engage in

nationwide repentance for the sin of legalized abortion. This divine discipline, like that

handed down to Israel in the Old Testament, could take the form of a natural disaster,

another civil war, or an invading army, writes Robertson:

If the past is any guide, we know that a righteous God will not hold back

His judgment forever. A great nation can slowly be destroyed by pervasive

moral decay. We sow the seeds of our own destruction, or God Himself

can strike sudden devastating blows—violent earthquakes, hurricanes and

tornadoes, massive flooding, extended drought, widespread disease, even

the impact of an asteroid. Or God can raise up fierce enemies who delight

only in destruction or death.[131]

Though the various other aspects of the national decline (which I will discuss shortly) are also given a place in the reasons for God's judgment, abortion is often singled out as a primary reason; Kennedy, for example, writes that "surely, God's anger and judgment are due a nation that kills the innocent for personal convenience and destroys the home in the name of selfish personal 'satisfaction.'"[132] In this case, at least, the American Narrative presents a continuity of time and some room for human agency, in portraying the nation as capable of collective repentance and revival.

Second, the narrative emphasizes the role of evangelical Christians in the abolition movement. William Wilberforce stands out as a hero in this regard, as someone who was openly motivated by his evangelicalism to put an end to the institution of slavery in the United Kingdom; Schaeffer writes that "one could wish that the United States had had some outstanding Christian as consistent as Wilberforce,"[133] suggesting that the reason slavery took hold in the United States was because the churches there were not willing to speak out on behalf of the slaves.[134] Kennedy and Newcombe, similarly, write that "the abolition of slavery was largely a Christian movement,"[135] situating abolitionism in a larger narrative about the role of evangelical Christians in social reforms throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the anti-dueling movement, Prohibition, African-American civil rights—and the anti-abortion movement, in which Randall Terry and his direct-action group Operation Rescue are presented as the spiritual heir to the abolitionists, the temperance movement, and the heroes of civil rights.[136]

Like the abolitionists, the anti-abortion movement is presented as taking an unpopular stand that would be vindicated by the judgment of history:

> Yet sadly enough, when it came to dealing with the greatest social evil of the age, the groundswells of local revival did not produce the necessary tidal wave of change. The revivals failed to touch the vital nerve of slavery. [...] Today prophetic voices can again be heard, warning of personal and social evils, which if left unrepented of, will bring a fresh judgment of God upon our beloved land. The national curse of abortion can claim responsibility for the annual killing [sic] over a million unborn babies. […] One wonders how long we can continue to presume upon the divine favor earned for this land by the faithful, obedient Christians among our forefathers.[137]

The parallel between slavery and abortion gives the rhetor considerable leeway in choosing whether to compare the present situation to the antebellum era, in which divisions over slavery ran deep while evangelical abolitionists called the nation to repentance, or to the Civil War itself when the divisions broke into outright hostility; Kennedy and Newcombe avail themselves of the latter comparison, writing: "During the Civil War, in his classic Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln said that this nation needed 'a new birth of freedom.' Today, we are engaged in another type of civil war, and we are again in need of a new birth of freedom."[138]

Finally, both slavery and abortion are presented as having fundamentally pagan origins, which Christians accepted despite the Bible's clear witness. Both Schaeffer and Whitehead emphasize the role of Aristotle's philosophy in the defense of slavery, with the

latter suggesting that slavery illustrates "the danger of natural law thinking."[139] Marshall and Manuel attribute the presence of slavery in the Americas to Satan, suggesting that he had "sown the seeds of darkness"[140] in an effort to "choke out the Light"[141] of Christ on the North American continent by introducing a practice that would not only cause division and strife but would also imperil the nation spiritually.

Similarly, Whitehead joins Schaeffer in suggesting that abortion is the ultimate sign of the moral degradation wrought by secular humanism and the acceptance of nonbiblical, non-absolute moral standards. "With the loss of absolutes and with the application of evolutionary principles, the dignity of man is severely diminished. […] The logical conclusion of man's significance being no greater than 'a baboon or grain of sand' found its expression in the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which upheld the right to abortion-on-demand. To the Supreme Court an unborn child, as a nonperson, had little significance."[142]

The Decline of America and the Failure of the Church

The next major development in the American Narrative is the nation's decline. At the nation's founding and throughout the nineteenth century, America remained nominally, if not uniquely, Christian; however, throughout the twentieth century, the nation lost sight of its Christian roots and began to adopt humanist pluralism as the national religion. As LaHaye and Hindson write:

> All through the twentieth century, we allowed godless secularism to
> replace the Judeo-Christian values of our society. God has been
> deliberately and systematically removed from prominence in our culture

and in our intellectual lives. We have made Him irrelevant to our culture.

Tragically, we have also made our culture irrelevant to God.[143]

As a consequence, the American Narrative suggests, virtually every indicator of national success and prosperity plummeted, particularly throughout the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s; the rates of abortion, teen pregnancy, and sexually-transmitted disease rose, while standardized test scores, marriage, and economic prosperity fell. The narratives differ somewhat in their dating of the beginning of the nation's decline, but all agree that by the 1960s things were headed seriously downhill.

Much of the blame for the nation's decline is cast on the Supreme Court, which between 1950 and 1975 handed down rulings outlawing *de jure* segregation in public facilities by race and official prayer in public schools and striking down state laws requiring public officials to swear belief in God and banning or restricting contraception and abortion. In so doing, the American Narrative suggests, the Supreme Court set the stage for what Kennedy and Newcombe describe as a "secular witch hunt against any sneaky vestiges of religion left in public places."[144] Barton sums up this complaint, writing that as a result of the Supreme Court's rulings on religion in the public square, "nine unelected individuals now exert more control over how, when, and if public religious activities will occur than any other body in America."[145]

But the Supreme Court is not solely to blame for the nation's decline in the American Narrative; so too are the churches, which failed in their duty to preach the Gospel and in their duty to stand against the rising tide of humanism and moral decline in the schools and in the culture. The decline itself stands as evidence of the church's failure, as Whitehead writes:

> We as Christians share a major responsibility for what has happened, since
>
> a significant factor has been the dwindling influence of Christianity, which
>
> has allowed humanistic thought to rise and dominate. The pronounced
>
> effect this has had on our world is illustrated by the evident moral
>
> decadence of the West.[146]

One part of the church's failure is its willingness to compromise on societal issues for the sake of evangelism; instead of speaking out against social evils, Whitehead writes, Christians chose to embrace the expansion of governmental power: "All too often the Christian community has compromised while laboring under the naive impression that in this way 'the church could reach more people.' As such, it is not the non-Christian who is most to blame for the cruelty we see today. It is the silent church."[147]

Another part of the failure of the church is attributed to its inability to truly understand the nature and pervasiveness of secular humanism; though the church or individual Christians would occasionally speak out on moral issues, they were unable to see the overall pattern of decline. As LaHaye writes:

> Only one organization in America can stop the complete 'humanization'
>
> of our nation: the church of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the church seems
>
> apathetic in its response to humanism, possibly because the wolf has so
>
> neatly hidden beneath his woolly disguise. Knowledgeable Christians will
>
> rise up against religious heresy or a curtailment of basic freedoms, but
>
> their fighting instincts do not seem to be aroused by the terms secular
>
> humanism or scientific humanism. [...] Under the guise of philosophy,
>
> humanism has been granted a reputable position in American society.[148]

Similarly, Schaeffer writes of the decline that "the failed responsibility covers a wide swath. Christian educators, Christian theologians, Christian lawyers—none of them blew loud trumpets until we were a long, long way down the road toward a humanistically based culture."[149]

The other aspect of the church's failure is its concentration on spiritual and religious matters to the detriment of politics, law, and culture. This line of thought is particularly prevalent among American Narrative rhetors from the Calvinist tradition, since that tradition emphasizes the sovereignty of God over all the world—including society and government. The churches, however, failed to take God's sovereignty seriously enough and were content with developing the spiritual health and devotion of their congregants, to the detriment of the wider culture. Schaeffer writes, for example, of the "evangelical leadership" of his day, that "it has shown the mark of a platonic, overly spiritualized Christianity all too often. Spirituality to the evangelical leadership often has not included the Lordship of Christ over the whole spectrum of life."[150]

Whitehead is a particularly harsh critic of the church in attributing blame for the nation's decline. He suggests that the seeds for the church's failure to arrest humanism were sown in the 19th century when the church embraced "Revivalistic piety," failing to defend Christianity even as "humanists were thrusting their ideas into education, science, and the arts." Whitehead continues:

Unfortunately, the church has been all too willing to use the categories of 'secular' and 'religious' when no such distinction exists in reality. All things have been created by God. Thus, all things have their origin in God and should be under Christ's lordship. The pietist renunciation thus raises

a core issue: *the lordship of Christ.* [...] If Christ is not Lord over the arts

and science, then man is. This is humanism in practice. It was difficult for

the church to dispute humanistic ideology because the church itself was

practicing humanism by separating the spiritual from the totality of life

and reality.[151]

Even an emphasis on personal evangelism and conversion of others, he writes, has not

stemmed the tide; it "won some souls but lost the battle for society."[152] The church (and

individual Christians) are called to exercise God's sovereignty over *everything*, not just

their own lives and hearts.

The Breakdown of Authority

The failure of the church to defend the nation against the humanist threat

ultimately led to a complete breakdown of hierarchical authority. This breakdown started

at the very top of the chain of authority, but its ultimate effect has been to remove

authorities that mediate between central government and the individual.

The highest level of authority in the American Narrative (as in the Cosmic

Narrative) is, of course, God, whose absolute laws are expressed in propositional form

through the proper interpretation of the natural world, the human condition, human

history, and most importantly the Bible. All human governments and societies are

ultimately subject to this final authority, whether they want to be or not; however, only

those societies that understand and willingly subject themselves to that authority can

enjoy what Schaeffer characterizes as "freedom without chaos."[153]

This social construct is possible because biblical authority infuses the rest of the

hierarchy, creating a bilateral relationship between the tiers; because of the authority of

God's law over all human authorities, even the lowest level of the hierarchy—the individual—was empowered to critique any level above him or her on the basis of the overarching biblical law. As Schaeffer writes, "In the days of a more Christian culture, a lone individual with the Bible could judge and warn society, regardless of the majority vote, because there was an absolute by which to judge. There was an absolute for both morals and law. But to the extent that the Christian consensus is gone, this absolute is gone as a social force."[154]

Because the rest of the social hierarchy—including those elements that do not exercise direct coercive authority, like the church—is also mediating the authority of biblical morality, "freedom without chaos" is possible. Individuals accept not only the external controls of absolute morality but also the internal controls that curb self-indulgent tendencies, and thus these societies are able to exercise the positive freedom to do good valorized by the American Narrative without requiring an excess of governmental control.

The American Narrative asserts that the founding generation (and the Puritans before them) understood this hierarchical authority; hence, they built "a government of law rather than of the arbitrary decisions of men—because the Bible as the final authority was there as the base."[155] The power of this central government was intentionally limited, with lower levels of mediating authority—the state and local governments, businesses, charities, the church, and the family—filling the gap between the federal government and the people, exercising biblical authority while being more responsive to local, family, or interpersonal conditions.

Without the highest authority of absolute Biblical morality as the glue holding together the bilateral relationships between the levels of the hierarchy, however, this system breaks down—and the American Narrative asserts that this is precisely what has happened from the late nineteenth century to the present. As Kennedy and Newcombe write:

> A myth that's prevalent in our society is this: 'There are no absolutes. All truth is relative.' I'm sure you've heard it a thousand times. This is currently believed by 62 percent of adults. If young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five are included, the figure rises to 74 percent. A hundred years ago, or even fifty years ago, that would have been unthinkable. A century ago, I'm sure 99 percent of Americans believed there were absolutes and truth was not relative.[156]

The unmooring of the hierarchy from biblical authority replaces an absolute and objective standard with an arbitrary and subjective one; as Schaeffer puts it, "humanism in private morals and political life is left with that which is arbitrary."[157]

The result of this breakdown in the highest authority has been a general disrespect for authority more generally, meaning that those authorities that cannot exercise coercive power lose it. In particular, three of the intermediate authorities between the central government (with its coercive power) and the individual (irreducible), which could not exercise coercive power, have broken down: the family, the church, and patriotism. The vacuum of authority between the individual and the state left by the decline of the family, the church, and patriotism is quickly filled from both sides: the individual in the assertion

of anti-social liberties, and the state in the assertion of greater economic and cultural control.

The most important level of hierarchical authority in the American Narrative is the family, whose essential function is not just to raise up children into godly adults but also to be an intermediate authority between all levels of government and individual people:

> Not only does the family prepare future citizens and leaders, but traditionally it has served as a buffer (a safety zone) between the individual and the state. It affords members of the family protection from total statist control. However, with the breakdown of family autonomy—accompanied by state interference into family affairs—the buffer is fading. If this continues the individual will be left naked against the state.[158]

It is for this reason that Kennedy and Newcombe can assert that "whatever hurts the family hurts society."[159] Consistent with the theme of "culture war," the breakdown of the family is characterized not as an unintended result of the decentering of Christianity from American culture, but as a primary goal of the totalitarian humanist elite:

> It is no coincidence that the family is attacked by those who object to 'the limits and restrictions placed on their personal freedom of choice' by Christian values and absolutes. They obviously realize what countries like the Soviet Union have known for years: If one can destroy the traditional family unit—set child against parent and give the ultimate authority in child rearing to the state—the basic institution that stands between total

state control of the citizenry is eradicated. And the freedom of thought

passed down by the family from generation to generation is lost.[160]

The family as intermediate authority is presented as being buffeted from both sides in the hierarchy, working in concert with one another; individual family members reject the authority of the family and are aided in doing this by the government, which continues to assert more and more of the powers that the family once held.

The American Narrative presents as the ideal family structure one in which the father is spiritual head of the household with the mother as his theoretically equal partner, raising and disciplining children to become Christian citizens in the world.

Children feel secure in a home where the father acts as the head of the

family, lovingly cares for their mother, loves and respects God, and trains

them to obey His principles. It is essential to family harmony that the wife

submit to her husband's leadership for the Lord's sake. Such a woman will

enjoy the love, respect, protection, and provision of her husband; and she

will provide her children with an example of the proper role model of a

woman, even in today's society.[161]

This structure has been threatened by women's assertions of equality and children's assertions of autonomy. Women, who had once enjoyed a place of honor as the keepers of the home, "believed that lie that it isn't good enough to be 'simply a mother and a housewife'"[162] and sought careers; as a result, women have been less able to perform their "natural desire to supply the needs of [their] home[s],"[163] and have been more independent of their husbands, leading to marital problems.[164] The family hierarchy is not simply a social construct but a biblical absolute; Falwell writes of the Equal Rights

Amendment that it "defies the mandate that 'the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church' (Ep. 5:23)."[165]

Similarly, children are being goaded by humanist public schools and the humanist media into asserting their own autonomy and rebelling against their parents—and are being aided in their efforts by the government, which wants to take from the family the authority to raise children. As LaHaye writes: "The Bible addresses only two commands to children: 'obey your parents' and 'honor your mother and father.' Both are in contrast to the philosophy of child advocates and humanist government bureaucrats, who consider parents unqualified to raise their own children…"[166] The American Narrative suggests that parents who discipline their children in any way are at risk of losing them to a government that is eager to take away the family's authority:

> Parents need to be particularly cautious today when disciplining their
>
> children, because some humanists in government spend all their time
>
> ferreting out and attacking parents who believe in discipline, accusing
>
> them of child abuse. We have met parents who lost custody of their
>
> children after spanking them for running away from home or going to
>
> school dances; in some cases they had their children taken away because
>
> the parents required church attendance.[167]

These assertions of women's rights and children's autonomy are the symptoms of the larger disease, the loss of absolute authority; where once it was understood that the family hierarchy was ordained by God, humanists in government and education have succeeded in persuading Americans that the "nuclear family" is just one of many possible configurations for the family unit, none better than any other. In this way, the disciplinary

authority of the family as mediator of God's absolute law—both upwards to the church and government and downwards to individual children—is being broken down.

Another layer in the social hierarchy whose disciplining authority has broken down is the church; multiple American Narrative rhetors reminisce fondly about an era when "church discipline" was in effect, whereby a member of the congregation who was sinning against church norms could be sanctioned or expelled from membership in the church:

> Church discipline is almost unheard of today. The early church practiced it, and the truly separated church that is filled with the Spirit today will still practice it.[168]

> Rebellion, in fact, has been so romanticized in recent years that church discipline is literally unheard of. Today, if anyone were threatened with dismissal from a local church, he or she would probably shrug, laugh, and leave.[169]

The second quotation illustrates the consequences of the breakdown of these two societal hierarchical authorities which exercised their authority without formal legal power; it is the spirit of "rebellion" against established hierarchical authorities—particularly parents and the church—that is the ultimate cause of social unrest. Rebellion leads to lawlessness, which ultimately leads to the rise of the totalitarian Antichrist, as LaHaye suggests:

> The present generation is preparing for the rule of Antichrist by its insistent, contagious desire for lawlessness. One of the plaguing problems of the younger generation is that of rebellion against law and order and a

desire to reject restraint. Instead of morality, honesty, and decency based

on the fixed standard of God's word, we find immorality and self-

expression. Self-indulgence is the watchword of life today![170]

A third hierarchical element of social control that is portrayed as having broken down is

patriotism; while the American Narrative decries much of the expansion of the national

government's authority, it still paradoxically valorizes the symbols of the national

government itself and of a notion of national community—and suggests that the agenda

of the humanist enemy is to eliminate patriotism and love of America with the ultimate

goal of subsuming American government underneath the government of the United

Nations. As LaHaye writes, the humanist is "a socialist one-worlder first, an American

second."[171]

Much of the breakdown in patriotism is attributed to the educational system.

Certainly, the American Narrative suggests that American public schools' treatment of

American history is revisionist and emphasizes the nation's wrongs. Furthermore,

Kennedy and Newcombe suggest that new history curriculums (in 2003) are illustrative

of this revisionist history designed to eliminate patriotic fervor:

Everything that is 'traditional' will be downplayed, altered, or left out. The

role of the founding fathers will be grossly downplayed. Any good that

America has done will be left out of history or modified. What brought on

various problems, such as the 9/11 terrorist acts, will be adjusted to be

politically correct.[172]

In contrast, Kennedy and Newcombe suggest a more "balanced" approach to American

history, which emphasizes that while the nation is "far from perfect" and has "many flaws

[…] there is no doubt that it is the most blessed nation that has ever existed on the face of the earth. It has more freedom and abundance than any land has ever enjoyed in the history of this planet."[173] Patriotism, like the church, exercises its power without legal authority; it serves as yet another curb on an individual's desire. Thus, like both the church and the family, the loss of patriotism is both a symptom and a cause of further self-indulgence, rebellion, and lawlessness.

The result of this breakdown in hierarchical authority has been what Falwell describes as "the tide of permissiveness and moral decay."[174] This moral decay, in turn, is the cause of the nation's other problems. Falwell writes:

But the fact remains that at the root of America's problems today is the decay of our individual and national morals. This has resulted in the subsequent decadent state and instability of everything else in America— including economics, politics, defense, etc. The choices we as Americans have made in moral and religious questions have determined the way America is going today.[175]

Similarly, Kennedy and Newcombe write:

In less than forty years, our culture has gone from the strong family values of a society with a Christian consensus to a society that glorifies violence, illicit sex, and rebellion. We have severed ourselves from the roots of what made us great in the first place. We have gone from *Leave it to Beaver* to *Beavis and Butthead* in some thirty to forty years.[176]

Other rhetors take up the same theme, presenting America's moral decline as the cause of the increased rate of suicide,[177] school shootings,[178] increases in drug addiction,[179]

increased rates of violence[180] and crime,[181] educational decline,[182] the (perceived) military decline of the United States *vis a vis* the Soviet Union in the 1970s[183] and, subsequently, the rise of Islamic terrorism in the 2000s,[184] the economic downturn,[185] the rise of welfare[186] and the Social Security crisis,[187] and political corruption[188] and apathy.[189] There is a symmetry between the assertion that the church's failure to stop humanism was due to its failure to understand that God is sovereign over all spheres of life, and this assertion that moral decline is at the root of national decline; in both instances, the narrative argues that the church needs to fight back in the "culture war"— and take it seriously *as* a war. As Kennedy and Newcombe write:

> In this country we are very much involved in a 'culture war,' a war for the
> minds, souls, and lives of every American, which has been going on apace
> and growing in its intensity. You may hear this described in many other
> ways, but ultimately this is a battle of faith against unbelief, a battle for
> God or against Him.[190]

The American decline in morality and respect for hierarchical authority is, thus, an existential threat not only to the nation but to the world; should this decline into "self-indulgence" and "lawlessness" continue, chaos will inevitably result—and the people will demand an authoritarian figure to restore some semblance of order, even if that order is based on arbitrary principles: "Society cannot stand chaos. Some group or some person will fill the vacuum. An elite will offer us arbitrary absolutes, and who will stand in its way?"[191]

America's Future

Unlike the future in the Cosmic Narrative, the future in the American Narrative is open-ended; the American people have the power to decide whether the nation will prosper or collapse. The present in the American Narrative is a time of continuous liminality; every moment is a moment of national choice, where America can choose either the path of righteousness or the path of judgment. In 1980, Falwell wrote that "America is at a crossroads as a nation" facing the "fateful 'Decade of Destiny' — the 1980s,"[192] and LaHaye similarly wrote of the 1980s as a "decade of destiny" in which "the issue [of humanism or Christianity] will be decided."[193] Whitehead wrote in 1982 that "We are at an important crossroads in time and history."[194] Twelve years later, in 1994, LaHaye wrote that "the future of America is up for grabs and will be determined before the twenty-first century."[195] Marshall and Manuel similarly wrote in 2009 that "once again, America stands, like Biblical Nineveh, at the crossroads of mercy and judgment."[196] Every election, every moment, every decision is a crucial one, and the nation could be swept up in revival or plummeted into judgment without warning.

Judgment in the American Narrative is every bit as immanent as revival; the choice is stark and immediate because God could choose to exercise divine wrath on the deserving nation at any moment for its sins. As Falwell writes, "when the majority of our population forgets that this is indeed 'one nation under God,' then we do not deserve to survive."[197] This divine wrath can be speedy or slow, writes Robertson:

A great nation can slowly be destroyed by pervasive moral decay. We sow

the seeds of our own destruction, or God Himself can strike sudden

devastating blows—violent earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes,

massive flooding, extended drought, widespread disease, even the impact

of an asteroid. Or God can raise up fierce enemies who delight only in

destruction or death.[198]

Indeed, the nation's slow decline rather than cataclysmic collapse can itself be seen as a

sign that God continues to want to bless America, "to allow us as much time as possible

to repent."[199]

Robertson writes that even the nation's nominal Christianity will not be enough:

"Do we suppose that we will be spared the judgment of a righteous God just because we

mouth religious platitudes and sing 'God Bless America'?"[200] This nominal Christianity

by a people in moral decline provides God with even further reason for holy wrath: "We

call ourselves a Christian nation, but in fact a majority of us are secular humanists and

self-idolaters. We cannot continue misusing the name of God and avoid His

correction."[201] Barton asserts that this consciousness of God's impending judgment

should infuse every political decision: "In evaluating a policy, a citizen should first ask,

'What will be the result of this proposed policy in light of the principle of national

accountability—or what the Founders called the principle of "rewards and

punishments"?'"[202] Because the order of the world reflects God's absolute law, God can

be either a direct or indirect agent of that destruction; the "the evils and destruction that

have fallen upon every other nation that has turned its back on God"[203] can take many

forms: divine acts of wrath, collapse from internal conflict or economic disaster, or

conquest by external invaders.

The only thing that can save America from divine wrath is to return to the values

of the early Republic—undergoing spiritual change and restoring the missing

intermediate elements of the social hierarchy. Indeed, despite their having been deceived by the lies of humanism, many Americans intuitively *want* to go back to that simpler time, as Falwell writes: "I believe that Americans want to see this country come back to basics, back to values, back to biblical morality, back to sensibility, and back to patriotism. Americans are looking for leadership and guidance."[204]

In the short term, these returns can take the form of small victories, but the only thing that could truly save the nation over the long term in the American Narrative is a large, decisive victory for Christianity over humanism. This victory must be more than political, though; because the intermediate institutions of authority that have broken down are primarily nongovernmental in nature, changing the government alone to one that centers Christianity and respects the intermediate authorities of family and church will leave only another vacuum of power. Rather, the change required is primarily a spiritual and religious change on a national scale to restore the Christian consensus to society as a whole. This change will involve three elements: revival or conversion, national repentance, and right thinking and action.

The first element is revival or conversion; in other words, Americans who are not Christian (or who are nominally Christian) must be born again, and those who are born again evangelicals must experience a rebirth of spiritual zeal. This is an essential element for reversing the decline—and here the language shifts from the less sectarian "Judeo-Christian values" to explicit language imploring Americans to convert to evangelical Christianity. As Kennedy and Newcombe write:

I believe that if we are ever going to experience a new birth of freedom in America, it must begin with the new birth. Period. Unbelievers didn't

settle America and frame its government and institutions. And unbelievers

won't get America back on track.

Not that we can't use help from all willing quarters. I welcome

cobelligerents, if you will, in the fight against abortion or pornography.

But to change American culture completely, we need to change a majority

of Americans—from within.

Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can do that.[205]

Since the problems in society stem from a church that is unwilling to assert absolute

divine authority and a culture that is unwilling to accept it, the solution involves a public

recommitment to that authority.

A precondition for national revival is repentance; the nation must acknowledge

that the nation's decline is, at its most fundamental level, a result of sin rather than error.

As Falwell writes, "God desires to give America revival. But before there can be revival,

there must first be a conviction of sin, and there cannot be a conviction of sin until there

is awareness of sin. The hope for America is for her people to believe the Bible to be the

Word of God and to begin to live by the laws of God."[206] This process of repentance must

be a fully national project, where Americans "as a people" will "humble themselves

before God […] repent of our national sins and prayerfully seek His ways."[207]

But the need for repentance is even greater for those who are already committed

Christians than it is for those who are not, because the Christians have compounded their

participation in the nation's sins with the abdication of their responsibility to assert

absolute truth in the face of human relativism. As Kennedy writes:

Repentance from sin is the condition on which God will hear our prayers and heal our land. How tragic that we Christians seem to have ignored that part! How tragic that repentance is so desperately needed today in the Church as it kneels to pray for the repentance of the nation![208]

Similarly, for Marshall and Manuel, one of the guiding arguments of their history of the Puritan era and the early Republic is that "God blesses repentance."[209] However, this is precisely the element that is missing from contemporary Christianity because of contemporary Christians' overvaluation of spiritual comfort:

Repentance is the missing ingredient in much of modern American Christianity. [...] Repentance involves heartfelt change. And change, the lifelong process of being conformed to the image of God's Son, involves pain. Unlike Dwight or Asbury, JQA or Jackson, most us of today are unwilling to go through much emotional or spiritual pain. We can wear out our knees praying for revival, but if we are not willing to go through the pain of repentance, the Great Awakening we seek will not come. But there can be a victorious conclusion. We have forgotten that true repentance is not only tremendously freeing, cleansing, and uplifting, but it brings the blessing of God in its wake! Further, repentance on the part of a few can spread throughout a family, a church, or a whole society. The salt can regain its savor![210]

Even repentance for national sins will not be enough, though, unless Americans truly understand what caused the national decline in the first place and the nature of the enemy

they face, and reorient their Christian lives not only to greater inward spiritual revival, but also to greater external social revival and renewal. As Whitehead writes:

> The church must learn to externalize the principles of its faith as practiced by Christians during the Reformation and in early America. The truths of the Bible must flow from the mind into the world. A false pietism, a false 'spirituality,' and all the exclusively internal activities that so often make up the contemporary church bring neither revival nor reformation. The light must be taken from beneath the basket and placed on the hill.[211]

Similarly, LaHaye makes understanding the nature of humanism a precondition for revival itself, writing that revival "will only come, however, if we become informed of what humanism is, who the enemy is, and how to fight their subtle form of religious evil."[212]

Knowing the whole truth is not enough; it is the Christian's job to act, influencing the whole culture and infusing it with the absolute truth of Christianity.[213] Schaeffer offers the Great Awakening revivals as an example, writing that "The old revivals are spoken about so warmly by the evangelical leadership. Yet they seem to have forgotten what those revivals were. [...] they [the revivals] also called for a resulting social action."[214]

The most significant arena in which revived Christians must demonstrate their authority is in the political and governmental sphere, flushing out humanism and asserting God's sovereignty over the whole body politic, as LaHaye writes: "From school board to city council to state legislature to Congress, we need elected officials who realize they are responsible to God for the way they rule their city or this country."[215]

Elsewhere he argues that Christian ministers should be involved not only in spiritual and political revival generally, but more specifically in raising up leaders from within the movement, "recruiting godly men to run for public office, where their moral influence can be felt."[216]

Epistemic Function

Despite the productive tensions in their constructions of identity and time, there are noteworthy harmonies between the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative in terms of their epistemic functions. Both narratives articulate three major epistemological assertions for their audiences to accept.

First, both narratives set out the notion of an absolute and objective truth that is not necessarily accessible to everyone. While parts of this truth are evident to those who take the appropriate lessons from history or who truly listen to their consciences, the whole of the truth can be found only by means of special revelation from God to humanity. The anthropological viewpoint set out by the narratives makes it impossible for anyone to have access to the whole of the truth without direct revelation from God in the form of the Bible, because the truth-value of the narratives is based not in the universe itself but in the personal authority of God. In other words, it is only because God is omnipotent, omniscient, and trustworthy that the category of "truth" exists at all.

Second, both narratives suggest that the nature of this objective and absolute truth is not simply descriptive (like scientific truth), though there is certainly a descriptive aspect to it; rather, this truth is fundamentally and necessarily prescriptive and hortatory. In other words, it is *moral* truth first and foremost—and the moral truth-value of the narratives' claims serves as a warrant for their descriptive claims as well, suggesting that

because the Bible so perfectly lays out the moral order of the universe, its assertions about the physical order of the universe must also be true.

Finally, because the absolute truths are moral and hortatory rather than descriptive in nature, and because one cannot see those truths without accepting the validity of God's special revelation to God's people, understanding the whole truth requires a wholesale change in one's own identity. The narratives both assert that the only people who can fully comprehend them are those who see *themselves* within the narratives and allow the narratives to shape their view of the world. Though the truths themselves are absolute, they are not comprehensible to a passive outside observer; their truth is understood only when they are lived into.

General and Special Revelation

Christian theologians have traditionally separated what they characterized as God's revelation about God's own nature and about the nature of the universe and humanity into two categories of revelation. General revelation is characterized as that revelation which is available to all humanity, regardless of their religious instruction or cultural heritage, through the use of human reason and intuition. This not only includes the human ability to decipher the scientific or physical laws of the universe through observation and reason, but also includes what Christian theology has characterized as inherent human moral or spiritual longings or inclinations among humans—inclinations like the need for God, the knowledge of one's own sinfulness, or "natural" moral laws like those against murder, rape, etc.

Special revelation, in contrast, is God's revelation of God's self to particular people or groups through more or less direct communication. This category of revelation

includes the whole of the Bible (as God's ongoing message to humanity) as well as the stories in it, which are themselves seen as particular instances of special revelation— God's special message to particular peoples, such as the ancient clan/nation of Israel or the followers of Jesus. According to evangelical theologian Stanley Grenz, general revelation and special revelation can be differentiated from one another in two further ways. First, he writes, general revelation is "disclosed naturally rather than supernaturally," in contrast to special revelation; this enables humans to reach the truths of general revelation through reason, while special revelation remains inaccessible to human reasoning. Second, "general revelation is 'noetic' rather than 'salvific'"; in other words, while general revelation can make humans aware of their need for God, only special revelation can provide enough knowledge of God to ensure salvation.[217]

The limitations of general revelation are a major theme particularly in the works of those major Christian Right thinkers who are closer to the Calvinist Reformed tradition, such as Francis Schaeffer. The Calvinist tradition has always put special emphasis on the idea that "the effects of the fall extend to every aspect of human existence; no human person possesses the ability to gain access to God by personal merit."[218] This is the first of the five points of Calvinism, which are often expressed in the acronym TULIP; the doctrine of humanity's complete fallenness is represented by the T, which stands for "total depravity."[219]

In his history of Western thought, Schaeffer argues that the elevation of general revelation led to the split between the Renaissance/Enlightenment tradition, which he suggested led inevitably to the chaos and repression of the French Revolution and Soviet Communism, and the Reformation tradition, which produced what he called "freedom

without chaos."[220] This split, he writes, began with thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas, who had "an incomplete view of the Fall" because he saw it as affecting only human will, with human reason left untainted, leaving people "free to mix the teachings of the Bible with the teachings of the non-Christian philosophers."[221] In contrast, he writes, later Reformers would believe that "people could not begin only from themselves, and on the basis of human reason alone think out the answers to the great questions which confront mankind."[222]

It is noteworthy that this theologically-based notion of the limitations of general revelation is embedded in and reliant upon narrative—namely, the beginning of the Cosmic Narrative, in which Adam and Eve bring sin into the world (and "blight" the whole of nature)[223] by disobeying God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Prior to this narrative event, human reason, like all other human faculties, was, while limited by humanity's status as a created being rather than the Creator, not tainted by sinfulness.

Moreover, the historicity of the narrative of the Fall is essential to the whole construct, according to Cosmic Narrative authors like D. James Kennedy, who writes that in the view of history presented by evolution, "Christ becomes a useless excrescence, someone who is unnecessary because there is no need for salvation . . . because there is no original sin . . . for there was no Adam."[224] Similarly, Falwell suggests that the rejection of the Genesis account as literal truth is part of "the satanic campaign to discredit the Bible," writing that a literal and historical fall is necessary because, "if man did not sin and fall from his original state, there is no need to accept the Gospel message."[225]

Objective and Absolute Truth

The assertion of traditional Protestant theology that not only human reason but nature itself is fallen as a result of the historic Fall also means that appeals to objective truth cannot rest on any ontological fact about the universe itself; because human observation (like human reason and human will) is fallen, even our seemingly-objective observations about the universe can lead to erroneous conclusions if they are made without reference to an authoritative and objective source. Thus, the existence of absolute and objective truth about anything is based not on the existence of an objective universe which we are all observing, but on the personal authority of a God who exists outside that universe, who created the universe, and whose observations are not tainted by fallen human nature.

In other words, true statements about the universe are true not primarily because they match human observations about the universe or accurately predict the results of future observations, but primarily because the omnipotent, omniscient God who created the universe says they are true. Where empirical observation and human reason agree with the assertion of truth by the divine authority, they are accurate and confer greater authenticity on the divine narrative; however, when they disagree with God's absolute truth, they prove the basic untrustworthiness of empirical observation and human reason.

This is a crucial move, rooting both special and general revelation in the personal authority and sovereignty of God. The objective truth-value of special revelation is naturally dependent on the authority of God; if God is not authoritative in revealing God's-self, God's relationship to humanity, human salvation, or absolute and objective moral standards for human behavior, then special revelation falls apart.

The Cosmic Narrative, in rooting even the dependability of general revelation in the authority of God, goes a step further, however; if God is not God, then we cannot even say anything true about nature, for it is God's consistency and authority that maintains the very physical laws of the universe itself. Absent divine authority, Schaeffer suggests, even the truths of general revelation available through science would be unreliable, because there would be no assurance that the laws of the universe would remain the same from one moment to the next. "Christianity is the mother of modern science because it insists that the God who created the universe has revealed himself in the Bible to be the kind of God he is. Consequently, there is a sufficient basis for science to study the universe."[226]

The appeal to divine authority as the root of absolute truth emphasizes another important epistemological point, which is that absolute truth is not purely descriptive, but is more importantly also prescriptive. In other words, absolute truth is more a moral fact than it is a scientific one. Absolute truth is inherently and necessarily hortatory in nature, rather than ontological; instead of simply explaining and defining the world as it is, the existence of absolute truth defines the world as it ought to be. The assertion of absolute truth in the narratives is more about defining the moral, political, and economic components of "God's law" than it is about defining any kind of ontological or scientific truth.

The equivocation of descriptive and prescriptive absolutes also works in the other direction, to assert that those who suggest that there are no moral absolutes are really saying that there are no absolutes at all. "When a teacher or professor says there are no absolutes, you need to understand that he is also saying, 'There is no God,' because, you

see, God is the ultimate absolute. He is absolutely supreme. He is absolutely infinite in His power and wisdom and knowledge—in all of His attributes. What He says is the ultimate and absolute truth. Keep in mind that when someone says that there are no absolutes, this person is simply giving you a veiled and cloaked atheism."[227]

The functional result of this is that even descriptive truth is not value-free; rather, it serves as evidence to support the whole edifice of truth, at the apex of which are the prescriptive claims. Descriptive truth is seen as evidence for prescriptive truth in two ways. First, ontologically, the existence of absolute descriptive truth itself is seen to be serving as proof of God's immutability and absolute authority. The very existence of the descriptive, of consistent scientific laws and of a predictable universe, stands as a general-revelation evidence for the special-revelation prescriptive absolutes of the Bible.

Second and perhaps more importantly, the content of the descriptive truth—particularly history—is seen as bearing witness to the validity and absolute authority of the prescriptive truth of divine moral law. When nations follow God's law, they prosper; when they do not follow God's law, they suffer. The two narratives offer a productive tension in presenting the agency (or the extent of agency) causing these outcomes.

On the one hand, moral law is portrayed as a universal force no less powerful than physical laws like universal gravitation or electromagnetism. As Robertson writes in *The Secret Kingdom*: "Jesus quite bluntly said, 'If you do this, then this will happen.' When He added no restrictions as to time, place, nationality, and the like, then they were laws, in the same sense as the natural laws established by God—those governing motion, gravity, sound and such. They simply work."[228] In other words, it is people themselves that bring about their own prosperity or suffering through their good or evil acts. That

good acts bring about blessing and evil acts bring about suffering is marshaled as more evidence of the universe's creation by a holy and just God; it is because the universe reflects the divine nature that it will naturally reward those who exhibit virtues like self-restraint, hard work, love of neighbor, and sexual morality.

The contrast between the American and French Revolutions in the American Narrative is used as a prime example of the ways in which the denial of divine moral law is portrayed as naturally leading to degradation and chaos. The American Narrative suggests that the root of the difference between these two revolutions was their basic worldviews; the Americans held an essentially Protestant worldview, in which there were absolute divine standards and humanity was depraved and inclined to sin, while the French held to an Enlightenment worldview in which morality was seen as a human construct and human wisdom could solve all of the nation's problems. The subsequent history of the two revolutions is presented as an inevitable consequence of these starting points; the Americans created a stable system of checks and balances where sin's effects could be mitigated[229], while the French Revolution brought forth "a bloodbath and display of horrors"[230] that ultimately led to the rise of Napoleon as a dictator who could restore order and sanity.[231] The inevitability of these consequences is so apparent that only the willfully blind could not see it, as LaHaye writes:

> We would expect true thinkers to profit by their mistakes, even in the field
> of philosophy. But such is not the case. In view of the total failure of
> Enlightenment humanism to produce reason, liberty, freedom, and
> progress through the French and Russian revolutions, and in light of the
> chaos, suffering, and totalitarian repression they instituted—which is the

ultimate consequence of no absolutes—one would hope that the humanist

mind would become suspicious that perhaps man without law really can't

be trusted. But these historic lessons are lost on the humanist mind.[232]

In the American Narrative, the lesson of history is this: Because the nature of God's

universe is such that there is a universal moral law, and humans are naturally inclined to

transgress against that law, those nations that do not enshrine those concepts into their

own laws are doomed to chaos and totalitarianism, while those that do will find

prosperity and hope. Even without any explicit divine intervention, these results will

inevitably follow; the people of a nation are the agents of their own fate.

The other option available to the rhetor is to make God the agent of this prosperity

or suffering, either through an apparently-natural coincidence or a supernatural act. Often

those involved in the narratives are not even aware that their paths are being guided from

on high, as in the example of Christopher Columbus's travels not taking him to the

mainland of North America. Both Marshall and Manuel and Kennedy and Newcombe

suggest that Columbus was guided southward by God so as to leave the future United

States available for colonization by Protestants, and more particularly by the New

England Puritans:

And to think, if it had not been for the flight of some birds [leading

Columbus to the West Indies], America would probably have the same

culture and religion as that of South and Central America today. Were the

cloud and those feathered creatures just a coincidence, or the hand of

God? I believe that just as God used a talking donkey to set Balaam

straight (Num. 22:21-31), so He used a cloud and a flight of birds to change Columbus's destination.[233]

A few farsighted Puritans could sense God's hand in a coincidence of timing that was too extraordinary to be accidental. Had Columbus landed farther north... […] Had her northeastern coast not been reserved for the Pilgrims and Puritans... To some, it must have seemed almost as if they were standing in the middle of a gigantic model of one of those newfangled pocket watches, with the wheels and gears of 'coincidence' swinging around and meshing and turning other gears, which swung and turned others.[234]

At other points, however, the characters in the narrative are portrayed as clearly aware that their path has been supernaturally blessed by God. This is particularly true for narratives about the American Revolution, centering on the person of George Washington; David Barton has written a whole book, *The Bulletproof George Washington*, about what is termed Washington's "miraculous" survival of several key battles during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution.[235]

Washington is also brought out as a character witness to testify about God's providence to contemporary audiences: "Rather, America would be a free nation, and it would be that Puritan and evangelical form of Christianity that would give birth to our nation. Was this the hand of God, or merely coincidence? Again, Washington himself said that an America who was ungrateful to God in light of all of His providential acts on behalf of our country was 'worse than an infidel.'"[236] Washington's attribution of both his

own and the United States' survival to "providence" is remarked upon in virtually every retelling of the American Narrative.

Similarly, the suffering of the wicked is also portrayed as both a natural effect of evil in a moral universe, and as an intentional act of wrath by a just and righteous God—with past acts of divine wrath presented as evidence of the future potential suffering facing the American people should they not repent of their evil ways and return to God. As Falwell writes:

> We the American people have to make a choice today: will it be revival or ruin? There can be no other way. One only has to turn to history to find that this is a proven fact. [...] America will be no exception [to several Bible verses promising ruin to nations that forget God]. If she forgets God, she too will face His wrath and judgment like every other nation in the history of humanity. [...] When a nation's ways please the Lord, that nation is blessed with supernatural help.[237]

In this way, the narratives insist that objective fact and absolute morality reinforce one another; the existence of absolute morality, and of God's punishment for (or the natural course of) immorality, is asserted as displaying itself to the student of history. Consistent with their overall approach, the narratives present biblical narratives as simultaneously typological and historical, as existing in both epic kairotic time and prosaic chronic time. The Old Testament narratives of God punishing the Israelites for their national sins by sending invading armies of Assyrians and Babylonians are presented as no less historical—and no less didactic—than constructed historical narratives of homosexuality and decadence bringing about the fall of the Roman Empire.

Truth Knowable Only by the Elect

The notion of absolute and objective moral truth is only part of the epistemological viewpoint set forth by the narratives, however; epistemology not only implicates questions about the existence and nature of knowledge, but also how human beings can come to obtain it. Christian theology has historically divided the process by which people come to grasp the truth into the categories of "general revelation" and "special revelation," with the former being available to all people everywhere, and the latter being available only to those to whom God has revealed it.

Historically, conservative Christian theology has tended to err on the side of an epistemology in which special revelation played a crucial and deciding role; where liberal theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw Christianity as an expression of a universal human experience, conservative theology developed in its assertion of the peculiarity of the Christian religion—and especially the inerrancy of the Bible—as the foundation for theological thought.[238]

A contrast between the work of Francis Schaeffer and the Christian Reconstructionists is illustrative of this debate. Drawing from one of his teachers, Cornelius Van Til, Schaeffer suggested that it is a person's presuppositions—his or her worldview, fundamental beliefs about the universe and knowledge—that dictate the extent to which he or she can understand the truth and, more importantly, act appropriately in response to that truth. The proper presuppositions, he argued, could only come from belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and God's absolute and eternal moral laws as a fixed standard; as he wrote, "we need absolutes if our existence is to have *meaning*— my existence, your existence, Man's [sic] existence."[239]

Schaeffer also believed that human reason, while fallen, could still get a person at least part of the way to the saving knowledge of God, in showing the nonbeliever that his or her worldview was internally consistent and led to disastrous consequences for both the individual and society. In fact, he suggested, contemporary people (unlike those of the past) are already further along in being ready to accept Christianity: "Already men [sic] are partway to the gospel, for they too believe that man is *dead*, dead in the sense of being meaningless. Christianity alone gives the reason for this meaninglessness, that their revolt has separated them from God who exists, and thus gives them the true explanation of the position to which they have come."[240]

To Schaeffer, even the special revelation of Scripture is intelligible, understandable, and believable for anyone who approaches it, because it is objective reality. The objectivity of special revelation, he argues, is what differentiates "Biblical" Christianity from "existential" philosophies—particularly the theological systems of neo-orthodox theologians like Karl Barth or Reinhold Niebuhr. The neo-orthodox theologians, Schaeffer argued, followed secular philosophy in fragmenting knowledge, so that the "religious truth" of Christianity was not reliant on the historic or scientific truth of the Biblical narratives. This, Schaeffer argued, made their systems "antitheology," since they had sacrificed "a unified field of knowledge" that brought together history, science, and theology.[241] In doing so they had created a theological system that "must simply be believed" without making any kind of verifiable statement.[242]

Schaeffer's version of Christianity, in contrast, is based on special revelation that is not only verifiable but falsifiable by means of general revelation; as he puts it, Christianity "is prepared to face the consequences of being proved false and say with

Paul: If you find the body of Christ, the discussion is finished; let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."[243] To Schaeffer, a logical person, whether Christian or not, who approached modern philosophy and Christianity with an open mind could accept Christianity as an objective reality.

This is where Van Til himself and others who drew on his theology, notably Christian Reconstructionists Rousas J. Rushdoony and his disciple Gary North, broke strongly with Schaeffer.[244] As Gary North puts it, Van Til held to "the explicit biblical foundation of presuppositionalism: *the denial of neutral common-ground natural logic.*"[245] Schaeffer acknowledged a role for general revelation—for the ability even of nonbelievers to know something true about God and the universe based on the lessons of history, the cosmos, and reason. Van Til and the Reconstructionists rejected that idea, arguing that nonbelievers could not possibly approach truth without Christian presuppositions.

This created a sort of feedback loop in Van Til's theology, where in order to truly understand and comprehend the truth of the Bible, one had to accept without question the presupposition that the Bible is true. Crapanzano summarizes Van Til's view that "at a certain point in argument, indeed in interpretation, reason just falters. You can only assert the truth of revelation […] You depend on the force of your (propositional) truths to determine the situation— the presuppositions which are entailed by and entail these truths."[246] In other words, faith, to Van Til and company, was a necessary prerequisite for knowledge; nobody could be argued into faith. This was in line with Calvinist theology, which holds that a person was saved because God has chosen them to be saved, and not because they made any decision on their own. (In contrast, many evangelicals hold to an

Arminian soteriology, where people make the free choice to accept God's gift of salvation.)

Schaeffer, however, was unwilling to abandon the idea that people could be rationally argued into accepting Christianity; for this, he was accused by North of hiding his Calvinist beliefs in order to be accepted by his new evangelical audiences.[247] Rather than assert (like Van Til and company) that in order to know or understand objective theological and moral truth one must presuppose the whole truth of revelation, he argued that one must only presuppose "the classical basis of antithesis"—that is, to accept that there is such a thing as absolute and objective truth, and that any idea operating in antithesis to that absolute and objective truth must necessarily be false.[248] If one believes that there is a truth to be found, Schaeffer thought, then one can examine Scripture's claims about science and history and find none of them to be false, while finding all other possibilities unacceptable.

This is an important debate for the validity of the American Narrative, which is strongly undermined by a wholesale rejection of general revelation. If America's founding was based in any part on philosophies that were not *explicitly* Christian and based entirely in special revelation, then those who deny general revelation must reject the nation's founding documents, in part if not in whole.

Gary North fully understood the extent to which a rejection of general revelation dooms the American Narrative's presentation of the American founding as a kairotic moment. He mildly criticized his mentor (and father-in-law) Rushdoony, suggesting that Rushdoony failed to understand that the intellectual leaders of the founding generation were guilty of "importing alien religious and philosophical principles under the cover of

language that had long been considered Christian,"[249] and thus that the constitution is "explicitly not Christian. It was designed that way. But if it is *not Christian*, then it must be *anti-Christian*. There is no neutrality, after all."[250] North also suggests that those who attempt to paint the Constitution as a Christian document are guilty of "mytho-history designed to calm the fears of Bible-believing Christians as they look back to the origin of the Constitution."[251] He rejects arguments that the framers intended a Christian nation, writing that "the Framers at the Constitutional Convention issued a death warrant against Christianity, but for tactical reasons, they and their spiritual heirs refused for several generations to deliver it to the intended victims."[252]

On the other hand, Schaeffer and those who draw on his work, including Whitehead and Barton, argue that the Constitution could reflect Biblical principles and remain valid despite the fact that those who wrote it were not all Christian, and that those who were Christian were also influenced by philosophies that were not explicitly Christian, such as the work of John Locke. This, they argue, was due to the influence of what Schaeffer describes as the "Christian consensus"; even those founders and influences that were not themselves Christian were so steeped in a culture and worldview based on Christianity that they reflected Biblical values often without realizing it. Thus, even avowed nonbelievers like Franklin or Jefferson could not help but espouse Christian principles, at least in part, to the extent that they were appealing to the English and American colonial tradition of "Christian consensus" rather than to the French tradition of the humanist Enlightenment.

The epistemological process, then, becomes not about seeing some new truth in the world that one was constitutionally incapable of seeing before, but rather about

encountering and accepting the validity of the truth that one should have been able to see all along. As Crapanzano writes, this goes deeper than simply changing one's individual understanding; salvation "is not so much a change in the way the world is experienced subjectively, but in the world itself, as it comes to be known, as it presents itself objectively."[253] It is not that the objective world is perceived differently by the converted; it is that the converted is capable of truly seeing the objective world as it is.

In other words, according to this epistemological approach, while the objective truth is accessible to anyone who encounters God's Word, it will still only be truly understood and believed by those who accept the assumptions of the Cosmic Narrative— namely, the authority of the Bible as an inerrant record of God's work throughout the history of the cosmos and of humanity—and who see their own identities implicated as part of that narrative.

This epistemological approach is soteriologically flexible. One can hold, with the Calvinists, that salvation is solely for God's elect as predestined from the beginning of time, suggesting that only those whose hearts are quickened by God to truly believe God's word will be able to understand this truth, despite its theoretically being available to all. On the other hand, Arminians can assert that God's truth remains available to all who believe in it and that the door of invitation is open to everyone, not just to those who have been given a special revelation from God.

This approach also creates soteriological flexibility in another way, by creating space for the "Christian consensus" asserted by Schaeffer, Barton, and LaHaye. If moral truth is available to everyone who can read the Bible and see its witness in history, then even those who do not entirely accept the Scriptural witness and undergo a truly

evangelical conversion experience could be capable of comprehending at least some of this moral truth, even if they do not accept the whole of it. Thus they can assert that even those of the country's founders who were not personally pious, or who held unorthodox views, could still create a system that reflected the deep spiritual truth of Christianity because the whole of society was awash in biblical literacy and in Protestant values like total depravity, as Schaeffer writes:

> But we should realize that the word Christian can legitimately be used two ways. The primary meaning is: an individual who has come to God through the work of Christ. The second meaning must be kept distinct but also has validity. It is possible for an individual to live within the circle of that which a Christian consensus brings forth, even though he himself is not a Christian in the first sense. This may be true in many areas—for example, in the arts or political thought. Many of the men who laid the foundation of the United States Constitution wee not Christians in the first sense, and yet they built upon the basis of the Reformation either directly through the *Lex Rex* tradition or indirectly through Locke. To whatever degree a society allows the teaching of the Bible to bring forth its natural conclusions, it is able to have form and freedom in society and government.[254]

This form of flexibility does not just operate in the past, however; the American Narrative, in particular, also asserts a sort of "Christian consensus" (or "Judeo-Christian consensus") in the present as well, albeit weakening, in the form of a silent majority that still stands for traditional values despite the humanism of the elites. This creates space for

what Schaeffer called "cobelligerency" even among those whose theological viewpoints are not compatible; LaHaye writes that "pro-moral political leaders may be Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, or Jews. Though differing in theology, they are in harmony on such issues as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, prostitution, murder, integrity, and the responsibility of government to protect the family, not destroy it."[255] It is because the absolute truth of morality exists in both general revelation and in clearly-accessible special revelation that it can be grasped even by those whom LaHaye, in his apocalyptic work, makes clear he does not think are truly Christian.[256]

Essential to this viewpoint is the notion that truth is fundamentally propositional in nature. As theologians Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke argue, the project of modern (as opposed to postmodern) evangelical theology was to glean universal, propositional truths from the narrative of the inerrant Bible:

> According to this [evangelical] model, the theologian, assisted by the canons of logic, applies the scientific method to the deposit of revelation found in scripture in an ongoing quest to compile the one, complete, timeless body of right doctrines, formulated as a series of statements or theological assertions, each of which is true in its own right.[257]

It is essential to note, however, that evangelical theology insists that assent to these propositional assertions is not, in itself, salvific. Rather, one must have a conversion experience, be born again, and put Jesus at the center of one's life, the effects of which will be shown in one's willingness to confront one's own sin and to change one's ways. Kennedy, for example, writes to the reader that on the day of judgment, "if you have continued impenitently in your sins, if you have been satisfied with only nominal

Christianity, if you have been satisfied to have your name upon the roll and not Christ

upon the throne of your heart, if you have rejected Him, if you have spurned the

invitation of His gospel—then, for you, it will be the fulfillment of the worst of all your

nightmares."[258] Similarly, LaHaye writes, "All human beings have been tempted of Satan

and have had to decide whether to respond to God or Satan. All have sinned, but God

through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, on Calvary's cross has given everyone a second

chance. That second chance, available only on this earth, involves the acceptance of

God's gift of salvation in the person of His Son. If you have never made that decision,

you are making a contrary decision right now."[259]

In other words, one cannot be saved simply by assenting to the propositional truth

found in the Cosmic Narrative of the Scriptures; rather, the process is one in which one

sees oneself as taking part in that narrative by accepting the sacrificial death and

resurrection of Jesus and changing one's own life to put Jesus at the center of it. This is

not a change in *belief*, per se; it is a change in identity which in turn affects one's ability

to perceive the objective world.

Because it contains a singular, universal, absolute truth which can ultimately be

stated propositionally, the Bible must be presented as a coherent and unified whole rather

than as a series of disparate parts. The coherence of Scripture is both argued and asserted

as a miraculous apologetic for its inerrancy and truth:

> Another bit of evidence we must consider in our attempt to validate the
>
> existence of God is the Bible: the oldest and most amazing book in the
>
> world. Written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 different
>
> people, it has a supernatural consistency about it. No other book has been

so loved, so hated, so persecuted, or so used as the Bible. [...] Nineteen

hundred years ago, this book was completed, never to be corrected or

updated. Its pages contain many signs of the supernatural, such as

hundreds of prophecies that have historically been fulfilled. Its

archaeological accuracy is acclaimed to be incredible. To those who have

studied it carefully, it bears all the signs of what it claims—divine

authorship.[260]

The notion of a singular and coherent Scripture is also bolstered by the fundamentalist

and evangelical hermeneutical technique of "proof-texting"—of using verses or passages

of Scripture, often out of any context, as citations supporting one's assertions.

Crapanzano writes that this practice "creates a 'space' in which the different authorial and

narrative perspectives of the cited texts are implicitly exploited to produce the illusion of

an external objectivity."[261]

The technique of proof-texting is carried over into the hermeneutics of the

American Narrative as well. Barton in particular is fond of this technique, in which he

strings together numerous quotations from the founders of the United States to bolster his

argument that they intended for America to be a Christian nation. These quotations, like

proof-texts in theological argument, are presented outside of their original context, and

carry the implication that the founders' vision for the country was a coherent and unified

single vision.

Interestingly, Barton's coherency technique seemingly pulls him a bit away from

Schaeffer and Whitehead's notion of a "Christian consensus" as sufficient for the

formation of a fundamentally Protestant national and legal structure. Because Barton is

presenting the founders as speaking more or less with one voice in envisioning a

Christian America, he has to account for the various degrees of religious commitment

found among them—hence, his argument in *The Jefferson Lies* that while Thomas

Jefferson (whose historical reputation is as one of the less religious of the founders) may

have strayed from strict Christian orthodoxy later on in life, "there never was a time when

he questioned the overall value of Christianity to individuals or to a nation. And there

never was a time when he was anti-Jesus or when he rejected Christianity."[262]

The Cosmic Narrative's coherency argument, as seen in the technique of proof-

texting, is not the only epistemological assumption to bleed over into the American

Narrative. The nation's founding documents (the Constitution and Declaration of

Independence) and—to a lesser extent—other texts from the nation's founders (such as

speeches, personal letters, and public documents like the *Federalist Papers*) are exegeted

like Scripture.

This does not mean that the American Narrative asserts the inerrancy of the

founding documents—Schaeffer in particular is highly critical of the founders' tolerance

for slavery[263]—but rather that rhetors appealing to the American Narrative have a similar

hermeneutical approach to these documents as Cosmic Narrative rhetors do to the Bible.

In both instances, the text is approached as a kairotic expression of timeless and universal

truths, with an exegetical purpose of gleaning what Grenz and Franke called (in relation

to Scripture) "one, complete, timeless body of right doctrines" as propositional truths

from the text.

The truth expressed by the founding documents thus takes on religious as well as

political character. In the American Narrative, America's founding documents do not

serve only as evidence of timeless political values like the proper ordering of society and economy, the rights of citizenship, and the republican form of government. They also serve as evidence of timeless religious values, particularly the superiority of Protestant Christianity in creating a social and cultural consensus in which "freedom without chaos" is possible.[264]

In this light, American Narrative rhetors' assertions about the influence of the Bible and of Reformed political thought (through Samuel Rutherford and John Locke) on the founders and the founding documents do not serve only as warrant for the narrative's claims about the intentions of the founders to establish a Christian nation. They take on an additional character of conferring on the founding documents a similar status to that of authoritative commentaries on Scripture—not on the same level as inerrant holy writ passed down by God through human amanuensis, but as expressions of the timeless principles of Scripture.

Because the principles expressed in the founding documents are both timeless and religious in nature, the founders can be portrayed as prophetic voices who were able to create a constitutional structure that could anticipate and address the problems of contemporary, post-industrial, urbanized and suburbanized America just as effectively as it addressed the problems facing the eighteenth-century, largely-agrarian, post-Revolution America. In other words, the founding documents are decontextualized, even as the time of their construction is presented as a kairotic and pivotal moment in the history of humanity.

Notes

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[1] Tim LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1994), 110.

[2] Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990), 281.

[3] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 261-64.

[4] William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America,* revised trade paperback ed. (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 200-302.

[5] Michelle Goldberg, "Fundamentally Unsound," *Salon.com*, 29 July 2002. Online source, accessed 9 August 2014. http://www.salon.com/2002/07/29/left_behind/

[6] Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), 249.

[7] Frederick Clarkson, "Theocratic Dominionism Gains Influence," *Public Eye* 8, No. 1 (1994). Online source, accessed 9 August 2014.

http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v08n1/chrisre2.html

[8] I will discuss Rushdoony and his movement, Christian Reconstructionism, in Chapter 5.

[9] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory, 1492-1793* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009), 19.

[10] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 193.

[11] Peter Marshall, David Manuel, and Anna Wilson Fishel, *The Light and the Glory for Young Readers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2011).

[12] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory Study Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1981).

[13] "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV), emphasis added

[14] The Books of Enoch and the Book of Adam and Eve have been dated to the first century BCE; though they are not part of the Christian Biblical canon, they nevertheless form part of the textual and theological tradition from which the canon arose, fleshing out notions of Sheol (the realm of the dead) as well as heaven. Enoch is actually quoted in the book of Jude, and cited by several early church leaders like Tertullian and Origen as Scripture. The story also forms the background of the character arc for Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost*; though of course no Christian considers Milton to be canon, the fact that his work assumes familiarity with the Lucifer tale is nevertheless a testament to

the extent to which this non-biblical story has become something akin to accepted wisdom among (particularly Western) Christians.

[15] The phrase "help meet" originally appears in Genesis 2:18 in the 1611 King James Version of the Bible, where God says of Adam that "I will create a help meet for him"; though this is often misunderstood and mispronounced as "helpmate," the word "meet" in this passage actually functions to suggest suitability or fit. The NIV translates this phrase as "a helper suitable for him."

[16] Biblical scholars, of course, have a much more complex view. Though Gospel authorship is the topic of many books, the basic gist is that three of the Gospels— Matthew, Mark, and Luke—all draw on some of the same source material, most notably a no-longer-extant collection of quotations known to scholars as "Q." These are known as the "Synoptic" Gospels (from the Greek term meaning that they can be read side-by-side), as opposed to John, which draws mostly on different source material and presents a radically different picture of Jesus than the other three Gospels. Evangelicals, though, in believing Scripture to be inerrant, also hold that the four Gospels, while presenting different images of Jesus, could not possibly be incompatible even as there are apparent contradictions (particularly in terms of timeline) between the stories.

[17] Matthew 1:18-24.

[18] Luke 1-2.

[19] Matthew 2:1-12.

[20] Matthew 2:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34.

[21] Matthew 26:14-16, 47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:1-6, 47-53; John 18:1-14.

[22] Matthew 26:57-67, 27:11-26; Mark 14:53-65, 15:1-15; Luke 22:66-71, 23:1-24; John 18:19-23, 28-40, 19:1-16.

[23] Jesus's last words are a point of disagreement among the Gospels; he says "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" in Matthew (27:46) and Mark (15:34), "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" in Luke (23:46), and "It is finished" in John (19:30). Matthew 27:51-53; Mark 15:38.

[24] Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10.

[25] Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53.

[26] 2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:20; Matthew 10:16-23.

[27] The belief in "original sin" itself is diverse even among conservative Protestants; those from the traditions closer to Catholicism and from the Calvinist-descended traditions will see original sin as a quality of what Calvinists would call "total depravity," a quality inherent to every person regardless of whether he or she has ever actually committed a sin, while the more evangelical traditions, and particularly those that do not practice infant baptism, hold to a looser notion in which sinfulness is not inherent to the human (though theologies vary, most believe in an "age of innocence" in which a child can be thought not to understand right and wrong and thus not need to be baptized) but hold that after that age, everyone has committed at least one sin and thus is in need of salvation.

[28] D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2003), 178.

[29] Harold Bloom, *The American Religion,* 2nd ed. (New York: Chu Hartley Publishers, 2006), 25.

[30] Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 59.

[31] LaHaye, for example, strongly condemns Roman Catholic liturgical practices like the burning of incense, the veneration of Mary, and the Lenten fast, among others, as "Babylonian customs" (271). LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 270-71.

[32] Ibid., 333-34.

[33] Ibid., 69.

[34] David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1996), 80.

[35] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 82.

[36] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled*, 78.

[37] Ephesians 6:12.

[38] 1 Peter 5:8 (NIV).

[39] Revelation 21:1 (NIV).

[40] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 49.

[41] Leif Eriksson's discovery of the New World some four hundred years earlier generally goes unmentioned.

[42] Barton, *Original Intent,* 76.

[43] Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991), 218.

[44] Pat Robertson, *The Secret Kingdom* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 63.

[45] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 44.

[46] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 12.

[47] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 10-11.

[48] Ibid., 15.

[49] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 21, 24.

[50] Ibid., 183.

[51] Ibid., 20.

[52] Ibid., 23

[53] Ibid., 24

[54] Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 33.

[55] Barton, *Original Intent,* 80.

[56] LaHaye, *Faith of our Founding Fathers*, 32.

[57] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 23.

[58] John W. Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution* (Charlottesville: The Rutherford Institute, 1982), 162.

[59] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 222.

[60] Ibid., 224.

[61] Ibid., 211.

[62] Ibid., 211.

[63] Ibid., 212.

[64] Ibid., 211.

[65] Ibid., 211.

[66] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 39.

[67] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 267.

[68] Ibid., 251.

[69] Ibid., 264-65.

[70] Ibid., 275.

[71] Ibid., 279.

[72] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 191.

[73] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 190; Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 320.

[74] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 306.

[75] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 32.

[76] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 23.

[77] Ibid., 379.

[78] Ibid., 378.

[79] Ibid., 361.

[80] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 360; also, LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 102-03.

[81] David Barton, *The Bulletproof George Washington,* 3rd ed. (Aledo, TX: WallBuilders Press, 2009).

[82] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 102.

[83] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 366.

[84] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 408.

[85] Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 73.

[86] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 46.

[87] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 360, 407; Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 46; LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 110.

[88] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 365.

[89] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 113.

[90] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 193.

[91] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 21-22

[92] John R. Pottenger, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Liberal Democracy and the Religious Axis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 8.

[93] Barton, *Original Intent,* 116.

[94] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 322.

[95] Robertson, *The New World Order,* 70-71; LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 322.

[96] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 18.

[97] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 33.

[98] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 110.

[99] Barton, *Original Intent,* 224.

[100] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 18.

[101] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 155.

[102] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 118.

[103] Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 199.

[104] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 109.

[105] Barton, *Original Intent,* 217.

[106] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 31.

[107] Roderick Hart, *The Political Pulpit* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1977).

[108] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967).

[109] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 73-74.

[110] Ibid., 75.

[111] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 56.

[112] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 52.

[113] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 252.

[114] Barton, *Original Intent,* 327.

[115] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *God's Plan for America: From Sea to Shining Sea, 1787-1837,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009), 102.

[116] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 61-62.

[117] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 434.

[118] Barton, *Original Intent,* 263; Pat Robertson, *The Ten Offenses* (Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2004), 56.

[119] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 25.

[120] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 140; Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 437.

[121] Barton, *Original Intent,* 279.

[122] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 124.

[123] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 30, 274; Barton, *Original Intent,* 279, 284-85.

[124] Barton, *Original Intent,* 284.

[125] Ibid., 279.

[126] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 431-32.

[127] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 166.

[128] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 223.

[129] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 431.

[130] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 432.

[131] Robertson, *The Ten Offenses,* 203-04.

[132] D. James Kennedy, *Why the Ten Commandments Matter* (New York: Warner Faith, 2005), viii.

[133] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 118.

[134] Ibid.*,* 114.

[135] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 218.

[136] Ibid., 218-19.

[137] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 432.

[138] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 4.

[139] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 183-84; see also Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 114.

[140] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea,* 11-12.

[141] Ibid., 12.

[142] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 52.

[143] Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, *Global Warning* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 54.

[144] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 5

[145] Barton, *Original Intent,* 13.

[146] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 19.

[147] Ibid., 146.

[148] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 125.

[149] Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 50.

[150] Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto,* 63.

[151] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 39-40. Emphasis in original.

[152] Ibid., 41.

[153] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 217.

[154] Ibid., 223.

[155] Ibid., 109.

[156] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 74.

[157] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 128.

[158] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 64.

[159] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 83.

[160] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 66.

[161] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 211.

[162] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 90.

[163] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 174.

[164] "Additionally, that second income, inducing a spirit of independence, may inhibit the wife's feeling of dependence on her husband, particularly in times of marital tension (and every good marriage experiences some of those, particularly in the early years). It is far better at such times, as the Bible teaches, that 'her desire shall be to her husband.' That does not admonish her to be his slave, but that she look to him rather than to her own self-sufficiency for provision and sustenance. The divorce rate, which is higher for working than for nonworking wives, is evidence that the feeling and opportunity for independence makes divorce an excessively easy option, to the disadvantage of both." LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 173.

[165] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 151.

[166] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 211.

[167] Ibid., 214.

[168] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 45.

[169] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 214.

[170] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 212.

[171] Ibid., 78.

[172] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 130.

[173] Ibid., 133.

[174] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 7.

[175] Ibid., 56.

[176] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 3-4.

[177] D. James Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth: Basic Christianity and What It Means in Your Life* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1985), 176-77.

[178] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 65.

[179] Robertson, *The Secret Kingdom,* 21; Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 210.

[180] Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth,* 112.

[181] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 69.

[182] Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth,* 133; LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 89; Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 58; Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 205-06

[183] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 97-98.

[184] LaHaye and Hindson, *Global Warning,* 71.

[185] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 81

[186] Ibid., 12.

[187] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 139.

[188] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 56.

[189] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 209-10.

[190] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 73.

[191] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 226-27.

[192] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 7.

[193] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 46.

[194] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 145.

[195] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 200.

[196] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 433.

[197] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 30.

[198] Robertson, *The Ten Offenses,* 204.

[199] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 447.

[200] Robertson, *The Ten Offenses,* 37.

[201] Ibid., 94.

[202] Barton, *Original Intent,* 321.

[203] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 18.

[204] Ibid., 19.

[205] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 191.

[206] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 68.

[207] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 42-43.

[208] Kennedy, *Why the Ten Commandments Matter,* ix.

[209] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 23.

[210] Marshall and Manuel, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 432-33.

[211] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 162-63.

[212] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 10.

[213] Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto,* 256.

[214] Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto,* 64.

[215] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 200.

[216] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 190.

[217] Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 133.

[218] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 448.

[219] The full acronym is:

Total depravity, where all human faculties are seen as fallen and tainted by sin;

Unconditional election, in which those who are chosen by God to be saved are not chosen because of their own merit;

Limited atonement, the idea that Christ died only for those whom God elected for salvation;

Irresistible grace, the idea that those elected by God for salvation are incapable of resisting salvation; and

Perseverence (or Preservation) of the saints, the idea that once God has elected a person for salvation, he or she cannot be *un*elected.

Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 448-49.

[220] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 249.

[221] Ibid., 52.

[222] Ibid., 81.

[223] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 27.

[224] Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth,* 35.

[225] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 63.

[226] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 134.

[227] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 75.

[228] Robertson, *The Secret Kingdom,* 16.

[229] Barton, *Original Intent,* 215; LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 71; Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 433-36

[230] Barton, *Original Intent,* 116.

[231] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 310-11; Robertson, *The New World Order,* 68; Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 121-22

[232] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 33.

[233] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 12.

[234] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, 192.

[235] Barton, *The Bulletproof George Washington.*

[236] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 17.

[237] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 24.

[238] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 5-15.

[239] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 145. Emphasis in original.

[240] Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 30th Anniversary Edition (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 66-67.

[241] Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 74.

[242] Ibid., 75.

[243] Ibid., 66.

[244] A good outline of Van Til's public break with Schaeffer can be found in Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), 170-174.

[245] North, *Political Polytheism,* 172.

[246] Vincent Crapanzano, *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 82.

[247] North, *Political Polytheism,* 172.

[248] Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 26.

[249] North, *Political Polytheism,* 681.

[250] Ibid., 681.

[251] Ibid., 686.

[252] Ibid., 691.

[253] Crapanzano, *Serving the Word,* 97.

[254] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 110. Also see Barton, *Original Intent,* 215; Marshall and Manuel 2009 (Light), 434; Robertson, *The New World Order,* 59.

[255] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 177.

[256] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 269-71.

[257] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 37.

[258] Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth,* 116.

[259] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 347.

[260] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 108-09.

[261] Crapanzano, *Serving the Word,* 77.

[262] David Barton, *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed about Thomas Jefferson* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 167.

[263] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?,* 114.

[264] Ibid., 252.

Chapter 3: Space and Time

In October 2014, a new film version of *Left Behind*—the first of a series of novels by Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins taking place in the premillennial dispensationalist version of the End Times—was released. Despite starring popular Hollywood actor Nicolas Cage, the film did poorly at the box office, finishing in sixth place in its first weekend of release, and by its fourth weekend in theaters, the film had been dropped by five-sixths of the theaters that had originally shown it. (*Left Behind* ended up in 122nd place in the 2014 domestic box-office rankings.[1])

On October 29, on his radio show *Wallbuilders Live*, David Barton discussed the "really pathetic" performance of the film. Despite the fact that the book series on which the film was based was co-written by a prominent figure in the Christian Right, featured heavily evangelical themes, and was one of the most significant pop-culture phenomena to arise out of evangelicalism in the past several decades, Barton expressed pleasure that the film had not been popular even among evangelicals:

> Quite frankly, I was somewhat happy the movie was a bust. And that
> seems like a strange thing to say, but it's because of eschatology. […]
> What's happened as a result [of rapture theology], and what I saw
> throughout the '80s and '90s and even in the early 2000's was that people
> said, 'Hey, it's all prophesied. Jesus is coming back and it's an absolute
> waste of time to get involved with anything, because the rapture's going to
> happen and everything we're doing is wasted energy at that point anyway,
> so let's not get involved.' […]

And so what happens is that Christians, we have missed something very simple. And that simple thing is in the commands of Jesus. There are 45 commands that Jesus gives believers in the New Testament, if you read all of the gospels all the way through, there are 45 things Jesus tells us to do. And one of those things that He says is Luke 19:13, He says, 'You occupy until I come.' That 'occupy until I come' means you're supposed to be involved.[2]

Barton expressed one of the clear tensions between the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative. Even accounting for versions of the Cosmic Narrative that break from the strict premillennial dispensationalism (with a pretribulation rapture) expressed by fundamentalists like Timothy LaHaye or Jerry Falwell, the central theme of the Cosmic Narrative is that the future has already been written by God and that the story of God's people on earth as revealed in the Bible does not leave much space for the United States or for the temporal, historical triumph of Christianity. In the American Narrative, on the other hand, the future is uncertain and unwritten, and the American people are the authors of their own fate—with God as the agency by which the consequences of the American people's decisions are realized, rather than the agent who chooses the direction in which the plot of the story will go.

In her analysis of the *Left Behind* novel series, Kristy Maddux recognizes the problem of agency, arguing that the novels are significant in creating space for human agency within the context of premillennialism by constructing a vision of Christian citizenship in which the Christian, secure in his or her faith, is empowered by God to take action in the ongoing fight against evil. This vision for citizenship, she suggests, allows

Left Behind to transcend the limitations of premillennial eschatology, which posits a telic and imminent eschaton, "disrupting the dualisms" of the divide between premillennial and postmillennial views to formulate a vision that is "simultaneously tragic and comic, imminent and immanent, telic and cyclical, and literal and analogical."[3] She also argues that the novel series defines its world by reference to "three binary pairs—good and evil, reality and appearance, and truth and persuasion."[4] Within the world defined by those binaries, she writes, the novels set forth a vision of human political agency that is aggressive, anti-intellectual, and non-discursive—a vision that is translated into the contemporary, cyclical, non-apocalyptic world.

Maddux also correctly identifies the limitations on human agency in the *Left Behind* novels as well as the space created for it. The novels' characters and their audience of present-day Christians, Maddux writes, "must accept the foreordained unfolding of events" while taking part in them—including the inevitability and timing of the rapture and tribulation, the loss of the United States, and the ultimate collapse of all world authorities, none of which can be altered by human agency.[5] Further, as Maddux identifies, the locus for religious identity in the *Left Behind* novels is personal and individual rather than corporate; the Rapture clearly affects individuals regardless of their nationality or group affiliation, based on whether or not they have accepted Jesus Christ into their heart, and salvation requires nothing but individual faith in Jesus. The "powers that be" in the world—government, culture, established religious authorities—are the enemies of the ragtag, underground, secret group of true Christians in the last days as they struggle against the agenda of the Antichrist.

As a religious leader who made eschatology a prominent part of his theology as well as an activist who urged his audience to take action in the political and cultural spheres, LaHaye was also clearly well aware of this tension and of the need to reconcile the *telos* of his premillennial dispensationalism—the decline of the political, cultural and economic systems of the world—with his call for action within those spheres. As he wrote in *The Battle for the Mind*:

> Most knowledgeable Christians are looking for the Second Coming of Christ and the tribulation period that He predicted would come before the end of the age. Because present world conditions are so similar to those the Bible prophesies for the last days (see 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Peter 3:1-15; Matthew 24:6,7,37,38), they conclude that a takeover of our culture by the forces of evil is inevitable; so they do nothing to resist it. This is unscriptural! We are commanded to resist the devil and to put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day (see Ephesians 6:13). […]
>
> That tribulation [the seven-year tribulation of premillennial dispensationalism] is predestined and will surely come to pass. But the pre-tribulation tribulation—that is, the tribulation that will engulf this country if liberal humanists are permitted to take total control of our government—is neither predestined nor necessary. But it will deluge the entire land in the next few years, unless Christians are willing to become much more assertive in defense of morality and decency than they have been during the past three decades.[6]

In this passage, LaHaye utilizes one of the strategies by which premillennial dispensationalists encourage political action—a strategy that Susan Friend Harding describes as the "little tribulation," "a small window of progressive history in the last days, a brief moment in time when Christians could, and must be, agents of political and social change."[7] In the space of time between the present and the rapture that begins the prophesied, predestined, and inevitable End Times, there is room in which Christians have some measure of agency, the ability to successfully resist evil not only in their individual lives and religious institutions, but to empower the whole of the culture to resist evil and stave off the "pre-tribulation tribulation" that awaits the country if the "liberal humanists" take power.

The effectiveness of this narrative is limited, however, because, as Harding suggests, "the temporal window they opened up was in fact just a window. It could be shut at any time. It did not alter the basic structure of history, of either the end-times or the great tribulation."[8] This is evident in this passage from LaHaye as well; even though it comes from a book geared specifically toward encouraging political and social action by Christians, it does not hold out a great deal of hope for the ultimate success of political action. Christians are called to resist evil first because they are commanded by God to do so, and then in order to strengthen themselves for the trials to come. In doing this, they may even succeed for a time in staving off the "pre-tribulation tribulation"—but the ultimate decline of every political, cultural, and economic power and the resulting worthlessness of any investment into those powers remains inevitable. Evangelical Christians may win individual battles—and will ultimately win the war after Christ's

return at the end of the Great Tribulation—but the institutions they are fighting to save will surely pass away.

It is notable that LaHaye does *not* argue with his invisible interlocutors' assertion that the end is likely imminent; he, too, can read the signs of the times and interpret them according to biblical prophecy, and will not gainsay anyone who suggests that the present generation could be the last before the end of everything. If the present conditions truly are signs of the imminence of the Great Tribulation and the End Times, LaHaye would certainly agree that any attempts to make the world better through political or cultural action are futile. Nevertheless, because God commands and because there is some hope that the tribulations of the immediate future are *not* signs of the end of days, Christians must resist.

As Barton notes, LaHaye's approach (which has shifted in focus toward the apocalyptic as his career has progressed, perhaps in part due to the popularity of the *Left Behind* series) is a kind of cold comfort, particularly for those who believe that the date of the eschaton is fixed, predestined, and imminent. If the greatest effect a Christian's political and cultural activism can have is to stop a "little tribulation"—a victory that would have no effect on the predestined date of the Great Tribulation, at which point the governmental and cultural institutions for which the Christian was fighting will all collapse—then why not concentrate on saving as many souls out of the tribulation instead? This is a crucial challenge for premillennial eschatologies: to find a place for human agency in a world formed by the belief that every human action is part of a preordained and fixed narrative in which the final act will occur as a result of a divinely-effected rupture with the present world order.

I will not argue with the conclusions drawn by Maddux about the world constructed by the *Left Behind* novels, which I find both persuasive and illuminating. What I will suggest instead is that within the larger rhetorical landscape of the Christian Right, a more complicated picture emerges that amplifies, rather than contradicts, the rhetorical functions she identifies in the *Left Behind* novels. The *Left Behind* novels set out a limited space for human agency, creating a comic frame not within the context of the novels themselves but through the relationship between the teleological and dying world of the novels and the cyclical and ongoing world of the novels' readers. In the dual narrative structure I am identifying, the comic and cyclical frame becomes part of the story.

The resonances and dissonances between the Cosmic and American Narratives imply a world in which the timing and nature of the end times themselves can be altered by human agency, and in which nations as well as individuals are loci for religious identity and have at least some teleological role in the eschatological future. In other words, the broader context further disrupts the dualisms identified by Maddux, offering the rhetor significantly more flexibility and space for human agency and enabling the connection with broader narratives that unify the disparate elements in American culture.

This structure necessarily implicates all three of Gutterman's major components of narrative: setting, identity, and interaction with other narratives. The implications of this structure for the setting of the narratives largely take place within the rhetorical construction of time. The narratives view the temporal canvas from different positions. In the American Narrative, the rhetor is situated in the present, looking to the known past of chronic time and the unknown future, reasoning from cyclical history to "learn the

lessons" of the past. In the Cosmic Narrative, the rhetor is effectively positioned at the end of time looking back to the beginning, with the whole of the narrative known, and reasoning from linear typology to see future events as "fulfilling" or "completing" past ones in kairotic fashion. By manipulating these two visions of time, rhetors can use the ambiguities created by the spaces between these narratives to situate historical events in cosmic time or cosmic events in historical time, in effect "baptizing" the events of history with cosmic and teleological significance, and "historicizing" the cosmic and metaphysical narratives created by eschatology by bringing them into the mundane, everyday, cyclical world.

The implications for identity are closely linked to the implications for time, as a character's identity in a closed, completed narrative is tied to his or her ultimate teleological destination. The two narratives set out two different loci for religious identity; in the Cosmic Narrative, it is only the individual who can make religious choices, and the consequences for those religious choices occur at the Last Judgment outside of ordinary space and time, while in the American Narrative, nations as well as individuals can make religious choices and experience the consequences for those choices in chronic history. The tension between these two visions of identity opens up a new space for human agency, enabling rhetors to reverse the natural tendency of premillennial eschatology to take a dim if not oppositional view to the political and cultural powers of this world and reconfigure a premillennialism that is supportive of certain formulations of political and cultural power in the service of the great cosmic war between good and evil.

Finally, the notion of collective religious identity suggests flexibility in the circumference of the identity formulation identified in the narrative as "us," shifting between the protagonist as an embattled minority of "true" believers amidst a sea of nominal Christians, and the protagonist as a member of the "silent majority" of pro-family Americans whose power over their country has been usurped by a minority of secular humanist elites. This creates the space for the last of Gutterman's characteristics of narrative, the interaction with other narratives. How does an evangelical Protestant Christian approach Roman Catholic believers who do not share the Cosmic Narrative's distrust of temporal authority? How could evangelical Christian leaders advocate for the election of Mitt Romney, whose Mormonism many of their theologies hold as a heresy at best and a dangerous cult at worst, or make common cause with Jewish leaders like Rabbi Daniel Lapin whom they believe to be ultimately hellbound? These barriers are overcome, I suggest, by appealing to the tension between determinism and choice in the Cosmic Narrative—emphasizing the evil of secular humanism as a unifying element between the Cosmic and American Narratives and the narratives of other religious traditions, and suggesting to Cosmic Narrative adherents that the salvation of America from a "pre-tribulation" state could have cosmic implications in delaying the coming Rapture and Tribulation beyond the audience's lifetime, thus transforming the premillennial vision of decline and rupture into an effectively postmillennial vision of cyclical rebirth.

Narrative Setting: Space and Time

The question of narrative setting is almost entirely a question of time rather than space, as the major events of both narratives occur in roughly the same space. There are

only two major spatial difference between the settings of the American Narrative and the Cosmic Narrative. First, the Cosmic Narrative adds heaven and hell to the range of space in which the drama plays out. Cosmic Narrative rhetors are quick to emphasize that heaven and hell are *literal* places rather than symbolic or allegorical ones; LaHaye suggests that the biblical heaven—"the third heaven, or the throne of God"—is a physical space that is somehow separate from and encompassing the "stellar heaven, which contains the great galaxies that we view on a starry night."[9] At the same time, however, within the Cosmic Narrative, heaven and hell do not exist within ordinary space/time as places human beings could theoretically see or visit if they had a powerful enough telescope or a deep enough mineshaft; the narrative suggests that their literal reality will only become clear after the eschatological story is complete, when God separates humanity and populates heaven and hell with the saved and the damned. These realms thus function largely as temporal settings rather than spatial ones.

The second major difference between the two narratives' construction of space concerns the location's role in the drama. For the American Narrative, unsurprisingly, the central location is the United States, with the rest of the world serving as a setting for the actions of human agents only insofar as those actions affect the United States. In the Cosmic Narrative, the action is centered in the Middle East, and particularly in two cities: Jerusalem and Babylon (which the narrative locates in or near Baghdad, Iraq), and the United States plays little or no role. That distinction in settings is much more significant; I will discuss that significance later on in this chapter.

Aside from those differences, the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative share a spatial setting, limited to the planet earth (and very little beyond) as the canvas for

the unfolding story. Even in the places in the Cosmic Narrative where the whole of the cosmos should theoretically be part of the narrative—the creation of the universe in Genesis 1 and the end of time in Revelation—the action is largely restricted to Earth, rather than spread out over the whole of cosmic space. In the creation narrative, other celestial objects are created on the first day (the heavens) and the fourth day (the sun, moon, and stars). Even in the most clear and detailed of Christian Right eschatological visions (that of *Left Behind* coauthor Tim LaHaye), the Sun is the only relevant cosmic object other than the planet Earth (and the comets and asteroids bombarding it) during the Great Tribulation; the fate of the universe as a whole from the edge of the solar system to the most distant galaxies does not play a role in LaHaye's eschatological narrative.

The element of setting in which the American Narrative and Cosmic Narrative differ substantially is that of how they rhetorically construct time. The resonances and dissonances between the way time works in the American Narrative and the Cosmic Narrative function to create new elements of human agency and new spaces for human action within these narratives that would not have otherwise fit within each narrative's own construction of time.

In the American Narrative, time is functionally chronic in nature; even though some moments in time are given greater weight than others, time itself proceeds from beginning to end in a more or less linear fashion. The rhetor, situated in the present, does not know how the narrative will end; while the American nation's spiritual and moral strength has reached its nadir either now or in the very recent past, American Christians still have the power to decide whether the present moment will be the first step in the recovery of the nation's moral and spiritual strength, or another stage in the long (and

perhaps suddenly catastrophic) decline of the United States. Thus, the American Narrative utilizes the Burkean comic frame, building up time as historic, cyclical, and episodic; the purpose of the narrative is so that present-day Americans might learn the lessons of history, correct the nation's grievous moral error, and transcend the sinfulness of the present age into a brighter future.

In the Cosmic Narrative, time is functionally kairotic in nature; while the narratives of creation, redemption, and fulfillment are positioned as historical events, the only one of the three major points in the narrative that is positioned as part of the chronic timeline of history is the middle event of Jesus's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. The rhetor is situated, in essence, *outside* of time, in relating a divinely-authored narrative that reads both past and future with the same amount of certainty; given that the whole of the narrative is essentially fixed in place, the role for human agency is limited to discovering that narrative at work in the present moment, and ensuring for oneself that the part one plays in the narrative is among the saved rather than the condemned. This emphasis on final condemnation or redemption is typical of the Burkean tragic frame, creating a model for time that is telic and linear. In reasoning typologically from the future backward, seeing present events as the fulfillment and completion of past events that gives meaning and purpose to the past, the narratives' ultimate purpose is to persuade their audience to choose in that moment to give meaning to Christ's sacrifice by becoming a Christian or deepening their faith.

As the Cosmic and American Narratives interact and intersect, however, these rhetorical constructions of time become available to create new spaces for human action within the confines of each narrative. In the American Narrative, the history of the United

States is read kairotically and typologically; audiences are invited to see themselves in the role of the nation's founders not as a form of historical comparison, but on the level of fulfilling the "type" of the founding generation, as a teleological completion of the work of God begun with the nation's founders. But the more significant function of this blending of chronic and kairotic time is seen in the Cosmic Narrative, in which the flexibility of kairotic time creates the implication that human agency can alter the timing of the eschaton itself, by speeding or halting the conditions that are seen as prerequisites for the beginning of the final act of the cosmic drama.

The spaces created for human agency effectively blend the actions prescribed in both narratives. The Cosmic Narrative's call for Christians to be active in winning souls to Christ and deepening their own faith is transformed into forms of patriotic duty as well as religious obligation. But more significantly, the American Narrative's suggestion that political and cultural activism to recover the "Christian consensus" of the American nation is given greater meaning. If the United States can experience a recovery of its spiritual and moral center and return to its role in world missions, this recovery could slow, halt, or even reverse the global decline that is a prerequisite for apocalypse, thus staving off the eschaton a little longer, perhaps even past the lifetimes of those now living—transforming the premillennial vision of continuous decline into an effectively postmillennial (if temporary) vision of recovery and renewal.

Time in the American Narrative: Chronos

In his groundbreaking work on nationalism, Benedict Anderson wrote that one of the most important effects of the modernity that gave rise to the contemporary notion of the nation as an "imagined community" was a change in the way time is perceived.

Borrowing from Walter Benjamin, Anderson argued that "what has come to take the place of the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar."[10] This is the kind of time that operates within the American Narrative, the *chronos* of the ticking watch and the Gregorian calendar. While some moments are clearly more important than others, there is no hint of a *heilsgeschichte* or "spiritual time" outside the bounds of ordinary time or "simultaneity-along-time."

Even the instances of divine intervention in the American Narrative are examples of what Anderson describes as "simultaneity […as] temporal coincidence," naturalistic occurrences within the ordinary realm of space and time, rather than miracles that break the plane of that setting to bring about physically impossible phenomena. There is no fire from heaven, no water into wine, no curing the blind or raising the dead in the American Narrative. God chooses to work through "providence," an extremely-improbable convergence of natural events: Washington avoids being shot in a pitched battle with American Indians during the French and Indian War,[11] a miraculous snow enables artillery to be moved from Ticonderoga to Cambridge,[12] or a thick fog enables Washington's army to escape Manhattan without being detected by the British.[13] They are miracles of divine providence either because the people involved in the events (like Washington) say they are, or because the rhetors relating the narrative say they are—not because they are undeniably supernatural acts.

Furthermore, every event in the narrative timeline has a fixed year and a date associated with it, from the beginning of the American story (Columbus's landing in the West Indies) to the present. The only events in the American Narrative that occur prior to the landing of the Europeans on the American continent are the acts of naturalistic divine intervention that keep them from discovering the continent until the appointed time—after the English Reformation, so that the North American continent would be populated by Protestants from Europe rather than Roman Catholics.[14] The indigenous peoples who lived on the continent prior to the arrival of the Europeans function more as part of the landscape itself—at times allied with Satan to drive the Christian light off the continent,[15] at times doing God's work in aiding the settlers or the pioneers—than as agents of their own destiny.[16]

Historical Reasoning

In the chronological American Narrative, because cause precedes effect, predictions can be made based on the similarity of present historical circumstances to those in the past; this places the narrative in a frame of reference that emphasizes transcending sin as error and overcoming it. The narrative structure here is basically cyclical and episodic, in which "history repeats itself." Those who understand history have a choice: they can learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid them, or they can fail to learn from the mistakes of the past and become themselves an illustration for future generations.

There is an important additional element in this historical reasoning. In Chapter 2, I discussed the ways in which the American Narrative and Cosmic Narrative both base

their epistemologies on a transcendent and universal *moral* truth, which is proven through appeals to the historical narrative; the existence of other objective truths, such as scientific, mathematical, or logical truth, stems from the omnipotence and trustworthiness of God as expressed first and foremost through the existence of objective moral truth. The placement of moral truth at the foundation of the epistemological structure suggests that the lessons to be learned from the past are not primarily economic, political, or military in nature, but moral and spiritual ones. As Falwell writes:

> But the fact remains that at the root of America's problems today is the decay of our individual and national morals. This has resulted in the subsequent decadent state and instability of everything else in America—including economics, politics, defense, etc. The choices we as Americans have made in moral and religious questions have determined the way America is going today.[17]

The narrative of American history "proves" that nations that place God at their moral center enjoy prosperity and peace, while nations that do not place God at their moral center (like France during the French Revolution) ultimately suffer the consequences of their sin, whether those consequences be by intentional divine intervention or by the basic moral nature of the universe causing those nations' collapse on their own.

That is not to say that the American Narrative does not posit economic and political lessons to be learned from history; the enemy ideology of secular humanism is portrayed as socialist, democratic/despotic, and libertarian over against the capitalist, republican, and more authoritarian ideology that plays the role of hero in the American Narrative. However, the economic and political lessons stem *from* the moral lesson.

Secular humanism is socialist because it places humanity at the center of the universe rather than God, and thus does not trust God's providence to provide for all of society through capitalism and charity. Secular humanism is democratic and despotic because it does not want to acknowledge that human beings have divinely-ordained rights as the republican outlook does. Secular humanist is libertarian because it does not acknowledge the absolute moral laws set down by God.

An Uncertain End: The Jeremiad

If the problem is moral, then the solution, too, is a moral one. This jeremiadic structure suggests that it will not be sufficient for American Christians to simply work for capitalism, republicanism, or more government authority over private morality; God and God's absolute moral laws must be returned to the center of American life, which means that the American people must experience a form of spiritual revival and recommitment to God in order to recover their prosperity and peace and reduce or remove the danger that America will suffer the consequences of its decline into sin and depravity. The problems of the present era—wars and rumors of wars, crime and violence, social chaos—are a form of discipline from God, seeking to bring America to repentance for its sins and draw the nation back from its moral decay and into the blessings of God. Part of that solution is to make understanding of this jeremiadic structure a prerequisite for political office; leaders need to understand that they and the nation as a whole will be held to account for their actions. Barton suggests that American leaders need to understand (as the nation's founders did) that "our political acts cause God to respond either as an ally or an adversary" and that "proposed laws and policies be judged with full cognizance of their spiritual implications."[18] This narrative structure is at the root of the

September 13, 2001 conversation between Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson from Chapter

1 as well; God allowed the 9/11 attacks to happen and lifted his "hedge of protection"

from America in order to warn the wayward nation that more chaos and more destruction

would follow if the nation did not return to God and restore the "Christian consensus" to

American culture.

      The choice left to America, then, is to choose which version of history will repeat

itself, to choose which narrative path the nation will ultimately follow. If the "silent

majority" of "pro-moral Americans" allows the secularist minority to continue to seize

more and more power, and fails to assert itself in the form of national moral and spiritual

revival, then America will finally suffer the fate of the godless revolutionary societies of

France and Russia—chaos followed by authoritarianism. Schaeffer sets the tone for this

historical procession in writing about the decline of absolute morality: "But we *must*

notice that there is a second result of modern man's loss of meaning and values which is

more ominous, and which many people do not see. This second result is that the elite will

exist. Society cannot stand chaos. Some group or some person will fill the vacuum. An

elite will offer us arbitrary absolutes, and who will stand in its way?"[19] LaHaye also

envisions the future without national revival:

> Until enough morally minded Americans understand what has taken place
>
> in the past few decades, the humanists will continue leading us toward the
>
> chaos of the French Revolution; after all, it was that same philosophy that
>
> destroyed France and paved the way for the dictator Napoleon Bonaparte.
>
> This time, the humanists hope to name their own dictator, who will
>
> create—out of the ashes of our pro-moral republic—a humanist utopia: an

atheistic, socialistic, amoral humanist society for America and the rest of

the world.[20]

In this pessimistic, dystopian future, the anarchy of moral chaos combines with external

threats to the nation's security, which grow in strength due to secular humanists' trust in

toothless world organizations like the United Nations and God's removal of divine

protection from America, to create a national demand for greater social order, even at the

cost of Americans' liberties—which a tyrannical authoritarian dictator will be all too

happy to provide. The future in this scenario is dependent on history as a cycle, in which

the pattern of dictatorial and authoritarian regimes arising from the ashes of the social

chaos that results from the loss of absolute morality is repeated in America.

The other choice set out in the jeremiad is to restore the "Christian consensus"—

and this, too, is set up as a cyclical historical parallel, with the English Wesleyan revivals

and with the Great Awakenings—particularly the first Great Awakening, in the decades

just prior to the American Revolution—set out as the historical touchstones for the

nation's revival and return to prosperity and blessing. Notably, the historical effects of

the Great Awakening are presented as both natural *and* supernatural. LaHaye cites "many

historians" in writing that the Great Awakening "provided the colonists with the mental

and moral toughness to declare their independence from England and endure the rigors of

the Revolutionary War, which lasted for seven long years. That victory was attributed by

many to 'the strong hand of Providence'—hardly the reaction of a nation of deists and

secularists."[21] Marshall and Manuel attribute even greater historic effect to the Great

Awakening revivals, suggesting that "the most important factor" resulting from the

revivals was not spiritual conversion, but rather their political and practical effects in

emphasizing "the reformation of society by the Spirit of Christ, operating through the newly regenerate."[22]

The non-supernatural effects (renewal of spirit and community values) of the past Great Awakening—and, by implication, of the potential "Great Awakening IV"[23] that American Christians can bring about with God's help—augments God's supernatural desire to "hear from heaven and heal our land" in the revival.[24] The return of American morality and social reform through the national unity, renewal of spirit, and social reform sparked by national revival will correspond with what Marshall and Manuel write "was frequently proven" through early American history: "that when people began to earnestly repent, what followed was the return of God's grace."[25] As the people draw closer to God by renewing the national spiritual life and restoring the Christian consensus, so too will God respond with increased blessing and increased protection for the nation in its mission to the world.

However, whichever choice America makes—whether or not the revival takes place and the nation's spiritual and moral health is restored—the consequences for the nation are set to play out within chronological history rather than in a future eschatological judgment. Individuals may be judged at God's throne for what they did or did not do in relation to America's moral decline and potential revival, but for the nation as a whole, "rewards and punishments for nations" will be "in *this* world rather than the next."[26] The future in the American Narrative is the same as the past: the ongoing chronological tick of historic time, the rise and fall of nations, and history proving time and time again that those nations that place God's moral law at their center will prosper and be free, while those that do not place God's moral law at their center will ultimately

crumble and fade. Though the threat faced by the United States is an existential one, it is existential only for the United States; should America continue to experience moral and spiritual decline, other places, such as the Korean Peninsula[27] or the former Soviet Union,[28] could experience God's blessing and the resultant revival in order to fill the gap.

Time in the Cosmic Narrative: Kairos

While the present-day portion of the Cosmic Narrative does exist within temporal chronology, the most important events of the narrative occur *outside* of the chronic time of history and science—and events within the chronological timeline are viewed from a kairotic standpoint outside of time that views history from the future backward, rather than from a chronic standpoint viewing history from the past forward. The kairotic view of time does not operate *in place* of chronic time, but rather brings meaning and structure to the otherwise seemingly accidental march of chronic history. The reason that the important events of the narrative exist outside our understanding of chronic time is primarily epistemological, rather than ontological. We do not know the exact date of Creation nor how long Adam and Eve spent in Eden prior to the Fall, and we do not know the date of the Rapture and the beginning of the End Times not because these are indeterminate, but because the Author of the Cosmic Narrative has chosen not to reveal them to the human players in the great drama of the universe.

The narrative of the creation of the world is understood as a real, historic event— but in effect, for purposes of the narrative, this event occurs outside the space and time of our history. The Creation Museum does indicate approximate dates for the creation of the world (circa 4004 BCE) and the global flood (circa 2348 BCE).[29] However, the former date in particular still exists effectively outside of ordinary time, as the literalist creation

narrative suggests that after God created the world and created the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to live in, they resided there for an unspecified period of time before Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent and fell by eating the fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. During that time, the Creation Museum indicates that there was "no aging in the universe"; in the wake of the Fall, not only humanity but the universe as a whole "began aging."[30] If, prior to the Fall, the universe existed in a static state, then the narrative of the Fall effectively represents the beginning of chronic time itself. The Creation Museum also argues that the Noahic Flood, coming about 1,800 years later, reconfigured the continents of the world into their present configuration, effectively rupturing the antediluvian world both spatially and temporally from chronic history.[31]

Further, the scientific support provided by "creation science" for the Cosmic Narrative's doctrine of creation is presented only as a sort of argumentative bolster, rather than as convincing and sufficient in and of itself. The Creation Museum is explicit on the point that Biblical literalism, rather than scientific inquiry, is the starting point for their assumptions about the universe, including the dates of creation;[32] so, too, LaHaye writes that "accepting the creation of man by the direct act of God has always been a matter of faith in the revelation of God."[33] Nowhere in the Cosmic Narrative is it suggested that one might proceed from the scientific evidence for creation to faith in the authority of the Bible, from reasoning the reality of creation in chronic time to believing in the narrative purpose and function of creation in kairotic time. Rather, the narrative of personal salvation always proceeds from faith in an inerrant Scripture and in God's purpose in creation—kairotic time—to the reasoned acceptance of creation—still primarily a moral and spiritual phenomenon—as a scientific explanation for the world's origins in chronic

time. The evidence for creation provided within the chronic spheres of science and history only serves to demonstrate the basic moral, spiritual, kairotic truth of the narratives.

Similarly, at the other end of the Cosmic Narrative, the narrative posits that it will be impossible to place the End Times within chronological time until they commence with the Rapture. On multiple instances, LaHaye, Falwell, and others cite Jesus's warning to his disciples against predicting the date of eschaton: "About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."[34] While Cosmic Narrative rhetors speculate that the time of the Rapture could be imminent based on world events, they do not set a specific date, month, or year. Falwell even suggests that if someone *did* predict the "correct" date for the Rapture, God would change the date so that he or she would be wrong:

> Not long ago, Edgar R. Whisenant wrote a book, 88 Reasons Why the
>
> Rapture Will Be in 1988, in which September 7, 1988, was chosen as the
>
> date of the Rapture. It did not happen. If Whisenant had been right, the
>
> Lord would have changed the date so that he would not have been right.[35]

The Rapture and the beginning of the End Times are thus effectively outside of time, representing not continuity with the chronological timescale of history, but an effective rupture with history and a true end to the historical narrative. Though the events of the premillennial dispensational eschatology do themselves have fixed lengths—for example, exactly seven years of tribulation from the Rapture to the "Glorious Appearing" of Christ to commence the battle of Armageddon and inaugurate the millennium, subdivided into fixed periods for each of God's judgments against the earth—their location within the

historical chronology is not yet known to us as we continue to play our parts in the Cosmic Narrative.

A Kairotic and Narrative Future

The Cosmic Narrative's view of time is fundamentally linear in nature; while cyclical patterns do occur, they occur within the context of a historical narrative that is heading for a final consummation. Evangelical theologian Stanley Grenz suggests that the origins of this outlook in ancient Israel were the beginning of a truly historical consciousness: "God directed Israel to view life in a different manner. Events did not merely follow a repeatable pattern. Rather, each was a unique occurrence, and together these events were a trajectory which had a beginning and would have an end. Hence, occurrences formed a history—a narrative."[36] However, he suggests, secular historians removed God from the center of this linear narrative and replaced God with humanity, leading to linear narratives of human progress or regress.[37] This, he suggests, formed the basis of the chronic history from which the contemporary historical narrative derives— including the American Narrative.

In place of a purely chronic timescale of history, the Cosmic Narrative utilizes a kairotic view of time—in which chronic time continues only because of a "pause" in another reckoning of time. In the Old Testament book of Daniel, the prophet/seer envisions that the world will end after seventy more "weeks" of years, or 490 years. Dispensational theologians calculate that the book of Daniel was written 483 years— sixty-nine "weeks" of years—prior to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, positing that everything that has occurred since Christ takes place in "a gap or parenthesis" between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week.[38] Using a sports analogy, Falwell calls this

a "divine 'time out'" during which "God has stepped in and stopped the clock of prophecy at Calvary"[39]; this "time out" will end soon, at which point the seventieth week of Daniel (including the tribulation, etc.) will commence apace.

Dale L. Sullivan draws on the New Testament as well as on theologians from the modern era (particularly Paul Tillich) to present a conception of *kairos* which signifies "loaded time"—moments in which the divine breaks through into the temporal world.[40] He suggests that the New Testament in particular emphasizes two of these *kairotic* "great fulfillments": the first advent of Christ in first-century Palestine, and the second advent of Christ in the eschaton at the end of time itself.[41] Similarly, Philip Sipiora links New Testament references to *kairos* to eschatological vision, suggesting that the eschatological *kairos* represents a final rupture in chronic time:

> Time, as chronos, proceeds linearly until He authorizes the coming of the
> ultimate kairic moment, the time of judgment. There is possibly also an
> ethical dimension to this movement, in that 'final justice' is deferred until
> the kairic moment. One's ultimate fate becomes sealed forever only when
> the time is appropriate for judgment. The notion of 'God's time' adds an
> element of mystery and uncertainty into the calculus of human behavior
> and action, particularly as it refers to God's ultimate judgment of human
> behavior.[42]

Richard Benjamin Crosby expands further on the work of Sullivan and Sipiora to suggest *kairos* as "a means of making the invisible visible," with the end purpose not of persuading one's auditors through a rational or emotional process (the traditional aims of rhetoric) but rather of revealing the divine itself.[43] This, he suggests, is a fundamental

difference between "religionists" and secular rhetors to the affairs of the temporal and political world:

> Religionists simply exist within a different world of time and space, and they are willing to make decisions based on a standard other than political reason. […] Kairos allows them [the religious] to engage and influence politics through revelation and inspiration. […] Kairos is a tool they can use to engage and, ultimately, circumscribe the political world. Indeed, it defines the relationship between the divine and the political.[44]

In other words, the invocation of the divine *kairos* transforms the rhetorical act into a form of religious experience, placing the immediate and temporal experience in the space of a divine narrative about the universe. In a later article, Crosby also challenges the traditional view of *kairos* as ephemeral and contingent, suggesting that when spatial settings are added to the equation, kairos "may also be understood as an eternal force essential to particular spaces and, by extension, spatially induced consciousness."[45]

Notably, when the above scholars discuss theological notions of *kairos* in the post-New Testament era, they refer to "liberal" modernist theologians like Paul Tillich, Rudolf Otto, or Edwyn Bevan. While they also draw on the New Testament's uses of *kairos*, in discussing the implications of *kairos* for rhetoric, they appeal to the God-terminology of liberal theology—of God as the indescribable experience of the "numinous," for example.[46] This presupposes a separation between kairotic time and chronic time; for example, in the Sipiora quotation above, chronic time must end *before* the kairotic moment of the eschaton.

In other words, these contemporary rhetorical-critical treatments seem to assume that the difference between religious and irreligious worldviews is one of perspective or interpretation—in Crosby's words, "a different world of time and space."[47] As Sullivan writes:

> Aletheiac rhetoric, conversely, cannot be a techne; still it claims to unveil the truth. Even so, it admits that truth, or the unveiled vision, can be resisted and that the most we can hope for is the auditor's decision to believe. Because it always requires a leap of faith, no matter how small or large, aletheiac rhetoric does not demand submission as does scientific demonstration. […] This rhetoric is not simply emotional; its aim is not lower than the mind; rather it is suprarational rhetoric that goes beyond the rational capacity to confront an individual's being with the radiance of Being.[48]

The presumption here seems still to be that the experience of *kairos* is perspective-dependent, ephemeral, and subjective—an individual temporal expression of what the liberal theologians describe as the sublime or the numinous, something indescribable and irreducible, completely outside of the lived reality of everyday life. Even as Crosby suggests that the National Cathedral represents an effort to create a "sacralized space" in which the "revelatory opening, or aperture" of *kairos* "can be sustained indefinitely,"[49] the *experience* of that space is still ephemeral; the space is one of the "construction and maintenance" of *kairos*, which is nevertheless still experienced in specific moments (such as George W. Bush's speech at a prayer service there on September 14, 2001).[50] *Kairos* is

a breaking-in to *chronos*, a rupture in the everyday lived experience of an individual or group.

Unity of Chronos *and* Kairos *in the Cosmic Narrative*

Importantly, in the Cosmic Narrative, *kairos* is not separate from *chronos*. Divine kairotic time is not an imposition onto chronic time, as if the two could be separated and understood as independent phenomena. Rather, *kairos* truly *is* the imposition of the divine presence into the temporal world, in ways that place those moments securely within—rather than separate from—chronic time. Christ's resurrection is simultaneously *both* an act of divine revelation in which the supernatural and the temporal converge in a unique way, *and* a historical phenomenon that is no less real, no less historical, no less *objective* than the assassination of Caesar in 44 BCE.

This unity between *kairos* and *chronos* is fundamentally different from the modernist liberal theological attempt (by Bultmann and others) to read the biblical narrative as pure *heilsgeschichte*, a form of spiritualized and kairotic "salvation history" that has no relationship to the *historie* of *chronos*. The modernist liberal approach of *heilsgeschichte* would read the Bible as a set of allegories or unreliable narratives which are valuable *despite* their historical and scientific inaccuracy because they point to deeper theological or spiritual truths. The Cosmic Narrative holds that truth is absolute and inseparable, rooted in the authority and trustworthiness of God; if the Bible's claims about history and science are not reliable, then its claims about salvation are also not reliable. Schaeffer, for example, strongly criticizes Karl Barth for his "theological form of existentialism" which moved theological thought "into the area of non-reason" by suggesting that the Bible made "mistakes" in history or science.[51] If God is God, and if

the Bible is God's most reliable form of special revelation, then God's trustworthiness

must be reflected *both* in those things that can only be understood by faith (such as

salvation) *and* in those things that can be understood through human reason.

It is the Cosmic Narrative's *historicity*, its retellers say, that makes it unique;

while other religions presume this separation between divine and temporal experience,

Christianity purports to show God's actions in objective, provable history, as the

following quotations illustrate:

> Indeed, if we are willing to forget our presuppositions and examine the
>
> evidence objectively, the resurrection of Christ becomes something which
>
> is obviously true. It has been examined by some of the best authorities in
>
> the world—authorities most qualified to make such an examination and to
>
> do it painstakingly.[52]

> Islam is a religion that has no real evidence to support it, whereas
>
> Christianity has the evidence of Jesus Christ, the evidence of His miracles,
>
> the evidence of His perfect life, and most importantly, the evidence of His
>
> resurrection from the dead. We have incredible evidence, more so than we
>
> have of any event in ancient history, historians have told us.[53]

To the extent that elements of the Cosmic Narrative do not fit into the rational, chronic

time frame, it is not because of a fundamental incompatibility between the narrative's

temporal setting and chronic time. The retellers of the Cosmic Narrative are quick to

point out that Jesus says that nobody knows the day or the hour *except* for his Father in

heaven; it is because we occupy a place within the narrative, because we are still on the

stage of the drama as it plays out, that we do not know when it will end. To the Author of

the narrative, *chronos* and *kairos* are one and the same; once believers join God in the

heavenly kingdom, they too will understand how everything fit together to fulfill God's

plans for the universe. The chronological problem is epistemological—not ontological.

Typological and Telic Reasoning

As the Cosmic Narrative has been written by a God who is fundamentally *outside*

time, then, the form of reasoning employed within the Cosmic Narrative is not simply

read from the past forward seeking patterns of cause and effect; rather, it is read

typologically from the present *backward*, seeing patterns of fulfillment and completion.

Present (and future) events give meaning and significance to past events—or, as the

Liberty Bible Commentary puts it, "the Old Testament is revealed in the New, while the

New is concealed in the Old."[54] This shifts the context for the exegetical practice of

finding parallels between biblical and present-day situations. If one sees the Bible

narratives as *both* works of literature (with attendant authorial practices like

foreshadowing, metaphor, etc.) *and* historical fact, then the use of such narratives as an

interpretive lens for the contemporary world carries with it the implication that we

ourselves are part of the same story, part of a continuity of narrative that stretches from

the historical facts of the Bible to the age of the church and the present historical context,

all the way through to the end of time itself.

Susan Friend Harding describes typology as a structure for interpreting the

narratives of Scripture and history in which "earlier events prefigure later events, and

later events complete, or fulfill, earlier, incomplete events."[55] This interpretive

framework enables rhetors to draw implicit connections between juxtaposed stories.

Harding illustrates typology by relating Christian pastor Marvin Campbell's attempt to

convert her, in which Campbell juxtaposed his story of his accidentally killing his own son in a construction accident with the tales of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in the Gospels. In the gaps between the narratives, Harding suggests, they give meaning to one another; Isaac is a "type" of Jesus, who is in turn a type of Campbell's own son. The latter narratives "fulfill" or "complete" the former, making all of the narratives function as interpretive lenses on one another and casting the present moment in which Harding had to decide whether or not to be converted to Christianity in a similarly interpretive frame, with the implication that if Harding decided in that moment to follow Jesus, her decision would fulfill not only the death and resurrection of Jesus, but the death of the pastor's son as well:

> But like their stories, his too was incomplete. It invoked a haunting sense of something missing. Why did Campbell's son die? Or, more precisely given the typological sequence, for whom did Campbell's son die? The answer, of course, had already been provided as well by the previous stories. He died for me. The Reverend Campbell sacrificed his son, narratively speaking, for me.[56]

The very real emotional and narrative stakes for Harding's decision in the moment, and the smooth connection between the kairotic/chronic time of biblical narrative, the kairotic/chronic time of Campbell's own personal narrative, and the kairotic/chronic present provide a clear illustration that typology is not an interpretive framework in a critic's sense of the word, in which the object of interpretation is understood as a literary

or creative work that is separate from (if dependent on) the recalcitrance of the "reality" of history.

It is important to understand that in a worldview defined by a unity of biblical narrative as narrative *and* historical fact, when a rhetor draws typological parallels between biblical and present-day scenarios, that linkage is not just literary-critical, symbolic, or metaphorical. As Crapanzano puts it, for those who hold this perspective, it "provides not just a model for understanding the chain of events that we come to call history, but it actually modulates the perception of the events and their concatenations."[57] In this hermeneutics of historical interpretation, the whole of history as we experience it from day to day is a tale that has already been written, a story by and about God. The history presented in the text of the Bible differs only from the history that has transpired since the last book of the New Testament was written only insofar as the former is an absolutely authoritative and true source, whereas our knowledge of the latter is limited by the historical evidence we have.[58]

In other words, in this view, the march of history is not a series of coincidences, random occurrences, or even expressions of "pure" human will; it is a literary narrative in which present-day humans as well as past ones are living out events that occur within the temporal range of the Scriptural narrative, even if the narrative itself elides the interval between the second century of the Common Era and the beginning of the End Times. If we are all part of the Scriptural narrative, then the literary qualities of that narrative are also applicable to postbiblical history; thus, history itself is a *work* of literature, one written by a divine hand and revealed to us in the present in partial, fragmentary form through Scripture, but in the future in its completed and fulfilled form. Therefore, the

tools of *literary* hermeneutics and interpretation can be applied not only to the biblical

narrative but also to the narratives of one's own life, of one's church, one's community—

and one's nation.

In other words, the Cosmic Narrative invokes *kairos* as an expression of what

Leff describes (from Eliade) as "sacred time"—but not, as Leff suggests, as "an

interruption in our normal sense of temporality."[59] This view of time goes beyond even

Sipiora's interpretation of New Testament usages of *kairos,* in which "the Christian,

always and already, faces eschatological choices in the decisions of daily life."[60] Rather,

it is incorporated into and unified with the flow of the chronic in such a way as to imbue

history with a sense of the literary and dramatic not as a symbolic or metaphorical lens

overlaid on the "raw material" of historical fact, but as a structure and an order that is

every bit as real and objective as the historical events themselves. Auditors are invited to

see their lives as fractal microcosms of the structure of history—as part of a great and

constructed narrative, a literary masterpiece with a divine author, in which justice is

ultimately assured.

The function of *kairos* in the context of the contemporary Cosmic Narrative is

thus the *opposite* of what Sipiora (correctly) interprets as the kairotic vision of the New

Testament; where Sipiora sees the rupture of the kairotic final judgment as something

which "adds an element of mystery and uncertainty into the calculus of human behavior

and action, particularly as it refers to God's ultimate judgment of human behavior,"[61] in

the context of the Cosmic Narrative it functions as a form of what the old hymnal might

call "blessed assurance." Because the story has already been written, its ending is known

to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear; the wicked will receive their just desserts,

and those who have remained faithful to God will receive rewards beyond their wildest imaginings.

As discussed previously, one of the factors that unifies the American and Cosmic Narratives is the idea that reality as a whole is undergirded by divine *moral* authority as expressed through Scripture, that we are onstage players in the great drama of the cosmos authored by God and played out in real time. This is a framework for interpreting reality itself, an expression of what Harding describes as "a oneness within the divine plan" in which "there is no distinction between biblical and historical stories."[62] History itself as well as each person's individual story is a narrative *with an author*; as such, the hermeneutical tools that collapse and reconfigure time within literary narratives are also available to collapse and reconfigure time within life itself, even if, as participants in the narrative rather than its author, we are unable to completely understand the process.

Interactions between Temporal Frameworks

The resonances and dissonances between these alternative views of time—one looking for historical cycles from the past forward, the other looking for a prophetic telos from the present backward—function in transformative ways to refigure the settings for both narratives. The American Narrative is read as history *and* as literature, with a kairotic and typological perspective added to the more traditional reading of history. The tendency to read present history in terms of the literal fulfillment of biblical prophecies and types adds a new dimension to the traditional American jeremiad, lending prophetic and typological qualities to the nation's founders and their actions and reading them as heroes in new books of the Bible—books which have already been written by God, but which will not be shared with humanity until the story has reached its conclusion. This in

turn confers additional meaning on traditional conservative tropes: disinheritance and original intent.

Perhaps more significant, though, are the ramifications for the American Narrative on the Cosmic Narrative. Read in the light of the American Narrative's jeremiad, the tragic and deterministic qualities of the Cosmic Narrative are refigured into a more flexible and malleable shape, creating new spaces in which it is implied that human agency—and particularly American Christians' agency—can alter the kairotic timing of the eschaton, by affecting the historical conditions presented in the Cosmic Narrative as prerequisites for the Rapture.

Typology and Prophecy in the American Narrative

As Sacvan Bercovitch outlines, the use of typology is not a new phenomenon in Americans' rhetoric about themselves; the Puritans and their New England successors through the Great Awakening made extensive use of typology as a hermeneutic approach as they sought to define their identity and mission in the New World. The Puritan form of the jeremiad cast the colonists in the role of the "New Israel," who were brought by God out of England to the North American continent to fulfill a special and crucial role in the redemptive history of the world—a vision in which they "proclaim[ed] the colony to be the fulfillment of the biblical types, like the saint made perfect in Christ."[63] Bercovitch emphasizes that the New England Puritans envisioned their relationship with the old Israel as a "total identification—literal, spiritual, and figural,"[64] in which the Puritans "could claim all the ancient prerogatives"[65] and claim that the Bible's promises of blessing for the people of Israel applied equally to the New England community. This was a vision grounded in the notion that the literary structure of the Bible was

indistinguishable from the narrative of history itself, a worldview which "unite[d] allegory and chronicle in the framework of the work of redemption."[66]

This biblically-based typology was lost, Bercovitch writes, as the English colonies in North America gained a sense of collective identity; where once the Puritans' jeremiad had laid out a narrowly sectarian definition of the Puritan community, now "the meaning of Protestant identity became increasingly vague; typology took on the hazy significance of metaphor, image, and symbol; what passed for the divine plan lost its strict grounding in Scripture; 'providence' itself was shaken loose from its religious framework to become part of the belief in human progress."[67] While the American jeremiads that emerged still envisioned America as playing a crucial role in redemptive history, the form of the narrative shifted away from a story about the unfolding of the divine plan in which America was a New Israel chosen to fulfill the Bible's vision for redemption, to a story about human progress in which American national symbology itself was "invested […] with the attributes of the sacred."[68] Thus, while the theme of the American nation as uniquely blessed and provided for by the divine to fulfill a holy mission remains, the role of the typological—in which history itself is imbued with literary structure, and in which the present is seen as fulfilling the past in a very real way—has been replaced in American rhetoric with hermeneutical formations that separate meaning and purpose from reality.

The Cosmic Narrative and its kairotic hermeneutic of time, though, invites a more explicit and literal reading of typology back into the American Narrative, imbuing it with the idea of (as Bercovitch puts it) "the American experience […as] a new, last book of Scripture."[69] This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Marshall and Manuel's

evangelical reading of early American history, *The Light and the Glory*, in which they extol the Puritans as the ideal community—and in the process of praising the Puritans' approach to Scripture, covenant, and community more generally, specifically single out their hermeneutic of typology:

> The Pilgrims and Puritans actually referred to themselves as God's New Israel. But it wasn't that they thought they (and the Christian Church) had replaced Israel. We would discover that they used the Church's traditional method of interpreting the Old Testament: typology. This meant that they saw 'types' of New Testament events or persons in the Old Testament. [...] America's early Christian settlers, then, used typology to interpret God's dealings in their own lives. They felt that certain passages in the Bible, originally addressed to Israel, also applied to them…[70]

Marshall and Manuel endorse the Puritans' vision of themselves as a type of Israel, calling the Puritan experience God's "most significant attempt since ancient Israel to create a 'New Israel' of people living in obedience to biblical principles, through faith in Jesus Christ."[71] Further, they continually reinforce the notion that the covenant made by the Puritans with God remains in effect to this day, drawing a clear line from ancient Israel, to the Puritans, to the Founders, to the present in which each fulfills and completes the work of those who came before:

> In 1775 when the U.S. Marine Corps was founded, the recruiting slogan stated that it was seeking 'a few good men.' That is essentially what God said to Gideon in ancient Israel, when He reduced his army from thirty-two thousand to three hundred. And it was what He seemed to be saying

three and a half centuries ago, as He began to gather those who were
willing to give up everything for His sake in order to dwell in His 'New
Israel.' How much of the grace that continues to cover this country today
and how many of the incredible blessings that have been poured out upon
this land are a direct result of their obedience and willingness to die to
self?[72]

This is reminiscent of Susan Friend Harding's illustration of typology; just as Harding's potential conversion would have given meaning to the death of the preacher's son, the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, and the death of Christ, so too would Americans returning to the covenant made by the Puritans with God give meaning to the sacrifices and obedience of the Puritans, the U.S. Marines of the founding generation, and Gideon's army in ancient Israel. Time flows in both directions as part of God's plan; the present does not just repeat the past, but fulfills it as well. The fact that the Puritans drew inspiration from the biblical tale of Nehemiah for their own experiences of rebuilding a new Jerusalem out of exile was no accident; part of God's purpose in guiding Nehemiah's experience and in making it part of God's special revelation to God's people was for precisely that situation. So, too, is it no accident if present-day Christians draw inspiration from the Puritans' struggles, and from the Puritans' own inspiration in Nehemiah; that, too, was part of the divine purpose in bringing the Puritans to the North American continent, to inspire Christians of the present. Because God knows the future and sees the fulfillment of every story from the earliest stages, God has arranged human history as a writer arranges a well-plotted novel, so that all of the pieces fit together.

Because nothing in history is an accident, the American founders are read not only as historically admirable figures, but also as typological ones. To the extent that their words or actions inspire or are reflected in the words and actions of contemporary Americans, that inspiration or reflection only serves to reinforce the relationship between prefigurement and fulfillment, thus bolstering the idea that American history, like the history of the cosmos as a whole, is not related merely by cause and effect from the past forward. Rather, American history is a complete story in which things occurring in the present and future illuminate and fulfill the purposes of the divine author in the past.

This perspective confers new meaning on the trope of disinheritance that runs throughout traditional conservative narratives about America as well as through the Christian Right's American Narrative. Traditionally, the trope of disinheritance has been used by conservative voices in American politics to argue against attempts to expand the body politic and extend civil or citizenship rights to those who traditionally were out of power. Virtually every effort by oppressed peoples to decenter wealthy white heterosexual men of northern and western European descent from power in the American body politic—such as the expansion of immigration, feminism, the African-American and Latino civil rights movements, organized labor, and the LGBT liberation movement—has been met by arguments that the people struggling for equality in America did not truly understand the values and ideas upon which the country was built. In effect, these movements' opponents argued, the new element would displace the *true* Americans from their rightful role as the heirs to the prosperity and freedom left to them by those generations that came before.

The American Narrative's portrayal of the founding generation as Christian makes the religious element to this trope (which has generally been present to a greater or lesser degree) much more explicit. The values passed down by the nation's founders owe more to the Puritans than to Virginian Enlightenment liberals, and are thus primarily *religious* in origin; the nation's true heirs are not those who merely share the principles of self-control, hard work, risk-taking, and freedom, but specifically those who continue to hold to, as LaHaye titles one of his books, the "faith of our founding fathers."[73] It is *they* from whom the nation has been taken, he writes, and they who must "wrest control of this nation from the hands of the secularizers and place it back into the hands of those who founded this nation, citizens who had a personal and abiding faith in the God of the Bible."[74] Similarly, Whitehead complains that the American legal system has over time undergone a transition in which Christianity has fallen "from a preferred position within the religion clauses" and been "relegated to the level of all other systems of belief—and of unbelief."[75] The charge to Christians within the American Narrative is not to take or claim national institutions, but to *re*take or *re*claim these institutions and restore them to the Christian basis from which they purportedly originated.

When the nation's forebears are understood not simply as historical examples, however, but as types in a prophetic structure of prefigurement and fulfillment, this trope takes on new meaning. Not only is the new element displacing "traditional" Americans from their place as the rightful heirs to the values and prosperity of the nation's founders; they are also pulling the nation away from the *intentions* of those founders, and thus, as Falwell writes, from fulfilling God's purposes in founding the nation:

America must not turn away from the God who established her and who blessed her. It is time for Americans to come back to the faith of our fathers, to the Bible of our fathers, and to the biblical principles that our fathers used as a premise for this nation's establishment. We must come back lovingly but firmly, and establish as our priorities once again those priorities that are God's priorities. Only then will we become important to God, and only then will we once again know the great blessings of the Power that has made and preserved us as a nation![76]

Insofar as the "secular humanists" have removed America from "the God who established her and who blessed her," they are thwarting God's intention to fulfill "God's priorities" through the nation, with the result that America is no longer "important to God" and removed from God's blessings. Kennedy and Newcombe also touch on the theme of prefigurement and fulfillment when writing that American Christians "owe it to our forefathers who sacrificed so much to establish this nation on godly principles to gain back this lost territory."[77] In retaking the nation, Christians add meaning and value to the work of the founders, serving as antitype to the founders' type.

The Cosmic Narrative's temporal perspective makes it clear that the story of America, like all of history, was written by a divine author outside of time. Thus, the characters in the story of American history, like the characters in a novel, are not fully aware of the ultimate purposes of the author, but fulfill the author's purposes nonetheless in speaking to the future of the story without realizing it. Thus, the most significant characters in the American story—the Puritan leaders, the founding generation, the religious leaders of the First and Second Great Awakenings—are positioned as prophets

whose words and actions prefigure and can be fulfilled by the contemporary generation. Even if they were not aware of the significance and prophetic nature of their words and actions (and how could they have been?), because they played significant parts of God's plan for America, they also served on some level as amanuenses for God, divine channels used by God to present God's own message for the benefit of the present generation.

Positioning the American founders as prophets who were speaking to future generations as well as their own puts a new spin on the traditional conservative interpretive approach of "original intent." Proponents of this interpretive framework argue that all texts have a "true" meaning, and that this meaning resides not in the text alone, nor in a form of synthesis between interpreter and text or text and context, but rather in the meaning intended by the text's author(s), as determined by other statements by or about the author about that text. As Vincent Crapanzano points out, this interpretive framework lies at the heart of contemporary conservative legal thinking, particularly as regards the U.S. Constitution; to the extent that the intentions of the American founders for a particular section or amendment can be determined from other texts (such as the *Federalist Papers*, debates at the Constitutional Convention or in Congress, or personal letters), this perspective suggests that those intentions should bind the meaning of the passage in question.[78]

As Crapanzano notes, the originalist model in law is "a fully secular stance, which stresses correct methodology and ignores the condition of the interpreter"; in contrast, the other subject of Crapanzano's study on literalism, fundamentalist Christians, "believe that correct interpretation depends on the moral and spiritual condition of the interpreter."[79] This interpretive approach, which suggests that special revelation can only be truly

understood by those whose relationship with Jesus gives them "ears to hear," has resonance in both the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative. The kairotic perspective lends this resonance additional spiritual significance; if the American prophets are part of the divine plan in speaking to the present generation as well as their own, then their words and deeds are, at least on some level, a form of special revelation from God. As such, the true meaning for the contemporary world of those words and deeds can only be understood fully by those whose spiritual identity grants them "ears to hear." Like Scripture, the true meaning of the American prophets is theoretically accessible to all, but only those who approach the texts with the appropriate worldview and presuppositions will be able to truly comprehend the intentions of their authors—and, more importantly, truly comprehend the intentions of *the* Author of the American story, in passing down to the present generation these particular texts from these particular voices.

It is the latter point that offers greater interpretive possibilities. The dominant hermeneutical approach among evangelicals for biblical exegesis is to let Scripture interpret Scripture; in other words, if the literal meaning of the text itself is unclear, the next method for determining its meaning should be to find other parts of Scripture that can act as an interpretive lens. Crapanzano describes this process, in which exegetes will "cite single verses or short passages without contextualization" as commentaries on one another to make the passages being used function as simultaneously internal and external to the text: "They are internal insofar as they are part of Scripture, and they obtain their authority from that position; they are external insofar as they occur in different books by different authors."[80] This, he writes, "creates a 'space' in which the different authorial

and narrative perspectives of the cited texts are implicitly exploited to produce the illusion of an external objectivity."[81] Indeed, multiple Christian Right rhetors cite the coherency of the Bible as proof of its authority—for example, LaHaye:

> Written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 different people, [the Bible] has a supernatural consistency about it. No other book has been so loved, so hated, so persecuted, or so used as the Bible. [...] Nineteen hundred years ago, this book was completed, never to be corrected or updated. Its pages contain many signs of the supernatural, such as hundreds of prophecies that have historically been fulfilled. Its archaeological accuracy is acclaimed to be incredible. To those who have studied it carefully, it bears all the signs of what it claims—divine authorship.[82]

To the extent that the American corpus represents a form of special revelation passed down to the present generation as part of the divine plan, the temporal field of the Cosmic Narrative invites us to see it not as a series of individual texts representing their authors' wills and intentions, but rather as a single text in which, like the Bible's multiple authors, the American prophets each act as amanuenses for God in contributing their part to the divinely-ordained whole. Though there may have been disagreements among them and some were not orthodox Christians, all "were pro-Bible and had somewhat of a Christian worldview,"[83] such that they presented a united front. Falwell, for example, writes that "our Founding Fathers were not all Christians, but they were guided by biblical principles. They developed a nation predicated on Holy Writ."[84] Similarly, Barton writes that "our Founders—as well as subsequent courts and Congresses—believed intensely

that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, produced the public morality without which civil government would not long survive."[85]

This case is bolstered by the same forms of juxtaposition I discussed above in biblical exegesis, the placement of "proof texts" to create the "illusion of an external objectivity"; just as Scripture interprets Scripture, so too do the American prophets interpret the American prophets. Barton provides perhaps an archetypal example, collapsing quotations from multiple founders in multiple contexts into a single sentence to suggest that they were unified in support of a divinely-ordained and objective standard for public policy:

> To help evaluate proposed policies, learn to ask, 'Will this act violate
> God's clear standards, thus inviting Divine wrath (Thomas Jefferson) and
> "national calamity" (George Mason), or will it rather produce "the
> propitious smiles of heaven" (George Washington) and God's "concurring
> aid" (Benjamin Franklin)?'[86]

The fact that some of the American founders, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, rejected orthodox Christianity only *strengthens* the case that the American prophets had a unified and coherent vision of a Christian nation in the American Narrative, by presenting evidence for a "Christian consensus" that transcended religious commitments. Even those founders who were unable to accept Christianity as a religion, the narrative suggests, accepted the establishment of Christianity as an ethical system that would be good for the country:

> The strongest civil code is impotent against malicious behavior unless the
> heart itself can be restrained, and even Benjamin Franklin joined Thomas

Jefferson (two of the least religiously orthodox Founders) in believing that

the teachings of Christianity best accomplished that goal.[87]

Because the American prophets are presenting God's message rather than their own, as part of a unified and coherent vision of America and its future, their words take on oracular qualities; their original intentions for the country are not simply legally binding, but as a special revelation from God are morally and spiritually binding as well. The founders' belief (according to the narrative) that democracy without morality is unsustainable, and that morality without religion is impossible, plays the same role in the constitutive and political context as Scriptural prophecy does in a theological one, with the same idea that because this is a message from God, it is on some level timeless and absolute rather than contextual and temporal. Collapsing this temporal field has some interesting consequences for identity as well, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

The Eschaton in Chronic Time: Conditionality

Reading the Cosmic Narrative's kairotic, linear, and telic temporal setting into the American Narrative functions to imbue the American Narrative with Scriptural undertones, and bring new meaning to the traditional conservative trope of disinheritance. The temporal outlook of the American Narrative, when reflected back upon the Cosmic Narrative, is even more significant in its ramifications, bringing forth the implication that human activity can affect the timing of the divine plan in meaningful ways.

One of the major problems for the Christian Right has been that many of the movement's leaders and adherents subscribed to premillennial eschatology, making it more difficult to justify political and cultural action. If the Cosmic Narrative is already written, and if the End Times are imminent with their destruction of all political and

cultural institutions, and if we are all judged individually anyway, then the ongoing decline of the United States into depravity is not only understandable but inevitable. Thus, it is a waste of time and energy to try to reform America's political and cultural structures, and American Christians should concentrate their efforts toward evangelizing and saving as many individual souls as possible out of the oncoming tribulations.

Susan Friend Harding suggests that in response to this problem, Christian Right leaders like Tim LaHaye and Jerry Falwell developed "a new kind of time within the end-times, a potentially progressive period in what was otherwise a hopelessly regressive era." This took the form of "another, pretribulational, judgment, a 'little tribulation' that preceded the great tribulation, also precipitated out, one that had not been clearly foretold in the Bible."[88] Tim LaHaye clearly lays out the idea of this "little tribulation" in *The Battle for the Mind*:

> [The Great Tribulation of eschatology] is predestined and will surely come
> to pass. But the pre-tribulation tribulation—that is, the tribulation that will
> engulf this country if liberal humanists are permitted to take total control
> of our government—is neither predestined nor necessary. But it will
> deluge the entire land in the next few years, unless Christians are willing
> to become much more assertive in defense of morality and decency than
> they have been during the past three decades.[89]

Here we see Harding's "little tribulation," the explicit theological outlook espoused by those Christian Right rhetors who seek to make their calls to political and cultural activism consistent with their premillennial eschatological viewpoints.

But even still, as noted above, this "little tribulation" is a sort of cold comfort to American Christians, who are still faced with not just the possibility but the inevitability that the United States will ultimately be destroyed. Barton rightly identifies this as a tension that the more apocalyptic rhetors, particularly LaHaye, never quite resolve; LaHaye's more political and cultural works, such as *The Battle for the Mind*, *A Nation Without a Conscience*, and *Mind Siege* reflect a different prose style and different, seemingly incompatible, views of time and identity from his apocalyptic theological works like *Revelation Unveiled*, *Are We Living in the End Times?*, and *Global Warning*.

Yet when the uncertain end of the American Narrative is brought into the mix, even more interesting implications arise. While emphasizing that "no one knows the day or the hour," Christian Right apocalyptic writers—particularly LaHaye—emphasize the importance of the "signs of the times," certain technological, governmental, and/or cultural conditions that can be seen as indications that the rapture and the End Times are right around the corner. These conditions are understood as occurring within ordinary, chronological and physical space and time, not as miraculous ruptures of the physical order—and more importantly, the fulfillment of these conditions is dependent upon the actions (or inactions) of the Church and the nations, including the United States.

One of these conditions is that before the End Times commence, the Gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth. As LaHaye and Hindson write:

Our Lord paralleled the worldwide preaching of the gospel with the timing of His second coming. He said, 'This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:14). No date is given to calculate when this will

be fulfilled, but the promise of Scripture is clear. When the last convert to come to faith in Christ completes the body of Christ, the church age will conclude, and Christ will return to rapture the church to heaven.[90]

Making the global spread of the Gospel into a precondition for the Rapture adds a new dimension to the American Narrative's suggestion that God brought forth and preserved the United States primarily to serve as a base for global missionary work. In both his 1980 book *The Battle for the Mind* and his 2000 book *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* (the latter coauthored with David Noebel, but reusing verbatim a great deal of material from *The Battle for the Mind*), LaHaye draws on his worldwide travels with his wife to argue that four-fifths of all world missionary efforts originate in the United States, meaning that "the eternal souls of millions of people depend on American Christians to supply them with the good news"[91]—but that the continued strength of the United States as a base for world missions is at risk due to the encroachment of secular humanism. Returning the nation to the "Christian consensus" will pay dividends not only in preserving the American nation from God's wrath, but also for spreading the Gospel around the world and hastening the End Times.

But it is the opposite implication that is even more profound. The Cosmic Narrative makes the continuing moral decline of the political and social order a precondition for the beginning of the End Times—but the American Narrative suggests that the decline of the political and social order, at least in the United States, can be arrested and reversed. The seeming contradiction between these two visions imbues political and cultural activism with a new meaning: By reversing the spiritual decline of the United States and reviving the nation as a spiritual bulwark against the satanic and

secular humanist forces at work in the world, conservative Christian activists have the power to delay the eschaton itself.

In several places, LaHaye (and his various coauthors) suggest that the spiritual strength of the Church is God's tool for restraining the forces of evil—not only in the historic, temporal realm, but in the kairotic and spiritual realm as well. For example, LaHaye and Hindson write that "it is the Christian's spiritual success, based upon an adherence to God's Word, that restrains the coming of the Antichrist and the false prophet."[92] When the church is removed from the world in the Rapture, the now-unrestrained Antichrist will be free to do his worst. However, LaHaye and Hindson also suggest that the Antichrist's rise will be evident *prior* to the Rapture as well: "We do not know the timetable of God, but we can smell the ashes of a decadent society that may soon face extinction. It is only a matter of time before the human race faces the prospect of annihilation. But first the deceiver will arise, promising to bring peace to the world."[93] Charting the rise of "the deceiver" *prior* to the Rapture suggests that should the Church continue to restrain Antichrists around the world, that precondition for the Great Tribulation will remain unfulfilled.

But in *A Nation Without a Conscience* (1994), Timothy and Beverly LaHaye go further. Arguing against the idea that the imminent eschaton of premillennialism makes political and cultural activism pointless, they imply that the preconditions for the eschaton are themselves flexible—and that because the United States remains as a restraint upon the forces of evil worldwide, God will not "punish" the nation by allowing it to fall asunder in the apocalypse of the Tribulation. By remaining Christian, the United States could reset the conditions for the eschaton by pushing them back even to the end of

the twenty-first century. Though they grant that "our decaying culture mirrors [the Bible's] prediction of the last days,"[94] they nevertheless argue:

> No one knows for certain whether these are indeed the last days. Being a teacher of Bible prophecy, Tim is inclined to agree that we may indeed be in the last days, but the Bible is not specific, and we may be a hundred years or more away from the last days. No one really knows. Consequently, instead of just waiting for the Rapture to take all Christians up to the Father's house, we must realize that Christ may not return until the end of the next century.[95]

LaHaye and LaHaye go on to argue that God does not want to destroy the United States because "the judging hand of God has never fallen on any nation in history that had the percentage of Christians that this nation possesses."[96] The born-again Christians of the United States, in addition to being a "restraining influence"[97] on the progress of evil both within the country and around the world, are also the ones who are holding back God's hand from destroying the American nation, just as God would have held back from destroying Sodom and Gomorrah if there had been ten righteous souls within that city.[98] Even the majority of Americans who are not themselves born-again Christians are good enough to restrain God's hand of judgment on the nation; God's wrath is not against these "sheep," but against the "evil shepherds" in "the entertainment industry, education, media, and government" who are leading them astray.[99] It is for this reason, LaHaye and LaHaye write, that "we do not think God will destroy America, but we might expect him to discipline her" within the scope of history through things like terrorism, economic downturns, disease, or natural disasters.[100]

While LaHaye and LaHaye do not explicitly argue that the timing of the eschaton could depend upon whether or not American Christians succeed in calling the nation to repentance and revival, the way in which they position their argument makes the implication clear. LaHaye and LaHaye position their fictional interlocutors, the "doomsayers,"[101] not merely as arguing that God will destroy America; rather, the pessimists are suggesting that the world conditions have deteriorated to the point where the events of the premillennial apocalypse are clearly imminent, and that America, like the rest of the world, will clearly deserve its fate in the coming Great Tribulation. Thus, by implication, God is holding back on the apocalypse itself because God does not want to judge and destroy the United States. The continuing Christian influence in America is not only preserving the nation from destruction in the chronic time of history, but is also saving the whole of the planet from destruction in the kairotic time of eschatology.

LaHaye is not the only rhetor to draw the Cosmic and American Narratives together to this implied conclusion. Pat Robertson also engages in a similar exercise in his 1991 book *The New World Order*, in which he posits the existence of a global conspiracy of "the Establishment"—led by the Council on Foreign Relations, the United Nations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Illuminati—that has been working over the past several hundred years to institute a "one-world collectivist government" and stamp out Christianity and capitalism.[102] This conspiracy is really only the beginning of the agenda, though; the conspirators' *true* function is to be part of Satan's apocalyptic plan to prepare a mechanism by which the Antichrist can wield power once he has received "particular empowerment and authority" from Satan, thus bringing about the End

Times.[103] The only thing standing in the way of this agenda, Robertson writes, is the

United States:

> Such a world government can come together only after the Christian
>
> United States is out of the way. After all, the rest of the world can federate
>
> any time it wants to, but a vital, economically strong, Christian United
>
> States would have at its disposal the spiritual and material force to prohibit
>
> a worldwide satanic dictator from winning his battle. […] If America is
>
> free, people everywhere can hope for freedom. And if America goes
>
> down, all hope is lost to the rest of the world.[104]

Robertson presents the rise of the one-world government and the Antichrist as

simultaneously both inevitable and avoidable; while "the triumph of God's world order is

certain"[105] and the Bible's prophecies about the End Times remain as true as ever, that

does not mean that this *particular* moment in history must be the point in the Cosmic

Narrative when the forces of darkness prevail in bringing about the apocalypse. Instead,

Christians in America face the choice of the jeremiad yet again: "Rebuild the foundation

of a free, sovereign America from the grassroots" through Robertson's newly-founded

Christian Coalition,[106] or witness the rise of the Antichrist in the one-world government

that the conspirators of "the Establishment" are working to put in place.

If the eschaton is a century or more away, as LaHaye suggests it may be, then the

landscape for Christian activism is altered; rather than fighting to preserve a nation that

will be destroyed by God during the events of the Tribulation, American Christians can

restore the nation to the vision of American prophets—a nation ruled by the Christian

consensus. While the premillennial eschaton continues to lie in wait at some

indeterminate point in the future, for the moment, the wrath of God is not yet upon the world. With a morally-restored and newly-prosperous America returning to God's purposes for the nation—spreading capitalism, republicanism, charity, and (most importantly) the Christian gospel across the globe—not only are the "pretribulation conditions" that are a prerequisite for the beginning of the End Times rolled back (and any potential Antichrists nipped in the bud), but also the restored America offers a foretaste of the millennial kingdom, a sort of typology in reverse. This is, in effect, a postmillennial vision; if the American forerunner to the millennial kingdom is going to last for at least the next century, then the vast majority of LaHaye's readers will have died before the beginning of the End Times. The pattern shifts from telic back to cyclical, as America reveals yet again God's pattern in history of discipline, repentance, and restoration, and God demonstrates through America yet again what happens when a nation is in covenant with God. This future is defined by continuity rather than rupture.

Conclusion: (Re)reading Time

The American Narrative and the Cosmic Narrative offer two different visions for time. One is comic, defined by a chronic view of time in which cause precedes effect and history teaches lessons to the future through cyclical patterns. The other is tragic, defined by the linear progression towards a teleological endpoint and utilizing a kairotic view of time in which the past is fulfilled in the present and future, and the present and the future give meaning and purpose to the events of the past. The resonances and dissonances between these two temporal visions animate both narratives with new implications that create new spaces for flexibility and address the individual narratives' potential weaknesses.

For the American Narrative, a kairotic view of time significantly raises the stakes for action and suggests a perspective in which the most significant figures in the American Narrative are read not just as great people and patriots, but as prophets who served as amanuenses for God in speaking truth to future generations as well as their own. Their words and actions are connected to one another in such a way as to suggest that they shared a coherent and complete vision for the country, which allows their stories and their words to be used similarly to Scripture, juxtaposed with one another in an attempt to convey the timeless, universal, objective truth toward which they pointed. This has substantial implications for the formation of identity; in the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which evangelical exegetical tendencies produce a reading of the American Narrative as Scripture in which contemporary categories of identity and ideology, in effect, "overwrite" the historical context and collapse the gap between the culture of the late eighteenth century and today's evangelical Christian subculture.

For the Cosmic Narrative, the cyclical, chronic, jeremiadic view of time found in the American Narrative clashes with the notion of the human story as telic and divinely authored—a tension that many Cosmic Narrative rhetors, particularly those in the apocalyptic tradition, have never quite resolved. The American Narrative's temporal perspective, however, also brings out some of the latent qualities of the eschatological viewpoint found in the Cosmic Narrative, such as the notion that the end will be preceded by "pretribulation conditions," a set of "signs of the times" that can be read by Christians who are open to God's message to reveal the imminence of the eschaton. When the jeremiadic structure of the American Narrative is applied to these latent qualities, a new picture emerges in which American Christians can, in restoring America, stave off the

Tribulation for a time, effectively turning the premillennial vision of the "doomsayers" into a (temporarily) postmillennial foretaste of the millennial kingdom. This, too, has substantial implications for the formation of identity, particularly with regards to the apocalyptic Cosmic Narrative's skeptical if not oppositional view of political, cultural, and economic powers; to the extent that the United States *has* a teleological future in the End Times narrative, there exists the potential for a measured acceptance of certain forms of political, cultural, and economic powers, with the United States leading an ultimately doomed coalition of righteous nations in a war against an eastern alliance guided by the Antichrist and Satan. I will discuss these implications as well in the next chapter.

Notes

[1] "2014 Domestic Grosses." *Box Office Mojo*. Online source; accessed 11 September 2016. http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?page=2&view=releasedate&view2=domestic&yr=2014&p=.htm

[2] David Barton, *Wallbuilders Live* (Syndicated radio program, October 29, 2014 edition). Recording from *Right Wing Watch*: http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/david-barton-grateful-most-recent-left-behind-movie-bombed

[3] Kristy Maddux, *The Faithful Citizen: Popular Christian Media and Gendered Civic Identities* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 91.

[4] Ibid., 100.

[5] Ibid*.,* 116.

[6] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 217-18..

[7] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 241.

[8] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell,* 245.

[9] Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 357.

[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 2006), 24.

[11] David Barton, *The Bulletproof George Washington,* 3rd edition (Aledo, TX: WallBuilders Press, 2009).

[12] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory, 1492-1793*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009), 375.

[13] Marshall and Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory,* 398.

[14] D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2003), 10-11.

[15] Marshall and Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory,* 82, 272, 275.

[16] Ibid.*,* 165.

[17] Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 56.

[18] David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1996), 324.

[19] Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), 226-27. Emphasis in original.

[20] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 145.

[21] Tim LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1994), 32-33.

[22] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *God's Plan for America: From Sea to Shining Sea, 1787-1837,* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009), 333.

[23] Tim LaHaye and David Noebel, *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 40. Interestingly, when LaHaye writes similar sentiments in *The Battle for the Mind* (1980) and *The Battle for the Family* (1982), he refers to the revival as "Great Awakening II" rather than "Great Awakening IV," as he and David Noebel do in 2000. Even if he became more aware of the Second

Great Awakening in the early 1800s in the intervening period, one is forced to wonder when he thinks the third Great Awakening took place.

[24] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 42-43.

[25] Marshall and Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory,* 23.

[26] Barton, *Original Intent,* 323. Emphasis in original.

[27] Tim LaHaye and Beverly LaHaye, *A Nation Without a Conscience* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), 252.

[28] Pat Robertson, *The Secret Kingdom* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 34

[29] "God's Word Is the Key to the Past, Present, and Future," Creation Museum, 2800 Bullitsburg Church Rd., Petersburg, KY 41080. Visited 16 July 2011.

[30] "Cosmic Aging," Creation Museum.

[31] "The Flood Rearranges the Earth," Creation Museum.

[32] "Different Views Because of Different Starting Points," Creation Museum.

[33] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 50.

[34] Mark 13:32 (NIV). Also see Matthew 24:36.

[35] Jerry Falwell, *Why I Believe Jesus Christ May Return in the 1990s* (Lynchburg, VA: Old Time Gospel Hour, 1990), 8.

[36] Grenz, Stanley. *Theology for the Community of God*, paperback edition (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 607.

[37] Ibid*.,* 607.

[38] Falwell, *Why I Believe Jesus Christ May Return in the 1990s,* 43.

[39] Ibid*.,* 43.

[40] Dale L. Sullivan, "Kairos and the Rhetoric of Belief," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992), 321.

[41] Sullivan, "Kairos and the Rhetoric of Belief," 323.

[42] Philip Sipiora, "Kairos: The Rhetoric of Time and Timing in the New Testament," in *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis,* Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin, eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 122.

[43] Richard Benjamin Crosby, "Kairos as God's Time in Martin Luther King Jr.'s Last Sunday Sermon," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2009), 265.

[44] Crosby, "Kairos as God's Time," 278.

[45] Ibid., 133.

[46] Sullivan, "Kairos and the Rhetoric of Belief," 326.

[47] Crosby, "Kairos as God's Time," 278.

[48] Sullivan, "Kairos and the Rhetoric of Belief," 329.

[49] Richard Benjamin Crosby, "Cathedral of Kairos: Rhetoric and Revelation in the 'National House of Prayer,'" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 46, no. 2 (2013), 138.

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[54] Jerry Falwell, Ed Hindson, and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *Liberty Bible Commentary, Volume II* (Lynchburg, VA: The Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1982), 205.

[55] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell,* 55.

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[57] Vincent Crapanzano, *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 161.

[58] Crapanzano, *Serving the Word,* 161.

[59] Michael Leff, "Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln's Second Inaugural," *Communication Reports* 1, no. 1 (1988), 29.

[60] Sipiora, "*Kairos*: The Rhetoric of Time and Timing in the New Testament," 122.

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[62] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell,* 55.

[63] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 43.

[64] Ibid., 76.

[65] Ibid., 75.

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[67] Ibid., 93.

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[73] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers.*

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[76] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 50.

[77] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What if America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 70

[78] Crapanzano, *Serving the Word,* 2-3, 279-303.

[79] Ibid., 292.

[80] Ibid., 77.

[81] Ibid., 77.

[82] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 108-09.

[83] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What if America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 216.

[84] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 29.

[85] Barton, *Original Intent,* 317.

[86] Ibid., 324.

[87] Ibid., 33.

[88] Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell,* 241.

[89] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 217-18.

[90] Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, *Global Warning* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 152.

[91] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege,* 234.

[92] LaHaye and Hindson, *Global Warning,* 88.

[93] Ibid., 88.

[94] LaHaye and LaHaye, *A Nation without a Conscience,* 242.

[95] Ibid., 243.

[96] Ibid., 251.

[97] Ibid., 246.

[98] Ibid., 251.

[99] Ibid., 247.

[100] Ibid., 251.

[101] Ibid., 252.

[102] Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991), 263.

[103] Ibid., 256.

[104] Ibid., 256.

[105] Ibid., 268.

[106] Ibid., 261.

Chapter 4: Identity

One of the central functions of worldview-forming narratives is to establish and constitute identity. In retelling or reenacting the narrative, the rhetor sets forth for his or her audience a vision and definition of who they are—a vision and definition which, if accepted by the audience, places them into the narrative and sets out structures that can have ramifications for their understandings of epistemology, teleology, and morality. In conventional political narratives, such as Maurice Charland's example of the Quebecois, the intended audience is the protagonist and central character of the narrative.[1] The White Paper which advocated Quebecois independence posited the Quebecois as a unique people set apart from English-speaking Canadians, rather than bit players in the Canadian narrative. Possessed of a narrative all their own, with an identity and a direction distinct from that of Anglophone Canadians, the Quebecois were the heroes of their own story.

Charland's example illustrates the extent to which identity formation is a question of circumference, of defining the size of the circle that differentiates "us" from "them." As "French Canadians," the identity of the people of Quebec was swallowed up into the whole of what it meant to be Canadian. Their Francophone status was a *modifier* on their identity; they were Canadians first, and Francophones second. The White Paper invited citizens of Quebec to shrink the circumference of identity to see themselves as Quebecois first and foremost; Canadians from Ontario, Prince Edward Island, or British Columbia could not share in that identity.

The White Paper is also an example of the teleological implications of narratively-embedded political identity. One of the defining characteristics of narrative is that its characters do not stand still; rather, they drive and are driven by a plot in which

they and the circumstances around them change. In political narratives like that of the Peuple Quebecois, the end of the story has not been written—but the narratives create a sense of certainty by presenting comparisons to other struggles for identity and independence that were successful, thus imbuing the identity of the Quebecois with the fates of those other independence movements and presenting their historical struggles as guideposts for the choices of present-day Quebecois. The *telos* of the Quebecois is clear; should they choose to seize this moment, they are destined to be an independent and free people, rather than a single province in a larger nation that is linguistically and culturally alien to them.

The dual narrative structure of the Christian Right's rhetoric complicates these implications in ways that operate both internally and externally to the text. Internally, the dual narrative structure has to account for the contradictions between the narratives, which present two different structures for the circumference and locus of religious identity. The Cosmic Narrative casts its audience as "true Christians," a minority even among nominal Christians, who will stand as individuals to face God's judgment upon their religious decisions; conversely, the American Narrative casts its audience as a silent majority of pro-family Americans, whose mission is to restore the religious identity of the nation so that it is not judged with wrath by God. These contradictions can do rhetorical work in enabling rhetors to widen or narrow the circumference of identity to suit their purposes, but they can also constrain the internal dynamics of the Christian Right as a movement, particularly with regards to the role of power.

The identity structures that arise internally to the text also combine with narrative epistemological and temporal structures to create additional complications that are

external to the text, as the evangelical Christian Right's narrative structure interacts with the larger landscape of American political and religious conservatism. These complications occur not only in places where the *plot* of the evangelical Christian Right's narrative structure conflicts with those of conservative Roman Catholics and Latter-Day Saints, libertarians, and neoconservatives, but also where those structures of identity, epistemology, and time/teleology conflict.

I recognize that the split I present here between "internal" and "external" dynamics is a somewhat artificial one, given the frequent rhetorical interplay between the narrative structures of the Christian Right and those of other worldviews within the space of American conservative rhetorics. This is particularly the case as the evangelical Right encounters other forms of Christian conservatism, such as the Mormonism of Glenn Beck or W. Cleon Skousen, or the Roman Catholicism of Rick Santorum or Antonin Scalia. Despite the frequent interaction between the narrative structure of evangelical Christian Right rhetoric and those of other branches of American conservative thought, however, there is still a point of divergence: both the American Narrative and the Cosmic Narrative have at their root a normative version of Christianity which is either explicitly presented or implicitly coded as evangelical Protestant. Similarly, while evangelical Christian Right rhetors use the same *form* of strategic appeals to resolve the internal and external contradictions presented by the narrative structure, the *content* of those appeals differs according to the audience.

There are two basic strategic appeals used within the evangelical Christian Right's dual-narrative structure to address these internal and external contradictions. First, the narratives attempt to unite disparate identity visions in opposition to a common

enemy. Internally, this common enemy is "secular humanism," which can also be used as an encompassing term to provide a "true" explanation for both of the common enemies that appear in the external dynamics: socialism/communism and (particularly since September 11) Islam. The common enemy motif creates a flexible *external* constraint on the category of identity that creates a sense of emergency and urgency, in which internal contradictions must be put aside while evangelical Protestants (internally) and "pro-moral Americans" (externally) fight for their lives.

Second, the narratives make full use of the range and flexibility of civil religious symbology, shifting between coding these symbols as normatively Protestant and evangelical (for internal use) and as symbols of a kind of "mere Americanism"[2] that can include the broader scope of American conservatism while nevertheless excluding those in the enemy category above (for external use). This use of symbology presents a vision for political, cultural, and social power that is rhetorically useful both internally and externally. Internally, this vision of power overcomes the Cosmic Narrative's naturally skeptical (or oppositional) view of the powers-that-be, suggesting that power can be constructive in uniting and moving forward the American *and* Christian missions; externally, civil religious symbology unites American conservatives behind a crusading, militant vision to crush the antagonistic forces they have portrayed as the enemy.

In this chapter, I discuss the internal dynamics of identity formation that arise from the two narratives' differing visions of and for their protagonists and their audiences. I lay out three aspects of these differing visions: the locus of religious identity, the circumference of the audience/protagonist in-group, and the attitude toward power. I

then discuss how appeals to the common enemy of secular humanism and to a normatively Protestant vision of civil religion address these contradictions in identity.

Loci of Identity

The first two clauses of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution set forth the framework for the relationship between religion and the American federal government: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…" Legal scholars have named the two clauses setting forth the relationship between religion and the state: the Establishment Clause ("no law respecting an establishment of religion"), which suggests that government cannot privilege or impose any one religious viewpoint over others; and the Free Exercise Clause ("or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"), which suggests that government cannot prevent individuals from holding and practicing their own religious viewpoints.

While both of these clauses ultimately locate the power of religious decision-making in the hands of lower-level bodies (initially states, localities, and individuals, but later narrowed by Supreme Court interpretations of the Fourteenth Amendment to just individuals) they limit the power of the state in different ways and represent opposite poles of a continuum for understanding the locus of religious identity. On one end, the Establishment Clause implies the possibility for a communal and national locus for religious identity, in prohibiting the state from imposing one; on the other end, the Free Exercise Clause suggests a personal and individual locus for religious identity in prohibiting the state from infringing upon individuals' religious practices.

These two clauses are an excellent lens for exploring the subject-positions laid out by the Cosmic and American Narratives. On the one hand, the Cosmic Narrative sets out

the notion that religious identity is individual and sets the circumference of religious identity through a clear (if not always apparent) line of demarcation between the "saved" and the "unsaved," and furthermore suggests that even among those who claim to be Christian, many, if not the majority, are not *truly* saved—a distinction that will be revealed at the culmination of the narrative, when God (the author and true protagonist of the Cosmic Narrative) sits in judgment over all. The American Narrative, on the other hand, sees the locus of religious identity as communal and presents a wider circumference with less clear lines between "in" and "out," so as to envision its audience as the silent majority. As the protagonists in that narrative, the American people are in charge of their own fate—including determining (through their actions) how God will judge the nation as a collective whole.

Cosmic Narrative: Individual Religious Identity

"It's not about you."[3]

The very first sentence of the best-selling *The Purpose-Driven Life*, written by evangelical pastor Rick Warren, points to the thesis of the work as a whole—that at the center of each individual's life story is not the individual him- or herself, but rather God and God's purposes for the world and for each individual. *The Purpose-Driven Life* represents itself as a countercultural antidote to the self-help genre, suggesting that the secret to fulfillment is not to know oneself or achieve self-actualization, but rather to know God and make God's intentions the guiding force in one's life. The purpose of life (and of *The Purpose-Driven Life*) is to understand that each individual's personal narrative, like the narratives of history, the rise and fall of civilizations, and ultimately of the cosmos itself, is *really* about God. The central message of *The Purpose-Driven Life*,

in other words, is that God is the author of every true narrative in the universe—as well as the subject, the hero, and the protagonist.

At the same time, though, *The Purpose-Driven Life* is addressed by Warren to the reader, and focusing on the ways in which the reader can align his or her life with God's purposes. It is explicitly intended to persuade the reader to take a step on a spiritual journey toward evangelical Christianity: to persuade the non-Christian or nominal Christian to truly accept Jesus as his or her personal Lord and Savior, and to persuade the already-saved evangelical to deepen his or her spirituality and become more involved and active in the church. Thus, Warren implicitly and explicitly grants the reader the agency to change his or her thoughts, actions, and inclinations, in effect recentering the reader in his or her own life story even as he argues that the reader should be decentering him- or herself. So in that sense, Warren's protestations aside, *The Purpose-Driven Life* truly *is* a book "about you."

This apparent contradiction reflects what Crapanzano identifies as "an ambiguity inherent in evangelical Christianity":

> Who is the hero of these stories? Ultimately, it is God, but He is no
> ordinary hero, for He commands the storyline. Man's [sic] position is
> more complicated. His fate is already determined—he is either one of the
> elect or he is not—so how can he be a hero in the stories he tells? And yet
> he is. […] The evangelical's stories are success stories in miniature—the
> American dream cast in spiritual terms (that are not altogether resistant to
> material claims). They proclaim humility as they announce election.[4]

Crapanzano illustrates well the tension within evangelical self-narrative as to who is the protagonist of the tale: is it God's story, or is it one's own?[5] This tension is also reflected in the Cosmic Narrative. While on a grand scale, the narrative is clearly God's story from beginning to end, with God as both author and protagonist, the fact that Christians are asked to envision *themselves* and their place in the narrative complicates matters somewhat.

The individual Christian occupies an important place within the Cosmic Narrative. Rather than being just one face in the crowd of billions, the narrative holds that each individual is known and loved by God, so much so that, according to a popular evangelical saying, "Even if you had been the only person on earth who sinned, Jesus would have still died for you." It is the individual who is presented with the gospel, the individual who responds to it, and the individual who repents and forms a personal relationship with Christ. Those who have individually accepted Christ into their hearts will be saved; those who have not will be damned. The question of salvation is not simply as a facet of the individual's identity, but as the whole of it; as Jerry Falwell puts it, "if a person is not a Christian, he [sic] is inherently a failure."[6] All of humanity is split according to this category of identity, as D. James Kennedy writes:

> The Scriptures inevitably cleave mankind in half: There are those that are
> the sheep, and those that are the goats; there is the wheat, and there are the
> tares; there are the good fish and there are the bad; there are the saved and
> there are the lost; there are those who are on their way to heaven and there
> are those who are on their way to hell.[7]

Similarly, Timothy LaHaye writes:

> …there are only two kinds of people. The Bible repeatedly refers to the
> believing or unbelieving, the saved or unsaved, the condemned or not
> condemned, the righteous or unrighteous, the just or unjust, the wise or
> unwise. […] either a person's name is written or it is not written in the
> Book of Life. It must be one way or the other.[8]

The Cosmic Narrative is explicit on this point: There is no salvation for any category other than the individual. Membership in a church or citizenship in a godly nation cannot by themselves bring a person to salvation or spare them from hellfire; in order to be saved, each individual must undergo a personal salvation experience, "the most basic spiritual experience,"[9] in which they are "personally calling on the name of the Lord"[10] and accepting Christ into their heart. As the *Liberty Bible Commentary* puts it:

> People may be members of good churches and still be lost and go to hell.
> The sheep may have had a vague idea it was lost, but this coin could
> picture those with no knowledge of being lost. We need to search for those
> who are lost to bring them to Christ.[11]

And D. James Kennedy again:

> How tragic it is that so many millions of people in this country have been
> satisfied merely to have their names on a church roll, and to be baptized or
> confirmed. Yet they have never experienced the transforming,
> regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, which alone can make them
> acceptable for admission into heaven.[12]

Moreover, this conversion experience must be complete and totalizing; to the extent that one does not align the whole of their identity around Christianity and place Christ at the

center of their heart, their salvation is at risk. Those who have not undergone a born-again experience may identify as Christians and think they are Christians, but they are not really Christians, because "there is no other kind of real Christian except those who have been born anew—those who have been regenerated from above."[13] Needless to say, this can be a source of anxiety for individual evangelicals, who might worry that they have not done enough to center Christ in their lives; that anxiety is often utilized by Christian Right authors to spur their audience on to deeper forms of devotion. A true Christian, Kennedy writes, will not have fear or anxiety about the coming judgment:

> Are you really a Christian? You know how you can tell don't you? If you really belong to Christ, then right now, you can pray from your heart this prayer which concludes the canon of Scripture: 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Come quickly![14]

The dividing line between "real Christians" who are saved, and everyone else who is not saved, is a question of the heart, as Kennedy writes:

> But if you have continued impenitently in your sins, if you have been satisfied with only nominal Christianity, if you have been satisfied to have your name upon the roll and not Christ upon the throne of your heart, if you have rejected Him, if you have spurned the invitation of His gospel— then, for you, it [the day of judgment] will be the fulfillment of the worst of all your nightmares.[15]

Kennedy sets out a clear distinction between "only nominal Christianity" and putting Jesus "upon the throne of [one's] heart"—between what Augustine called the "visible" and "invisible" church. The group of people sitting in the pews on Sunday morning is not

necessarily the same as the group of people who will join Jesus in heaven at the end of time. In fact, writes Kennedy, the latter are much fewer in number than the former:

> How tragic it is that so many millions of people in this country have been
> satisfied merely to have their names on a church roll, and to be baptized or
> confirmed. Yet they have never experienced the transforming,
> regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, which alone can make them
> acceptable for admission into heaven.[16]

Those Christians who have not been "born again" or who hold to a merely nominal Christianity are viewed as "lukewarm," and, as the book of Revelation suggests, "spit out" by God who would prefer even the coldness of a nonbeliever over a lukewarm so-called believer. In some retellings of the Cosmic Narrative (particularly those favored by those tied to historic Christian fundamentalism), whole denominations and families of Christianity are broadly painted as at the very least theologically suspect, if not apostate; according to these retellings, while there may be a "faithful remnant" who are keeping the historic zeal of those denominations alive, their leadership and direction are corrupt, and perhaps (likely) hopelessly so. The most common targets among Nicene Christianity for such attacks are Roman Catholicism and the mainline Protestant denominations.

In rejecting nominal Christianity, Cosmic Narrative rejects the notion of "works righteousness," the idea that one might be saved by acting Christian while not putting their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, as displaying "the mere externalities of religion"[17] and insufficient for salvation. Those externalities, however, are still viewed as markers or manifestations of salvation, by which one might determine whether oneself (or someone

else) is a true Christian. Kennedy suggests that true Christians will be known by their evangelism, their service to the church, their personal devotional life, and their tithes:

> Some Christians have remained in craven silence throughout these years. Some must come before Him without one soul—one other person—who has come to know Christ because of you. What a tragedy that is! Dear friend, are you a faithful witness for Jesus Christ? Not only by your life, but also by your lips? Do you serve Christ and His church? You took a vow that you would serve Christ to the best of your ability in his church, and yet have you ever given one day, or even one hour, to the service of Christ? You are never to be found in church on Sunday evening or at prayer meeting. You are never to be found in any hour of service. When all of the appeals are made, they all go right over your head. You offer no service for Christ. […] Ah, I even wonder if you are really saved at all. Some do not make it a habit to read God's Word or to seek Him faithfully in prayer. Others do not bring their tithes and offerings to Christ. Instead, like Demas, you have loved this present world. All of these things will come out at the judgment.[18]

In the context of the Cosmic Narrative, the idea of a "Christian nation" does not make sense. Nations cannot be religious at all in the Cosmic Narrative; only individuals, who will be subject to God's judgment based on whether or not they have accepted the Gospel, repented of their sins, and invited Jesus into their hearts, can have a religious identity. Even within the confines of the church, the Cosmic Narrative suggests, there are

many who will not be saved because they have not truly had a personal salvation experience.

American Narrative: Communal Religious Identity

In contrast, the American Narrative suggests that not only is a "Christian nation" possible, but that it has indeed happened in the history of the United States. This vision of religious identity has communal and national qualities. In this vision, the United States, as a people combining Christian piety and a Protestant work ethic with republican and free-market values, can be a beacon of prosperity and hope to the world—and the *true* American community, as the protagonists of the narrative, are those who understand and share that vision for the country. And while the nation may not face judgment in the final reckoning that takes place outside chronic history (as befitting the American Narrative's nested position inside the larger timeline of the Cosmic Narrative), America will most certainly face God's judgment *as a nation*. The presence of godly *individuals* within an increasingly-ungodly nation will not be enough to save the nation from divine wrath.

The contemporary American Narrative's appeals to collective religious identity set the stage for a drama of collective blessing—or collective judgment. The narrative casts its protagonists in the role of the Israelites of the Old Testament, continually facing the choice between following God's ways or religious compromise. If they follow God's ways, they will reap the benefits of God's blessing; if they compromise or backslide, they will suffer God's wrath and judgment against the people with whom God has made a covenant. Jerry Falwell, for example, reviews several Bible verses promising ruin to nations that forget God, concluding that "America will be no exception […] If she forgets

God, she too will face His wrath and judgment like every other nation in the history of humanity."[19]

Moreover, in a manner similar to the individual in the Cosmic Narrative, the nation must experience true religious conversion and follow God with its whole heart, mind, and strength. All of the nation's institutions must be subjected to God's sovereignty; cultural artifacts must promote God's values, social and family relationships must reflect the divine order, and perhaps most importantly, the government must be reformed to more closely align with God's law.

Just like nominal Christianity or "works righteousness" in the Cosmic Narrative, the presence of theistic civil religious symbology *alone* will not be enough to preserve the nation from wrath. As Pat Robertson writes: "Do we suppose that we will be spared the judgment of a righteous God just because we mouth religious platitudes and sing 'God Bless America'?"[20] Robertson further emphasizes the sense of collective responsibility in arguing that the liberals who are risking the nation's destruction "speak of the desire to be free from religion, free from religious restraint, and free to 'do their thing,' regardless of its effect on the rest of us."[21]

Falwell further explicates the relationship between the individual and the corporate in the American Narrative, writing that "a nation must be willing to submit both individually and corporately to God's authority in order to experience God's blessings."[22] While individual salvation and individual spirituality play a role in this edifice of identity, they are ultimately a part of the religious identity of the nation as a whole. This confers a great deal of weight on political decision-making, as such decisions become wrapped up in the question of American national identity; will citizens make

political choices that preserve America's Christian heritage and thus save the nation from judgment, or choices that undermine that heritage and thereby condemn the collective whole?

For in this construction of American identity, it truly is the nation's heritage that is at stake. Just as *The Purpose-Driven Life* roots the individual's religious identity within God's purposes for that individual's life, rhetors appealing to the American Narrative root the nation's collective Christian identity in the purposes and intentions of those who founded the nation. That category not only includes the founding generation of the United States—the signers of the Declaration of Independence and framers of the Constitution—but also their spiritual forebears in the Puritans and the First Great Awakening. These forebears, the American Narrative suggests, established Calvinist-leaning Protestantism as a form of national cultural religion; even if the founders themselves may have had a more diverse array of religious beliefs, the (Reformed Protestant) Christian consensus was strong enough to produce a normative collective Christianity that was potent enough to invoke God's providence and blessing upon the enterprise as a whole.

Further, the American Narrative argues that the nation's founders understood collective religious identity as a controlling force in establishing the definition for terms like "freedom" and "liberty." As Kennedy and Newcombe write, those terms "cannot properly be defined without considering purpose: that for which something was made. […] Liberty as the founders understood it meant liberty under God—the freedom to do what is right."[23] Falwell similarly writes that "our religious heritage and our liberty can never be separated. America is in trouble today because her people are forgetting the origin of her liberty, and questioning the authority and inerrancy of the Bible."[24] In this

edifice, the definitional terms of American self-understanding can only be understood within the context of a collective religious identity, a "liberty under law"[25] in which republican government is free to be limited in scope because the people as a whole are a moral and upright people who respect "God's immutable laws"[26] and control their own personal, individual desires for the good of the collective whole, rather than "doing what is right in their own eyes."[27]

In the absence of that collective religious identity as a controlling factor, terms like "freedom" and "liberty" have been perverted by contemporary liberals, who do not understand them within their proper context in which people were free "to worship and serve Christ, to do what they believed to be right, according to the Word of God."[28] Rather, the liberal humanists want "freedom *from* law, unless [they] can remake the laws into decrees that legalize license."[29] The individual does play a role in this model of identity, but only insofar as his or her choices reflect the founders' model of liberty as a form of self-control and freedom to do good within the context of biblical law, rather than as a form of license.

Circumference of Identity

Though the American Narrative and Cosmic Narrative differ in their visions of the locus of religious identity, they do both hold out a model of collective identity in some form, even if (in the Cosmic Narrative) that collective cannot have a religious nature in and of itself. The American Narrative suggests collective national religious identity as the expression of the nation's religiosity and cultural consensus, in inviting audiences to identify themselves as part of a Christian nation. While the basic unit of religious identity in the Cosmic Narrative is the individual, there are markers of visible

and invisible collective identity. Visibly, there is the sense of the Church as a whole—not as a vehicle for salvation, but as the persecuted Bride of Christ who will stand triumphant alongside Christ after the events of the end times. Invisibly, as we have noticed, the Cosmic Narrative bifurcates humanity with very clear lines into the saved and the unsaved, the Christians or the damned. Both of these visions of collective identity suggest a circumference for the circle that contains the group with which the audience is invited to identify.

Cosmic Narrative: The Church vs. The World

The Cosmic Narrative articulates a locus of religion where the individual's ultimate fate is determined not by group membership but by their having personally undergone a salvation experience and made Jesus the center of their life. The clear bifurcation between the saved and unsaved is mirrored in another key distinction in the Cosmic Narrative's articulation of group identity: the division between the Church and the World. The Church is Augustine's invisible church, those who are regenerated by Christ and born again; the World is everyone and everything else.

This split draws primarily from language in the New Testament which was written to and by persecuted Christians seeking to define, understand, and encourage their community in the midst of suffering. True Christians, the narrative suggests, will never be accepted by the world, a vision based on Bible verses like James 4:4, which states that "friendship with the world means enmity against God."[30] The church is to remain set apart and holy, rather than compromising with the pagan world in the pursuit of temporal power. LaHaye writes that seeking friendship or acceptance from the world (and inevitably compromising one's faith in order to receive friendship or acceptance) is a sign

that a Christian does not have faith in the power of Christ: "The only time Christians have the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit at their disposal is when they are obedient to the will of God. When they disobey God and make alliances with the world, they are entering into a powerless state that will enmesh and ruin them."[31] In this model, the world is and always will be necessarily opposed to the will of Christ; those who love Christ must reject the world.

Persecution by the world is put forward as a marker of the strength of one's faith; 2 Timothy 3:12 states that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."[32] The Cosmic Narrative presents the early church, a tight-knit group of believers who faced arrest, violence, and martyrdom at the hands of the Roman Empire for their beliefs, as the ideal for Christianity. Though Christians in America do not face violent martyrdom or legal suppression (with a strongly-implied "yet"), the idea of persecution still plays a central role in the aspirational narratives of contemporary evangelical Christianity. Modern Christians are persecuted now, according to the Cosmic Narrative, not by imprisonment or lions in the gladiatorial ring, but by ridicule and mockery from nonbelievers, and by a systematic attempt to silence Christianity in the public square. LaHaye, for example, writes that "Christianity is either ridiculed, misrepresented, or ignored" on television[33]. Robertson similarly argues that those (like him) who speak the truth are subjected to "libel and scorn" and a "torrent of unwanted vituperation."[34] Evangelical Christians, writes Gary Bauer, are uniquely singled out by the media for attack: "While we are constantly warned to be 'sensitive' in how we depict or talk about various ethnic and racial groups, apparently in Hollywood 'Christian-bashing' is acceptable entertainment."[35]

But the explicit, overt media ridicule reserved for evangelical Christianity or for Christian public figures like Pat Robertson or Tim LaHaye is presented as simply a more public and overt example of the microaggressions that evangelical Christians throughout the country experience (or simply fear) every day. As Robertson writes, "[Satan] has rendered Christians ever so slightly embarrassed about being Christians. [...] They're afraid of being categorized as religious freaks, or perhaps old-fashioned or out-of-step with the world. They are nervous about being discovered in prayer or other attitudes perceived as different."[36] Falwell similarly suggests that these microaggressions are part and parcel of being truly saved:

> When you got saved, you probably thought everyone would pat you on the
>
> back and tell you, 'Boy, you're a great guy.' You went back to work; and
>
> instead of your friends cheering you and praising you, they laughed,
>
> criticized you, and whispered about you behind your back. [...] You found
>
> opposition from everybody everywhere. Opposition is part of the hardness
>
> you have to endure.[37]

The Cosmic Narrative suggests that another form of microaggression against Christians is blatant blasphemy, both in the media and in everyday culture. This is presented not only as a special form of sin (as a violation of the Third Commandment not to take the name of God in vain) but also as a libelous attack on God and, by extension, God's followers:

> To libel means intentionally to write things about other persons that are
>
> false and would publicly injure their reputation or expose them to public
>
> ridicule. While such attacks on individuals remain illegal today, in

previous years, such attacks on God and Christ fell under the laws

constructed to protect reputations—the laws against libel.[38]

The ridicule and blasphemy faced by both everyday Christians and by prominent

Christian public figures, though, is not merely presented as a form of oppression in and of

itself, but also as a precursor to more explicit forms of oppression. As Kennedy and

Newcombe write:

> One time I was preaching about the new tolerance, and after the service
>
> someone who survived the Holocaust said to me, 'You are exactly right.
>
> That is what happened to the Jews. They first ridiculed them. They
>
> laughed at them. [...] And then they began to condemn them, then to
>
> silence them. They began to persecute them. And then they began to
>
> imprison them. Finally they began to kill them.' The new tolerance truly
>
> leads to intolerance.[39]

It is important to note the historical linkage at work here: in linking the plight of ridiculed

Christians in the United States to that of Jews in Nazi Germany in the years prior to

Hitler's Final Solution, Kennedy and Newcombe present evangelical Christians not only

as a minority but as a minority on a par with Israel, God's chosen people. This kind of

typological linkage is not simply a historical analogy, but draws in past and present,

connecting contemporary evangelicals to the sufferings of the Jews in the Bible book of

Esther, the sufferings of the early Christians under the boot of Rome, the dangers faced

by the modern state of Israel in the Middle East, suggesting that they are all part of a

grand and overarching story of the universe in which future events fulfill and make sense

of past ones. Christians in the Cosmic Narrative are not the holders of political power;

they are the victims of oppression, enjoying (temporary) protection only because American laws do not (yet) permit the open persecution of Christianity.

The fact that such ridicule can exist in a country where the majority is nominally Christian only serves to prove that the *true* Christians, the evangelicals, are a minority in the culture. The fact that evangelicals are offended by the ridicule of Christianity and blasphemy against God is a sign that they have a true reverence for God; the toleration of such mockery by the nominal Christian majority is a sign that they do not take their faith seriously enough. As Kennedy writes:

> I don't know about you, but it hurts and offends me to hear God's name used in vain. It's almost like a physical slap sometimes. We were silent when we should have spoken up, and as time has passed, the blasphemy no longer fazes us as a society anymore. More and more people are doing it. That does not make it right, however.[40]

The Cosmic Narrative draws parallels between the characterization of the contemporary epidemic of ridicule and blasphemy (which will lead to more blatant persecution down the line) and the persecution faced by the early church from the Roman imperial authorities. Perhaps the most significant of these parallels is the narrative's explanation of the origin of the attacks against Christians: Satan. As we have seen, the overarching theme of the Cosmic Narrative is that even before creation, the cosmos was already embroiled in a constant and largely-invisible spiritual war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. One of the strategies used by the demonic side of this spiritual war is to discredit and attack God's loyal soldiers, the true Christians—both overtly through persecution and ridicule, and covertly by promoting a nominal and "respectable"

Christianity that compromises with the world, rather than challenging it in the name of Christ, as LaHaye writes:

> Many so-called 'Christian' churches today […] are not Christians at all and are condemned by the Savior Himself because they preach a message other than the one laid down in the Word of God. In reality, they are the synagogue of Satan, not the Church of Jesus Christ.[41]

Unlike the overt persecution of the church, which "only causes the Church to flourish and continue in a perpetual state of revival,"[42] the acceptance of a nominal and syncretist form of Christianity by the powers of this world dulls the church's spiritual zeal by making it a church *of* the world, not just a church *in* the world. LaHaye suggests that Constantine's conversion and establishment of what would become the Roman Catholic Church are a cautionary tale, arguing that when the church was "married to governmental authority and elevated to a place of acceptance, it declined in spiritual blessing and power."[43] While Satan is still behind the ridicule and blasphemy of the contemporary world, intended to draw nominal Christians away from evangelical Christianity and demoralize the true Christians, the presence and popularity of nominal Christianity does not pose a risk to the Cosmic Narrative's construction of true Christianity as a minority set in opposition to the world. On the contrary, the existence of a nominal, compromising Christianity only bolsters the claim, by making the mainline Protestant denominations and Roman Catholicism the unwitting tools of the Satanic war against God's true army.

Further, the Cosmic Narrative suggests that true Christians are the minority in culture, and will be until the final judgment; the majority of people are too set in their sinful ways, too unwilling to face their sins, repent, and accept Christ's salvation, to be

truly saved. Kennedy and Newcombe, for example, suggest that "about half of the professing Christians in America today"[44] are really nominal and lukewarm Christians who have never truly undergone a conversion experience and been born again; similarly, LaHaye writes that in today's society, "the Bible is not believed by the majority of people" because of the attempts by Satan (working through "skeptics in education, the entertainment industry, science, and even the liberal ministry") to discredit it,[45] and that "a majority of the adult population of the earth have followed [Satan] in his rebellion against God."[46] The doctrines of original sin and total depravity paint a rather pessimistic anthropological picture, suggesting that when given the opportunity to do so, most people will either sin against the will of God or grow so comfortable as to forget God.

In positing true Christians as an embattled and persecuted minority who are set upon by an evil and fallen World, this vision of identity sets up a Manichaean world that sees any form of "compromise" as a grave danger to one's soul and one's salvation. The Cosmic Narrative suggests that any Christian who does not face ridicule or persecution (if only in the form of microaggressions), or who does not wince inwardly when someone takes the name of God in vain, is probably enjoying his or her comfort and respectability because he or she has compromised too much with the world. Rather than compromising with the World, the object for the Christian in the Cosmic Narrative is to save people out of the World and bring them into the invisible Church.

American Narrative: The Silent Majority

In contrast to the Cosmic Narrative's vision of the bulk of humanity as fallen and inclined to do evil, the American Narrative suggests that the default position of the *American* people is to do the right thing; when left to their own devices and freed from

any kind of corrupt outside influences, the narrative suggests, Americans are a basically godly and virtuous people who would choose righteousness for themselves and their families and limited government to protect them from evil abroad. This vision offers a certain amount of fluidity for the circumference of the subject-position in the narrative— a circumference that can be strategically broadened and narrowed to paint a picture of a vast "silent majority" of white, middle-class, suburban or rural, patriotic evangelicals who hold to the ideal of the nuclear family, who are being unwittingly cheated out of "their" country by a shadowy cabal of coastal, urban secular humanist elites, who use poor urban people of color as their unwitting stooges.

American Narrative rhetors invite their audience to see themselves as part of a vast majority of "pro-family" Americans who have "etched on the hearts […] the simple belief that we are 'One Nation, Under God.'"[47] These Americans want to raise their families to be wholesome and good, as part of a nation motivated by its religious faith. As Gary Bauer writes:

> Religion has motivated the average citizen as well. […] Americans may not cite Bible verses when they debate these issues, but they certainly base their opinions on their understanding of 'right or wrong.' And our moral concepts evolve directly from our religious faith.[48]

This vision of the American people as essentially wise and wholesome is not presented as a contradiction to the Christian theological concepts of original sin and total depravity; these notions are present in the American Narrative as well, particularly in the idea that the founding generation crafted the Constitution as an explicitly Protestant document reflecting a pessimistic anthropology. Rather, the construction of Americans as a

fundamentally-good people is rooted in American exceptionalism, and particularly the

American Narrative's presentation of American history as rooted in the Puritan vision for

the world. Dobson, for example, writes:

> I'm encouraged to report that hope does thrive, and that it emanates from
>
> the collective wisdom of the American people. We should never
>
> underestimate the ability of our countrymen to choose between good and
>
> bad alternatives. This characteristic has prevailed within us for nearly 300
>
> years, going back to the influence of the Puritans and the framers of the
>
> U.S. Constitution.[49]

Because this silent majority continues to be influenced by the Christian consensus that

was in place until the middle of the previous century, they maintain a (steadily declining)

remnant of the Puritans' worldview even though most of the silent majority are not born-

again Christians. LaHaye, for example, suggests that while only about 30% of the

American adult population is born-again (and thus could be expected to "vote for

morality […] if the issues were made clear"), they are joined by another 30% of the

population who are "pro-moral religious" mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics,

Mormons, and Jews, and yet another 20-30% who are "idealistic moralists" who "were

raised in a Christian consensus and possess a God-given, intuitive moral conscience."[50]

To the extent that the silent majority is not standing up for the moral values they

purportedly hold, it is because they have been indoctrinated and deceived from childhood

by secular humanists who seek to undermine the traditional American family. LaHaye

and Noebel, for example, argue that America has more "self-centered people" today than

ever before not because of original sin (which would suggest that Americans, like all

other humans, are inherently inclined to be self-centered), but rather because they were raised too permissively: "Children raised without loving parental correction grow up to be self-centered and selfish, and their attempt to be independent or autonomous leads them to futility or chaos."[51] Similarly, LaHaye and LaHaye write that millions of Americans have been "educated—or indoctrinated, depending on your point of view—by secularists" and, as a result, "usually accept liberal moral values for themselves and for society in general."[52] This leads them to conclude that if the nation turns around and returns to God's ways, God's judgment may not fall on the nation as a whole, but rather on "those who have indoctrinated and educated people" into godless values.[53]

Furthermore, Americans have allowed themselves to become too comfortable, producing faith that is "a mile long and an inch deep"; the prosperity brought about by the hard work and Christian consensus of America's forebears is a double-edged sword, producing a people who "seek comfort rather than growth" and who see themselves as "the final arbiters of righteousness, the ultimate rulers of our own experience and destiny," rather than submitting to God's authority.[54] The comfort and ease in which they live causes them to remain unaware of the threat to their lifestyle posed by secular humanism; those who accept the American Narrative accept the task of "awaken[ing] the 85 to 90 percent of Americans—Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Mormon, Muslim—to the true condition of the country."[55]

Agency plays a key role in all of these explanations for the silence of the majority of "pro-moral Americans" while the nation experiences ongoing moral decline; the American Narrative suggests that the American people are experiencing indoctrination, loss of morals, and increasing chaos not (as total depravity would suggest) because they

have not experienced God's grace and therefore are naturally inclined to make choices that lead them further away from God, but because they are "sheep" who have been passively led astray by "evil shepherds."[56] Americans are still characterized as basically good people who have gone wrong by failing to defend themselves, rather than basically fallen and sinful people who cannot defend themselves against the demonic onslaught without divine assistance. The solution, therefore, is not merely to pray that God blesses the nation with spiritual revival—though that is certainly a necessary component of the solution—but rather to take *action* in culture by supporting and voting for pro-moral candidates, taking part in cultural activism to stem the tide of pornography, profanity, and blasphemy, or working to retake their public schools and other public institutions for family values.

The Role of Power

Both narratives' visions for the circumference of group identity articulate a particular relationship between the audience/protagonist and the structures of economic, cultural, and especially political power. As the oppositional stance of "church versus world" in the Cosmic Narrative might suggest, that narrative articulates a subject-position that stands in wary opposition to the powers-that-be; if the powers of "the world" are not explicitly aligned against evangelical Christianity, they are at least not to be trusted, and certainly not to be pursued. The American Narrative, meanwhile, sets out a more ambiguous image of political and cultural power structures in which they occupy an established sphere and fulfill an established set of functions in both God's order for human civilizations in general and the United States in particular. If the powers of the world, guided by godly people, remain within their spheres and fulfill their functions,

then they can be forces for good as well as evil. However, if they break from those divinely-ordained forms, they become a force for oppression and persecution.

Cosmic Narrative: Oppositional/Wary

Taken on its own, the Cosmic Narrative has a tendency to present the temporal "powers that be" as untrustworthy allies at best, adversaries at worst. This is partially due to the portrayal in premillennial theology of the political, cultural, and economic elites as being in the witting or unwitting service of Satan as the Last Days approach. Stephen O'Leary notes that Christianity's apocalyptic tradition, when interpreted literally, takes a rather dim view of the political and temporal powers-that-be. This is understandable as a historical phenomenon, given that the apocalyptic narratives were first developed during the first few centuries of Christianity when the Christian community was suffering from persecution at the hands of the religious and political authorities. O'Leary notes that Revelation depicts the temporal political powers "in demonic terms," tying them to the agenda of Satan himself.[57] This eschatological narrative served a constitutive function, giving meaning to the persecution Christians were suffering by suggesting that God was allowing the evil Roman authorities to rule "only by a mysterious divine permission" and that the Roman Antichrist would ultimately join his master, Satan, in eternal banishment to the lake of fire.[58]

Historically, the Christian tradition steered away from this oppositional view to temporal power after the Roman emperor Constantine publicly converted to Christianity in 313 CE and, later, made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire and the Empire the official defender of theological orthodoxy. Obviously, the Roman Emperor's conversion from the chief persecutor of Christianity to the chief defender of

the orthodox faith could not be easily reconciled with an eschatological vision that painted him as the Antichrist, a demonic figure in league with Satan himself. This led to two eschatological innovations: a role for a mighty defender of the faith in the last days, and—much more prevalently—a new interpretation of the eschatological passages of Scripture that read them as allegorical or symbolic language, rather than as literal descriptions of phenomena that would occur within the context of predictable, chronic history.

The latter shift, from a literal and historic apocalyptic eschatology to a more spiritual and allegorical view, is generally associated with Augustine of Hippo, one of the most significant theologians in the history of Christianity and a key figure in the overall transition of Christianity from a persecuted religion out of power to the official religion of empire. The new eschatological hermeneutic developed by Augustine and other theologians during that era (known as amillennialism) enabled the eschatological moment to be put off indefinitely, suggesting a discontinuity between the *chronos* time of the present historical moment and the sacred *kairos* time of the End Times as prophesied in Scripture. The significance of this moment in the history of the church is not lost on evangelical and fundamentalist theologians; Tim LaHaye suggests that the move to an allegorical hermeneutic of eschatology in particular was a significant moment in the spiritual corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, when "theology and philosophy supplanted the study of Scriptures."[59]

This allegorical and spiritual hermeneutic—and its neutral to positive stance toward temporal political powers—remained largely intact even among the Protestant sects that split off from Roman Catholicism during the Reformation. Though the Radical

Reformation saw occasional outbreaks of millenarianism in isolated cities (such as John of Leiden in Münster), the major theological figures of the Protestant Reformation (Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox) held largely to Augustine's amillennial interpretation as they sought alliances with the established political powers of the day or held political power themselves.

The nineteenth century was the significant articulation point for evangelical eschatology, as the explosion of knowledge in the physical sciences led to an environment in which Protestant theologians believed that science, history, and Scripture were aligned with one another—and that much like nature for the scientist, the Bible could function for the theologian as *the* source of encrypted, hidden, but discoverable truths not only about God, but also about science, history, and the future.[60] When this hermeneutical approach was applied to eschatology, it effectively reunited the *chronos* and *kairos* that were separated from one another by the amillennial approach that took hold during Augustine's time, giving form to an eschatological narrative that took place *within* history (or, at least, at the culmination of history) rather than *outside* it. The most lasting result of this interpretive framework in eschatology was premillennial dispensationalism, the apocalyptic timeline developed by John Nelson Darby and (largely) adopted by the fundamentalist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This new approach, which is described by its proponents as a recovery of the theology of the early church, also has the early church's tendency to view temporal political powers as hostile entities. Timothy LaHaye, for example, writes in *Revelation Unveiled* that "human beings look favorably on government as a great help to them,

whereas God looks on government as a great hindrance to them, as does anyone who has studied history and observed government's bestial treatment of humanity."[61] The opposition of the powers-that-be to the true Christians functions constitutively, with fundamentalists (particularly after the Scopes trial) portraying themselves as the faithful "remnant" of true Christians holding firm to their beliefs amidst the corruption of the mainline churches and the skepticism of the public at large. Premillennial dispensationalism gave meaning to the mockery and revulsion directed by "the world" at the fundamentalists, suggesting that it would ultimately give way to vindication during the coming tribulation, when Christ's faithful would be raptured away to paradise while the rest of the world quite literally went to hell.

Premillennialism is not the only force that guides the Cosmic Narrative toward skepticism or opposition to the powers-that-be. Also at work is the strong thread of persecution within evangelical aspirational rhetoric. The idea that persecution is a sign of righteousness, that one is truly standing for the faith—and, conversely, that seeking acceptance from the powers-that-be is a sign that one is compromising with evil rather than standing up to it—implies that the powers-that-be are inherently hostile to true Christianity. The ideal Christians in the Cosmic Narrative—the early church—were a persecuted minority standing against the power of Rome, experiencing spiritual and numerical growth not despite their conflicts with temporal or political power but because of them. Ongoing persecution and the ever-present possibility of martyrdom strengthened the early Christians by making their faith more dynamic and central to their identity, and by preventing them from getting too comfortable or settled in their faith.

American Narrative: Elites

The American Narrative's portrayal of the American people as a basically good people led astray by bad leadership has some surface similarities with the Cosmic Narrative's mistrust of the powers-that-be, but presents a much more ambiguous view of the political and cultural powers. While the American Narrative also suggests that the present powers-that-be are standing in opposition to Christianity and persecuting Christians through ridicule and blasphemy (with the intention of changing the laws and culture in order to increase the tenor of that persecution), this is presented as a temporary situation. The stance of those currently in political and cultural power in opposition to the true Christian faith is not an inherent or inevitable characteristic of political and cultural power, as the Cosmic Narrative would suggest; rather, the current powers' hostility to true Christianity is a temporary situation brought about because the silent majority were lulled into complacency and overwhelmed by indoctrination.

The present situation is thus not a natural state of affairs, but a violation and an imposition on the natural state of affairs; those who presently hold power are thus usurpers who have, through a strategy of deception, taken away the inheritance that belonged to the *true* American people, the pro-moral and pro-family majority. Thus, the proper response is not for the church to reject political and cultural power, for fear of compromising with those who are persecuting the church; rather, Christians are called to awaken their fellow pro-moral Americans to exercise their agency and retake political and cultural power from those who stole it, to restore the Christian consensus to the culture and return the nation to its mission of spreading the intertwined gospels of

evangelical Christianity, republican government, and muscular capitalism to the lost nations of the world.

It is difficult to sustain the Cosmic Narrative's critique of political and cultural power as inherently corrupting or evil while also presenting people like Winthrop, Washington, and Madison as heroes and great leaders who understood that the role of government was to be a means by which Christian morality and Christian values could not only be enacted and protected in society, but also spread throughout the world. In the American Narrative, the powers of government, culture, and education do not represent an inherent danger to Christians; it is only when those powers exceed their divinely-ordained authority and begin to impede on the spheres of society that God intended for the church and the family that they threaten the divine order.

LaHaye, for example, counters those who believe that clergy should not be politically active by writing that "we wouldn't have to, if politicians would confine themselves to government, economics, and national defense, but today they are intruding into areas of morality and the family, attempting to legislate outside their domain."[62] When government acts outside its domain, it usurps not only the authority of other human institutions like private business, the church, or the family, but also the authority of God; by making people dependent upon government rather than on their own work or private charity, government replaces God. Tim and Beverly LaHaye, for example, complain that "society is being conditioned to look to government, not God, for guidance,"[63] and Falwell similarly laments that "today Americans […] are looking to government rather than to God, who ordained government."[64] Whitehead suggests that faith in government (which he roots in Marxism) has risen to the level of a "state religion" which "is already

involved in a bitter conflict with the religion of Christ."[65] The argument that the false religion of government is usurping the authority of God implicitly shifts the ground for the dispute over the size of government: those who argue for government to have a more active role in the economy and society are no longer simply providing a different solution to society's problems, but are marked as blasphemers who seek to undermine not only the divinely-ordained hierarchy of human power, but also God God's-self.[66]

In the American Narrative, *contra* Reagan, government itself is not the problem. The mere fact that government *has* a role in the divinely-ordained hierarchy suggests a space in the American Narrative for government to be a force for good rather than a threat to God's social order. Falwell writes, for example, that government is part of God's overall design for "a republic governed by laws predicated on the Bible"—including free-market capitalism and trusting private charity to assist the poor, which he suggests are biblically-rooted ideas.[67] Similarly, Whitehead writes that "as long as the state does not claim absolute authority and autonomy, it can exercise a lawful role in establishing order and civil justice."[68]

It is important to note that the limited role for the state in the American Narrative is not similar to the libertarian vision of a completely *laissez-faire* government that exercises as little control as possible over all aspects of society, including public morality. Rather, as Whitehead suggests, "part of the state's task of protecting the good [...] is to create an atmosphere where men can be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."[69] As discussed above, this reflects a definition of terms like "freedom" and "liberty" in which the role of the powers-that-be is to enable people to make *good* choices to the benefit of the collective whole, rather than giving them license to make any choices

no matter their consequences for the nation. Ultimately, the powers-that-be—including not only governmental and cultural powers, but also the institutions of the church, private business, and the family—must recognize that they are exercising authority that has been *delegated* to them by God, to provide concrete and contextualized enactments on earth of God's timeless and universal laws.[70]

The American Narrative's positioning of power not as inherently evil but as a neutral tool to be used by Christians for the protection of the family and the good of the gospel is, like the vision of the Christian consensus and the Christian nation, rooted in the narrative's presentation of American history. Whitehead, for example, writes that the founders' emulation of English common law was a good understanding of the limits and role of government, producing a Constitution that "acknowledg[ed] that a system of absolutes exists upon which government and law can be founded."[71] Similarly, Falwell writes:

> When America was founded, the legitimate purpose of government was to
> protect the lives, the liberties, and the property of the citizens. It was not
> the purpose of government to redistribute resources or to enforce any
> particular results in the relationships and dealings of the citizenry among
> themselves. Simply stated, government was to protect the God-given
> rights of the people.[72]

The emphasis on "God-given rights" here is important to the American Narrative's formulation of political and cultural power; the narrative suggests that the founders had a clear vision not only that rights came from God, but that the specific content of those rights could be derived from the divine revelation of Scripture. This conception of natural

law was so central to the "Christian world-and-life view" of the founders, write Kennedy

and Newcombe, that it was even central to the vision of non-Christian founders like

Benjamin Franklin; all of the founding generation, they write, were steeped in

Blackstone's conception "that natural law comes from God (in nature) and that revealed

law also comes from God (in revelation, in the Holy Scriptures)."[73]

Challenges and Resolutions

It is evident that there are some significant points of dissonance between the two

narratives' frameworks for the audience/protagonists' subject-position, group identity,

and relationship to power. Some of these challenges can be addressed by overtly shifting

the circumference of identity based on one's situations or purposes; Timothy LaHaye, for

example, differentiates between religious organizations with which he is willing to

cooperate as a pastor on matters of evangelism and theology and those with which he is

willing to cooperate on issues of political and social activism. This enables him to

articulate both the narrow vision of a "biblical fundamentalist with strong doctrinal

positions" of a restricted community of born-again Christians as a minority within the

larger culture, and a broader vision based in the American Narrative of a silent majority

of pro-moral Americans who want a return to the traditional values of their forebears.[74]

This call for "cobelligerency," as Schaeffer called it, is echoed by numerous rhetors who

perceive the threat of secular humanism as being great enough to put aside theological

differences for the good of the greater whole.

The narratives also create challenges and dissonances for subject-position identity

for those who are implicated (to a greater or lesser degree) as subjects in both narratives,

particularly with regards to their relationship with the political and cultural powers-that-

be, because they set out different (and contradictory) paths for the relationship between their subject/protagonists and the political and cultural powers of this world.

The historical appeals used within the Cosmic Narrative's motif of persecution pose a problem for the American Narrative's image of the silent majority. In the Cosmic Narrative, the persecution of the early church is seen not only as a sign of righteousness but also as a force used by God for the strengthening of the church's faith. For the first centuries of its existence, the Christian movement was not only a minority movement but a small one at that, and in many of the stories about persecution in the New Testament book of Acts, the persecution of Christians by the legal authorities was condoned or even demanded by the general populace. In other words, the church stood at odds not only with the powers-that-be, but with the majority of the public as well, giving rise to a formulation of "the world" that included not just the elites and the authorities but every person or institution that was not of Christ. The contemporary parallel to the popular aspect of those persecution narratives is the suggestion that born-again Christians in modern-day America will experience persecution not only in the form of ridicule or censorship by the elites in the culture industry, but also in the form of ridicule and microaggressions from co-workers, neighbors, friends, or family, even if their persecutors are nominally Christian. This model threatens to indict the silent pro-family majority of the American Narrative; if the persecution motif in the Cosmic Narrative is carried through, not only does this silent majority passively condone the microaggressive mockery of born-again Christians, but many members of that same majority are actively participating in it.

These dissonances are addressed through two strategic appeals. The first strategic appeal, the *via negativa*, is to a common enemy, one that can be presented as an alternative religion that is simultaneously the once and future enemy and persecutor of the true Christian faith (for the Cosmic Narrative), and a massive breach and usurpation of the social structure ordained by God for the nation God has chosen to spread the gospel and freedom throughout the world (for the American Narrative). This common enemy is secular humanism, which is portrayed within the context of the narratives as the demonically-driven force behind the various other threats that face both the American nation and Christianity as a whole.

The second strategic appeal, the *via positiva*, is to the symbols of theistic civil religion as a common set of symbols that are recast as an endorsement not of the vague, ecumenical god of pro-moral cobelligerency between Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and Jews, but specifically as the Christian God calling the nation's evangelicals to lead the nation into a state of (Protestant-flavored) Christian spiritual revival. The conflation of the nostalgic "traditional Americana," which includes the "old-time religion" valorized within the rhetoric of the Cosmic Narrative, with an evangelical form of American Protestantism, functions to code the symbols of civil religion as signs of the true Protestant faith of the nation—signs that can also be used outside the context of the narratives to build alliances among various disparate (religious and non-religious) conservative voices.

Both of these strategies have a similar epistemological pattern in which the resonance between the American and Cosmic Narratives suggest alternative interpretations for the identities they construct (the antagonist-identity of secular

humanism and the protagonist-identity of Protestant Americanism) than those that are prevalent in the wider culture. In the case of the *via negativa*, the American and Cosmic Narratives argue that the *only* true enemy is Satan's agenda of secular humanism, which is presented as the ultimate cause of virtually every bad thing that happens to the United States—including terrorism, economic woes, natural disaster, and moral decline; in contrast, while the wider culture does seek connections between the threats and challenges facing the nation, the idea that a unitary agenda unites them all is not widely accepted, and discussion of "secular humanism" by name is rarely part of the public discourse outside the Christian Right. Similarly, in the *via positiva* case of civil religion, the American and Cosmic Narratives reinterpret civil-religious symbols and rituals not as a means of including and unifying the nation as a whole around a common set of beliefs independent of religion (as the wider culture tends to view them), but as signs that the founders intended for the nation to be dominated culturally and religiously by evangelical Christians.

In both instances, then, the set of meanings produced by the interaction between the American and Cosmic Narratives functions as a kind of special revelation—a form of knowledge which can only be truly comprehended by those who have ears to hear and eyes to see it. At the same time, though, the narratives themselves insist that these truths are accessible to anyone who has a proper interpretation of the commonly-accepted historical record—and, moreover, implies that because these truths are at the center of the American Narrative, they are held in common among Americans, at least on some level. This epistemological ambiguity creates the opportunity and space for the manipulation of identity categories for Christian Right rhetors. On the one hand, their interpretations of

secular humanism and civil religion can serve as a sort of code language that serves to define those who understand the truth from those who do not, and to appeal to their adherents as those who possess the *whole* picture, thereby further reinforcing both the positive and negative identity strategies. On the other hand, by suggesting that such knowledge is (at least on a gut level) understood by everyone, they assert widespread support for their agenda and position the symbols of evangelical Christianity (as they interpret them) outside the realm of argument or disputation in American discourse. This ambiguity in identity also creates several different routes to justify political and cultural power, reinforcing the Cosmic Narrative's discomfort with the "powers-that-be" in the present tense while at the same time undermining that discomfort in the future tense.

The *via negativa*: Secular Humanism

Scholarship on the construction of identity through discourse has long understood the essentiality of difference in defining identity. Stuart Hall, for example, writes that "identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside,' abjected. Every identity has at its 'margin,' an excess, something more."[75] As the circumferences for the circle defining the in-group defined by the American Narrative and Cosmic Narrative compete with one another, the definition of the out-group takes on a more definitional role. Consequently, both narratives present a more or less unified vision for those who stand outside the circle and seek to oppose and oppress those within.

Within the context of the two narratives, secular humanism provides a common enemy whose opposition can not only explain the contradictions between the narratives' constructions of identity, but also provide a transcendent explanation for the multiple

forces perceived to be organizing in opposition to American evangelical Christianity.

Secular humanism is presented as an amoral alternative religion operating in competition

with Christianity—and as such, with an agenda to neuter or eliminate the Christian faith.

While the Cosmic and American Narratives emphasize different aspects of the secular

humanist agenda, the two narratives' portrayals of secular humanism are not in conflict

with one another, in contrast to the dissonances that exist in the two narratives'

constructions of subject-group identity.

Secular humanism bridges the gap between the silent majority and the persecuted

minority in two ways. First, as an alternative religion, it provides an explanation for the

persecution of born-again Christians. Through a sophisticated machinery of

indoctrination and thought control, the secular humanists who run public education and

the culture industry (including Hollywood and the television and radio broadcast

networks) have brainwashed the silent majority of pro-moral Americans into thinking

that born-again Christians are either ridiculous or dangerous. Second, secular humanism

is painted as part of Satan's agenda from the beginning of the world *and* as the

explanation for all of the problems and obstacles facing the United States, thereby setting

up a logic whereby all other antagonists are subsumed underneath the banner of secular

humanism. If one wants to fight America's earthly enemies (Islamic terrorism, the

breakdown of community, economic decline) or Christianity's spiritual enemies (moral

decline, relativism, heresy, disbelief, and ultimately Satan himself), the enemy is one and

the same: the secular humanists who are destroying the nation, undermining Christianity,

and ultimately serving the agenda of Satan. In other words, no matter which of the

Cosmic Narrative's or the American Narrative's circumferences of in-group identity is in

play at any given time, opposition to secular humanism remains a constant and primary concern. This, in turn, requires that one support the Christian Right's ideal form for a prosperous and godly United States against which the secular humanists are fighting.

Secular Humanism as an Alternative Religion

Central to the narratives' conception of secular humanism is the notion that despite secular humanism's self-portrayal as a non-religious viewpoint, it is in fact an alternative religion with its own holy texts, dogmas, and beliefs that are no less real and definable than those of Christians. This idea creates a rhetorical space in which any attempt to enact religious pluralism or religious neutrality in government, media, or culture can be portrayed as part of the secular humanist agenda. If both irreligion and Christianity are religious viewpoints, then neutrality is impossible; those who argue that Judeo-Christian religious values should not occupy a dominant place in the public square are *really* calling for secular humanist religious values to take that dominant position, whether or not they admit or even understand that they are doing so.

Tim LaHaye is perhaps the most prominent voice in presenting secular humanism as an alternative religion. To LaHaye, the scriptures of secular humanism are the *Humanist Manifestos*, a series of three documents (written in 1933, 1973, and 2003) that lay out the views of the religious and secular humanists who signed the documents. The *Humanist Manifestos,* he writes, "are not the weird ideas of a few obscure imbeciles unworthy of our consideration," but rather "the religious beliefs of some of the most influential people in America,"[76] representative of the beliefs of all secular humanists. In contrast to the "nonsectarian religious values" of pro-moral Americans, the Humanist Manifestos suggest that morality is relative and contextual:

> Ask a Roman Catholic, Baptist, Jew, Muslim, Mormon, or Presbyterian, 'Is it wrong to lie, cheat, steal, kill, or commit adultery?' They will usually answer with a resounding yes. But ask a secular humanist, atheist, communist, or socialist, and he'll respond, 'Not always,' 'In some circumstances,' or 'There are no absolute rights or wrongs.' Both answers are based on religion; in fact, both rely on 'Scripture.' The religious answer from the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, the secularists from the Humanist Manifestos I and II.[77]

This is a key pivot point for LaHaye: Not only does he argue that secular humanism *is* a fully-developed religion, but it also opens up the space for him to argue that the "pro-moral" viewpoint he advocates is *not* in itself a fully-developed religion, but is instead a point where numerous other fully-developed religious viewpoints intersect. In this way, he can argue that the American founders truly *did* intend a separation of church and state—but that they did not consider the "nonsectarian religious values" of the "Judeo-Christian Scriptures" to fall afoul of that doctrine. He suggests that deceptively, "religious humanists have labeled their doctrine *secular humanism*, ours *religion*. Then by claiming that morals originated with the teachers of the Bible, they, too, are classified as religious. Thus both religion and morality are excluded from our public schools."[78] The establishment of secular humanism in government, on the other hand, *does* violate the Establishment Clause, since it is a specific religious viewpoint—and, moreover, a viewpoint held by a minority who seek to impose their religion on the God-fearing majority:

> Some of [James Madison's] best arguments on religious freedom and
> separation of church and state are particularly appropriate today, when
> secularists seem to have no aversion to using the awesome power of
> government to advance the religious beliefs of humanism, particularly in
> our government-controlled public schools.[79]

The present situation, then, is (in LaHaye's eyes) completely contrary to the will of the American founders, who intended for government to "accommodate" religion by establishing a common-ground absolute morality with which people of all religions could agree, thus providing the space for religious viewpoints to be expressed as the foundation of the American formulation of human rights:

> The First Amendment has been so distorted that it is producing what it
> was written to prohibit—an established philosophy of secular humanism,
> which in every sense is itself an established religion—and this in a nation
> that once accommodated religion because its founders believed that
> 'unalienable rights' came from God our Creator and were thus
> safeguarded through a relationship with him.[80]

At times, David Barton's understanding of the religious nature of secular humanism would, on its face, seem to disagree with LaHaye's portrayal of secular humanism as a fully-fledged religion. Barton argues that the American founders defined religion as one's beliefs about one's duty to the "Supreme Being," with the presupposition that any true religion would include belief in the supernatural; thus, the "original intent" of the First Amendment does *not* protect atheism, secular humanism, or any other viewpoint that does not include belief in God.

> In earlier decisions on the First Amendment, neither atheism nor secular humanism qualified as 'religions'—for obvious reasons. [...] At a minimum, the Founders identified a religion by its belief in some Supreme Being; without that belief, there could be no 'religion.'[81]

The declaration that secular humanism is a religion that deserves First Amendment protections, Barton argues, makes the position of religious neutrality in government untenable, as government cannot exclude religious viewpoints without promoting *ir*religion, and vice versa: "since either religion or nonreligion will be endorsed by its presence, how can 'neutrality' and 'no favoritism' be maintained under such standards?"[82]

This apparent contradiction on the religious nature of secular humanism is resolved by considering the American Narrative's definition of "religious freedom" under the First Amendment as a form of positive liberty rather than negative liberty. As Kennedy and Newcombe write:

> Liberty has always been endangered—and has been under increasing assault—by those who are not free in Christ. […] The modern humanist is daily on his platform crying out for license. He does not want freedom under law—he wants freedom from law, unless he can remake the laws into decrees that legalize license.[83]

This quotation also illustrates that the language of "religious freedom" cloaks an effective hierarchy of religious values to be respected by government. By conflating "those who are not free in Christ" (in other words, those who are not born-again, evangelical Christians) with secular humanists, Kennedy and Newcombe imply that those who do not

adhere to evangelical Christianity are, to at least some degree, humanists "crying out for license." While non-evangelicals may not be completely humanized (on the following page, Kennedy and Newcombe present a more open circumference that includes "the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Ten Commandments"[84]), they are clearly compromised in a way that the "free in Christ" are not. This hierarchy of values thus places evangelical Protestantism at the head, making evangelicalism the full expression of "religious freedom," with the less-pure versions of Christianity (Roman Catholicism, mainline Protestantism) and conservative Judaism occupying a more ambivalent space (which is, nevertheless, still above that of the secular humanists).

All rhetors within this tradition, however, agree that secular humanism is not a neutral least common denominator upon which to build public and civic institutions in which all can participate regardless of their religious beliefs. On the contrary, they argue, one of the most insidious aspects of secular humanism is its tendency to cloak itself in the language of neutrality, irreligion, or science rather than coming clean about its religious nature. This disguise enables secular humanism to evade the Supreme Court's prohibitions on religion in government—and particularly on the teaching of religion in public schools, where secular humanists are constantly tempting innocent young minds to abandon their Christian faith. The disguise worn by secular humanism includes presenting itself as "open-minded" and "nonjudgmental," in contrast to conservative Christian critics. This is, in reality, a smokescreen to cover up the *in*tolerance of the secular humanist religion towards any belief systems that acknowledge God or God's moral law. As LaHaye writes:

> [T]oday's humanists, who grandly proclaim their tolerance of opposing
>
> views and proudly advocate respect of the opinions of others, become so
>
> vicious in their expressed hatred of Christianity and its absolutes. […]
>
> Because the biblical revelation and moral absolutes of Christianity
>
> comprise 'public enemy number one,' they work relentlessly for their
>
> destruction.[85]

Similarly, Whitehead writes that "the new 'religion' of secular humanism cannot and will not be tolerant of the biblical, Christian values still embodied in the American legal and social structure."[86] This trope of "open-minded hypocrites" enables Christian Right rhetors to set themselves up as the models for the *true* tolerance, in the same way as they are models for the *true* religious freedom. The *false* version of tolerance is "a weakening of the lines between good and evil, right and wrong,"[87] in which "your religious beliefs are no better than anyone else's since, after all, everything is relative."[88] In contrast, the *true* version of tolerance is to "put up with or bear with people who hold to views or beliefs or values or lifestyles that you don't agree with,"[89] but with the implicit understanding that you are both pursuing the same fundamental good—or, as Barton writes:

> Christian principles […] produced America's toleration for other religions;
>
> and while America did legislate according to Christian standards of
>
> conduct for social behavior, it did not tell other religions how, where,
>
> when, or even whether to worship.[90]

The rhetoric surrounding secular humanism is flexible enough that its proponents can be portrayed in both earthly and cosmic terms. In earthly terms, they are hedonists who grate

at the suggestion that there is any absolute moral law to which they adhere (particularly

one which would impede their sexual desires), or they are the brainwashed dupes of the

nation's enemies, who seek to weaken the United States by striking at the family

structure that sits at its foundation. In cosmic terms, they are, wittingly or unwittingly,

fulfilling the agenda of Satan himself to weaken the United States as a missionary nation

to the world, perhaps in advance of the End Times in which the Antichrist will arise and

institute a demonically-inspired world state.

Just as the Cosmic Narrative bifurcates the populace into individuals who are

either "saved" or "unsaved," so too does the Christian Right's narrative construction of

secular humanism suggest that no social institution—government, business, education,

the news media, Hollywood—can remain neutral in the culture war. If a social

institution's choices do not reflect the values of the Christian Right—whether the broader

"coalition" values of the pro-moral movement, or the more narrow values of conservative

Protestantism—then they are reflective of the secular humanist agenda.

This is perhaps most evident in Christian Right rhetors' dismissal of the charge

that they seek to "legislate morality" with the suggestion that any law is, in effect, a

legislation of morality. Kennedy and Newcombe, for example, write:

> To say that morality cannot be legislated is just a lie. The truth is that you
>
> cannot legislate anything but morality. [...] The question is simply, Whose
>
> morality is going to be legislated? It is either going to be God's morality,
>
> as expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Ten Commandments,
>
> or it is going to be man's morality, as expressed in the Humanist
>
> Manifesto, which sanctions everything that used to be called immorality.[91]

In this line of thinking, to the extent that the law permits an act, it encourages it and thereby declares it moral; similarly, any act penalized or prohibited by law is being declared immoral. This logic fuels the more recent suggestion that the successes of the LGBT liberation movement in overturning same-sex marriage bans or passing anti-discrimination laws are dangerous not only for the religious freedom of those who wish to discriminate against LGBT people on religious grounds, but also for the nation's youth. To the extent that the law treats LGBT people equally with cisgender heterosexuals, it is encouraging young people to "experiment" with homosexuality or fluid gender identities.[92] To the extent that the law makes divorce easier to obtain, it encourages couples who are experiencing marital difficulties to get divorced instead of working to reconcile.[93] There is no such thing as a law that is "neutral" on the question of LGBT rights or divorce; if the law treats LGBT people equally with cisgender heterosexual people, or makes it easier for married couples to obtain a divorce, it is encouraging and condoning those acts by exhibiting a moral viewpoint in which such things are permissible.

Secular Humanism At War with Christianity

If religious neutrality in government, society, culture, or the media is impossible, then every cultural institution becomes a battlefield between the "pro-moral" and the secular humanists. This rhetorical form resonates with themes in both narratives. The American Narrative's open-ended teleology suggests that the nation sits on the knife's edge between disaster and blessing, which is ideal for seeing every struggle, no matter how small, as a potential tipping point for the nation's fate. The Cosmic Narrative's overarching theme is that there is a great war between God and Satan that spans all of

space and time. As with much of the rhetoric about secular humanism, the public schools

serve as LaHaye's example:

> Once [secular humanism] is identified as a dangerous religion and
>
> expelled legally from our public schools, it will collapse under its own
>
> weight, for the American people—particularly parents—will never agree
>
> to subsidize the spiritual destruction of their children.[94]

This quotation exhibits as a nuance another crucial aspect of the characterization of

secular humanists. Regardless of the tension between the narratives' construction of

protagonist identity as persecuted minority or the silent majority, the narratives agree that

secular humanism is *not* the viewpoint of the majority; rather, secular humanists are a

minority who have embedded themselves into positions of power in cultural institutions

("government, education, commerce, the media, and in some cases, liberal churches"[95]),

where they will be able to have a disproportionately-large influence on society despite

their small numbers.[96] The secular humanists are aware that their values do not reflect

those of the American majority:

> If [humanist measures] were debated and voted upon by the people, they
>
> would be turned down; yet the politicians blithely enact legislation that is
>
> antithetical to the will of the majority. Have you ever asked why? It is all
>
> very simple, if you face the fact that we are being controlled by a small but
>
> very influential cadre of committed humanists, who are determined to turn
>
> traditionally moral-minded America into an amoral, humanist country. Oh,
>
> they don't call it humanist. They label it democracy, but they mean
>
> humanism, in all its atheistic, amoral depravity.[97]

Because secular humanists understand that their values are in conflict with those of Christians and pro-moral Americans, they seek to maintain their influence by using their positions as elites in the culture industry to engage in a campaign of indoctrination and "mind control."[98] The public education system serves as one of the central settings for this agenda, with the innocence of children heightening the themes of crisis, threat, and fear that pervade both narratives' portrayal of the contemporary era.[99] In this construction of the secular humanist agenda, the humanists, by becoming predominant in the public schools,[100] use education to inculcate children with their morality.

The narratives' portrayal of the dangers of secular humanist public education is rooted in the epistemological resonance between the American and Cosmic Narratives. Both narratives suggest that the ultimate truth holding the universe together is not the impersonal and objective laws of science or mathematics, but rather the personal authority of God the Creator and God's absolute moral law, without which the established laws of science and mathematics would not be trustworthy. Because secular humanists in public school are trying to teach facts without values, the narratives suggest, they are failing at teaching both.

Portraying indoctrination as the means for the spread of secular humanism creates another articulation point for bridging the narratives' competing circumferences of identity. Those members of American Narrative's "silent majority" who support aspects of the secular humanist agenda are doing so not because they would agree with the whole of that agenda, but because they have been deceived and indoctrinated by secular humanists; if they only knew what the secular humanists' goals for society were, they would surely oppose any inkling of secular humanism. At the same time, the narratives

suggest that the reason many members of the majority could be deceived was because they have not truly experienced salvation through Jesus Christ and are not currently active in Bible-believing churches at which the secular humanist agenda is clearly laid out and opposed; thus, in tune with the Cosmic Narrative's identity construction, the indoctrination trope sets out an implicit division between the nominal Christians whose minds were open and susceptible to secular humanist indoctrination, and the truly born-again Christians whose complete Christian worldview insulated and protected them from such deceptions.

Secular Humanism Uniting and Subsuming All Other Enemies

The second means by which the rhetorical construction of secular humanism as *via negativa* bridges the gap between the Cosmic Narrative and American Narrative's conceptions of identity is by subsuming both narratives' articulations of the enemy, thus providing an overarching explanation for all of the problems that face both the United States and the Christian faith. By presenting the struggle between Christianity and secular humanism (or the philosophies that evolved into secular humanism) as a war that has raged continuously throughout both the kairotic timeframe of the Cosmic Narrative and the chronic timeframe of the American Narrative, all of the struggles faced by the faith, the nation, and the individual can ultimately be traced back to Satan's secular humanist agenda.

The rhetoric of secular humanism enables Christian Right rhetors to conflate the agenda of American social liberals with that of the enemy abroad, and to conflate opposition to evangelical Christianity and opposition to the United States, thus setting out a hard external boundary for the circumference of identity. If the enemies of America are

the same as the enemies of conservative Christianity, and if the domestic enemies of the

social conservative agenda are the same as the foreign enemies of the global American

agenda, then the moral duty of opposition to America's foreign enemies must involve

devotion to the social and theological agenda of conservative Christianity. To this view,

American identity is not just capitalism, republicanism, the nuclear family, baseball,

Mom, and apple pie, under the guarding eye of the vague providential god of civil

religion. Rather, because the historic secular humanist (satanic) agenda opposes both

America and Christianity, American identity by implication is explicitly evangelical and

Protestant, drawing moral strength from the inerrancy of the Bible. With secular

humanism in the role of the transcendent earthly cause of every existential threat facing

the United States and Christianity, opposition to the secular humanist agenda becomes

the duty of every American and every Christian—thus creating the conditions by which

rhetors can deftly conflate the identity categories, so that being a good American means

being a good Christian, and vice versa.

The *via negativa* of secular humanism plays a major role in the motif of national

decline. The narratives suggest differing explanations for the purpose and ultimate *telos*

of the nation's decline, but the portrayal of secular humanism enables rhetors to suggest

that the root cause in both instances is the same—the satanically-linked secular humanist

agenda. But this does not mean that secular humanism is a recent threat; in both

narratives, the ideology of secular humanism is linked to the archetypal temptations that

have faced the narratives' protagonists since the very beginning of the story. In the

Cosmic Narrative, for example, secular humanism is only one manifestation of a timeless

idolatry:

But did these humanistic ideas originate with the Greeks? Hardly! They

were a superstitious, polytheistic people, whose religion permeated their

thinking, but even they didn't originate these ideas, for such teachings can

be traced back to Confucius, Buddha, and even Babylon, the source of all

religions.[101]

This reinforces the Manichaean worldview of the Cosmic Narrative: just as truth and

goodness are a unified, single entity, so too are falsehood and evil. Despite the illusion

that there are a multiplicity of non-Christian faiths, those with eyes to see can understand

that whether they are Eastern (Buddhism, Confucianism) or Western (Greek humanism),

all religions (contrasted here with Christianity as a truth that transcends religiosity) are

merely different versions of the single false religion of Babylon.

Similarly, Marshall and Manuel cast the entire American story against the

backdrop of spiritual warfare, suggesting that the recent rise of secular humanism is

merely the latest stage of a satanic plot against Christianity in the New World that goes

all the way back to Columbus's initial "discovery" of the Americas in the fifteenth

century. Satan, realizing that he could not stop God from planting a Christian nation on

the American continent, set out to corrupt the Americans by using "dupes and unwitting

servants" to turn their hearts away from God and toward their own desires, leading to the

self-destruction of the nation either by civil war or by steady internal erosion.[102]

Schaeffer makes a similar argument in *How Should We Then Live?*, suggesting that

present-day secular humanism is merely the evolutionary end result of the humanism of

the Renaissance, "a value system rooted in the belief that man is his own measure, that

man is autonomous, totally independent."[103]

Secular humanists in the United States are also portrayed as being in league—ideologically if not strategically—with the nation's foreign enemies, with the common agenda of weakening the United States and Christianity. For the first decades of the Christian Right's existence (during the Cold War), this theme involved adapting an already-existing trope among American political conservatives that members of the American center-left were (wittingly or not) aiding the Soviet foe in the spread of international communism and the weakening of the United States. This rich rhetorical soil enabled Christian Right figures to utilize already-existing appeals within anti-communist discourse such as the weakening of the American family and the decline of American military masculinity, bringing them to the conclusion that the center of American strength was not just the nuclear family, but the *evangelical Christian* nuclear family, grounded in sound conservative theology. Christian Right rhetors took advantage of the same premises that conservative rhetors had used to argue for greater military belligerence against the Soviet Union and greater order on the home front, but brought them to a more sectarian conclusion. For example, in *Listen, America!* (1980), Jerry Falwell wrote:

> Communists know that in order to take over a country they must first see
>
> to it that a nation's military strength is weakened and that its morals are
>
> corrupted so that its people will have no will to resist wrong. When people
>
> begin to accept perversion and immorality as ways of life, as is happening
>
> in the United States today, we must beware. This should be a danger
>
> signal and a warning to our country. Our enemies know that when we are
>
> weak morally, and when we have lost our will to fight, we are in a

precarious position for takeover. Communists seek to discredit the
authority of the Word of God. Today in America we find the Bible being
questioned by many of our people.[104]

Falwell pivots here from the conservative theme of American military and moral decline

to a case for biblical inerrancy. Because communists seek to undermine American moral

strength, and because American moral strength is based in the inerrancy of the Bible, then

opposition to communism requires not only that one support the military might of the

United States in standing against the global communist agenda, but also that one adapt

biblical inerrancy in order to resist the communist attempt to "discredit the authority of

the Word of God." He further develops this theme several pages later:

While we know that Russians understand only force, we have been busy
taking God out of our society in general and our schools in particular,
instead of thinking about protecting our people. Now our young people are
reaping the consequences of America's sins. And at the Kremlin we are
viewed with derision.[105]

Usually, the portrayal of the nation's enemies as "understand[ing] only force" could be

expected to lead to an argument for military action and against negotiation or

compromise, and Falwell himself certainly makes the argument often enough in *Listen,*

America! that the United States should take a more belligerent stance against the Soviet

Union.

In this instance, however, he pivots the trope in a different direction, arguing that

keeping God in society and in the schools is *itself* an act of force against the Soviet

Union. In doing this, Falwell redefines "force" as primarily a form of *moral* power;

America lacks the force to defeat the Soviet enemy because the nation has sinned in removing God from society and education. The military decline of the nation and the threat to national security posed by the Soviet enemy are merely symptoms of the overall disease of moral decline. If the nation were morally strong and held to biblical inerrancy, Falwell writes, the Soviet threat would be much less intimidating, as America's young people would be imbued with the kind of moral strength that produces the will to fight and to win. Thus, by undermining the authority and inerrancy of the Bible, American social liberals and secularists have put the nation in a position ripe for Soviet takeover, whether or not that was their intention.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Islamic fundamentalists have taken over the rhetorical space of "primary foreign threat" that the Soviet Union occupied until the end of the Cold War. It would seem at first glance to be much more difficult to connect the agenda of liberal secular humanists in the United States to that of fundamentalist Muslims overseas than it was to connect it to the Soviet agenda. While American liberalism could be presented as a moderate, politically-acceptable form of communism or socialism during the Cold War, there is an almost polar opposition between American liberals' support of women's rights, reproductive choice, and LGBT rights (to say nothing of the Christian Right's portrayal of secular humanists as atheists, hedonists, and relativists) and the rigid views of sexuality and gender, tight restrictions on religious and sexual expression, and strict religious law of fundamentalist Islam. It would be difficult to argue that American liberals are ideologically sympathetic to foreign fundamentalist Muslims, as conservative rhetors during the Cold War era argued liberals were toward foreign communist influence.

As a result, Christian Right rhetors in the post-9/11 context rhetorically link secular humanists and fundamentalist Muslims by emphasizing their opposition to God's purposes, as expressed in the Cosmic and American Narratives. Both secular humanists and fundamentalist Muslims are trying to stymie God's purposes for humanity by opposing Christian evangelism—secular humanists by eroding "religious freedom" domestically and undermining the cultural force of Christianity, fundamentalist Muslims by persecuting evangelical Christians in the countries they control. Secular humanists and fundamentalist Muslims also have in common their desire to weaken the United States of America as a militarily- and economically-dominant force in the world.

In a way, this line of reasoning is a classic example of turning a liability into an asset. Because Christian Right rhetors cannot credibly argue that secular humanists are ideologically sympathetic to the fundamentalist Muslim enemies of the Christian United States, they can suggest that secular humanists are so consumed with their opposition to and hatred of evangelical Christianity and American dominance that are willing to ally even with those who would be their bitterest foes in other contexts, so long as it brings down the United States.

Pat Robertson encapsulates this line of thinking by suggesting that liberals are embracing radical Islam as a form of rebellion:

> [Liberals] want to rebel against the established order, and the established
> order of western civilization is basically Christian. [...] And so if
> somebody wants to rebel against that, then anything else goes. So here
> comes an ideology out of Saudi Arabia, 7th Century Saudi Arabia, talking
> about persecution of women, cutting off hands, decapitating people,

butchering whole populations because they happen to share a different

faith and the so-called Left is saying, 'this is the ideology we want.'[106]

This theme has become particularly prevalent since the election of Barack Obama, as many Christian Right figures attempt to reconcile the president's support for LGBT rights and reproductive choice with their opinion that he is, if not secretly a Muslim, at least sympathetic to the agenda of Islamic fundamentalists (including their opposition to both women's rights and LGBT rights) and actively promoting and protecting them both in the United States and abroad. The explanation presented for these seemingly-irreconcilable positions is that both Islamic militants and secular humanism weaken the United States, as Gina Miller of website *BarbWire*[107] makes clear:

> We see what the Muslims are doing in our nation and around the world.
> We see the Muslim sympathizer in the White House (who has allowed
> Muslim Brotherhood operatives into his administration) downplay Islamic
> terror in our nation, mislabeling the jihadi terror attack at Fort Hood as
> 'workplace violence.' We have seen Barack Obama (or whatever his
> name is) arm and finance Islamists in the Middle East. We have seen him
> leave our southern border wide open to illegal aliens and Muslim
> terrorists. We have seen him allow our Ambassador and others to be
> murdered by Islamists in Benghazi. We have seen him purge our military
> and intelligence communities of rational reference to Islamic dangers and
> forbid them from monitoring mosques—all this while he decimates our
> military and floods it with 'out and proud' homosexual deviants.[108]

In this scenario, President Obama is working hand-in-glove with fundamentalist Muslims abroad—if not as an active ally, then as a passive "sympathizer"—with the shared goal of weakening the United States.

The battlefields of the great war between God and Satan and between America and its enemies, are not merely external, however. Because this is a struggle between ideas and ideologies, each person's mind is also a site of pitched battle, with the enemy constantly seeking a foothold. The ideology of secular humanism has the potential to infect not just the body politic—in the form of syncretism and worldliness (in the Cosmic Narrative) and secularism and liberalism (in the American Narrative)—but also the heart and mind of the individual believer. Thus, the believer must be on constant guard to ensure that such thinking does not gain a beachhead in their own mind. This idea looms so large that Tim LaHaye titled his first major book about political activism *The Battle for the Mind* in 1980, writing that "what this life is all about is *THE BATTLE FOR YOUR MIND*: whether you will live your life guided by man's wisdom (humanism) or God's wisdom (Christianity)."[109]

Characterizing secular humanism not just as an external threat but as an enemy within one's own heart and mind makes it all the more dangerous. Instead of being openly antagonistic and, thus, easily identified as an enemy, secular humanism is constantly trying to gain a foothold in the mind of individual believers by sowing doubts about the authority of the Bible and undermining their own simple faith in God. This characteristic binds together the archetypal enemy in the Cosmic Narrative (Satan) and the archetypal enemy in the American Narrative (the liberal elite), as LaHaye writes:

Genesis shows Satan's first attempt at discrediting the Word of God when he asked Eve, 'Did God really say?' and his first attempt at denying the Word of God, 'You will not surely die' (Gen. 3:1-5). Sad to say, the thousands of years since then finds [sic] human beings still believing Satan and not God. Today the Bible is not believed by the majority of people but rather is subjected to the criticism of skeptics in education, the entertainment industry, science, and even the liberal ministry. This skepticism has tragically resulted in the doom of many unsuspecting souls.[110]

This skepticism is not only a danger to the locus of religion in the Cosmic Narrative, the individual; it is also a danger to the whole of the body politic, the locus of religion in the American Narrative, because of the linkage between the nation's spiritual well-being and its well-being in other areas. Falwell, for example, writes that if the American people allow secular humanism to undermine the authority of the Bible—either in their own hearts or in the policy sphere—then they put the whole of the body politic at risk: "Our religious heritage and our liberty can never be separated. America is in trouble today because her people are forgetting the origin of her liberty, and questioning the authority and inerrancy of the Bible."[111]

The Cosmic and American Narratives share a common epistemological outlook, in which God's moral authority precedes and undergirds the recalcitrance of the physical world and the reliability of history. Thus, by undermining the moral authority of God and the faith in one's mind and soul—in both the individual mind and the corporate body politic—secular humanism thus also presents a threat to the physical safety, economic

security, and happiness of both individual believers and the nation as a whole. Even more

perniciously, secular humanism attempts to undermine that connection by suggesting that

the blessings that are promised by both God and history for those who follow God's law

can be achieved without the requirement that one follow God's law.

Because Americans have allowed secular humanism to take hold within the once-

Christian nation, then, disaster—both human-made and natural—is the result. For

example, Marshall and Manuel write:

> The opening pages of this book mentioned some social indicators of the
>
> lifting of God's grace—the holocaust of abortion, the rapidly decaying
>
> moral fabric of our public and private lives, the attacks on traditional
>
> marriage, and the disintegration of the American family. The recent
>
> increase and intensity of natural disasters seem to bear further witness to
>
> it. Earthquakes, floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, and raging forest
>
> fires—if one were to view them with the benefit of time-lapse
>
> photography, it would be difficult not to conclude that God had a
>
> controversy with all humankind, and especially America.[112]

This explanation for natural disaster leaves a certain amount of rhetorical flexibility,

however; rhetors can position natural disaster as a sign that God's judgment has caught

up to the United States and that the nation's chickens are finally coming home to roost, or

that God has not forgotten about the United States and is calling the nation to return to its

covenant with God. The epistemological uncertainty, in which the audience (from their

vantage point) cannot know which of these two explanations is the correct one, assumes

the nation's decline and invites the question of whether or not the nation has passed the "point of no return":

> If God continues to lift His grace, it will not be long before we will be in a state of chaos very much of our own making. Whether the end comes with a bang or a whimper, we seem to be approaching a national point of no return, beyond which it will be too late for America to come back.[113]

Christian Right rhetors are fully aware that much as polite political society (including many of their peers) rejected (or were politically pressured to reject) Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson's explanation of divine wrath for the 9/11 attacks, there is a similar rejection of any explanation for natural disasters but the naturalistic one. The fact that Americans, by and large, seek scientific rather than spiritual explanations for such disasters only serves as more proof of the nation's decline, as Barton and Barna write:

> Unlike today's Americans, who disapprove of God's job performance in handling natural disasters, citizens in earlier generations widely embraced the Bible's teachings that weather calamities and disasters were often a product of our own public sins and wickedness rather than any failure of performance on God's part.[114]

This interpretation also sets up natural disaster as an epistemological test: those who have eyes to see are capable of understanding the whole truth, including the truth of the nation's decline, even as those who lack that epistemological outlook grasp for other explanations. That natural disasters are not interpreted as divine wrath, leading to national self-examination and repentance, is understood as yet another sign that the "Christian

consensus" that guided the nation's founders is no longer present in the United States—and a further sign that the nation deserves God's wrath for abandoning God's moral law.

The theme of the epistemological test occurs throughout the Christian Right rhetoric discussing secular humanism. While the general public see only a series of disparate threats like the crumbling family, rising crime, Soviet belligerence, economic turmoil, and natural disaster, there is a further truth available to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Those who understand the fundamentally *spiritual* root of the threat posed by secular humanism are the only people capable of truly comprehending that all of the problems faced by the United States and by evangelical Christianity can be traced back to the satanic agenda of secular humanism. The portrayal of secular humanists as the natural enemies of Christianity because of the contrast between that religion's absolute moral demands and their own hedonism might run the risk of painting secular humanists as too individualistic and scattered to present a real, coordinated threat. Presenting them as cats-paws for Satan suggests that even though their actions may appear to the untrained eye as disjointed and uncoordinated, those who truly believe and understand that the agenda of evil has a dark mastermind can see how their actions serve Satanic purposes, even if the individuals themselves are not aware of it.

Secular humanism, thus, represents a complete and totalizing existential threat. Because it stands in enmity against both Christian evangelism and American influence, it threatens to box in the universal messages of Christianity and Americanism and cut short American Christians' missionary efforts. Because it threatens the moral fabric of the nation and the individual, it has the potential to open up both to external dangers, not the least of which is God's righteous discipline or wrath. No matter which locus of religion

one adopts, no matter with which narrative one identifies more fully, the secular humanist threat undermines skepticism towards both narratives by suggesting that one set aside whatever differences or questions one may have in confronting this existential threat.

And because the secular humanist bogeyman is a threat to both narratives' conceptions of the subject, it conflates those subjects. If one wishes to support the United States by combatting those who would stand against it, one cannot do so without also accepting (in some form) the evangelical Christian agenda, since the secular humanists' opposition to that agenda—and to the family structures undergirded by the Christian consensus—is part and parcel of their ongoing efforts to weaken the United States. Similarly, those who would be tempted to suggest that God is no respecter of nations and that citizenship in the Kingdom of God necessarily precludes complete citizenship in any of the nation-states of the World, the rhetoric of opposition argues that the same people who oppose Christian evangelism are also trying to undermine the United States, which stands as the last bastion of evangelical hope in a world that is either steadily rejecting God (like Europe), rejecting Protestantism in favor of a socialist Catholicism (like Central and South America), or adopting the enemy religion of Islam (like Africa and Asia). Those who wish to see evangelical Christianity continue as an influential force in the world, thus bringing more souls to Christ, are thus obligated to defend the United States as the bulwark of true Christianity.

The *via positiva*: (Re)interpreting Civil Religion

It is against the backdrop of the *via negativa* that we see the other major strategy for negotiating the gaps in circumference between the Cosmic and American Narratives: the appeal to the symbolic systems of civil religion, wielded in service of the constitutive

American and Cosmic Narratives. In using and recirculating these civil religious symbols, however, Christian Right rhetors recast the ecumenical and nebulous "divine providence" of traditional civil religion into the mold of the evangelical Christian God, and in so doing, harness the constitutive functions of civil religious symbols to suggest an alternative teleological vision for the nation in which "true American values" are recoded as particular to evangelical Christianity, rather than universally accessible by those of any (or no) faith.

In Christian Right discourse, the God of "in God we trust" and "one nation under God" is not the generic, eternally-providential God of the American Jeremiad, Bellah's formulation of civil religion, or Hart's generic formulation of civic piety, but the *Christian* God—and, moreover, a specifically *Protestant* and *evangelical* reading of the Christian God. The archetypal "family" of the pro-family movement is not just the nuclear family living in a house with a white picket fence in an idyllic small-town neighborhood; it is an evangelical Protestant nuclear family in which the father (as spiritual head) and mother (as spiritual caretaker) raise children not just to be good citizens but to be good born-again Christians, ready to fulfill God's religious, economic, and political mission for the United States. The American mission is also recast, articulating a vision in which the nation stands not just as proof that American economic and political ideas work, but that those ideas can only be truly understood and fulfilled by a people who live under a Christian consensus, which grants them the self-control to be able to handle liberty, the moral strength to resist evil, and the blessings of God to protect them from their adversaries.

There are several important implications for this redefinition of civil religion that enable it to negotiate the Cosmic and American Narratives' alternative visions for identity. First, because of the role played by civil religious symbols in the formation of American collective identity, these symbols are invoked not by argument but by assertion; in Aristotelian terms, they loom largest not in the deliberative form, but in the epideictic. In American civil religion, the notion of unity plays a constitutive role; American civil religion asserts that a nation of disparate ethnic groups and backgrounds is held together by a shared commitment to a set of core ideals and values. By asserting that the core ideals and values that unite the nation are rooted in a conservative and sectarian vision of Christian consensus, the American Narrative places that vision beyond the realm of deliberation and debate and puts its imagined interlocutor in the unenviable position of undermining that unity. Further, by casting the United States as God's chosen champion not only of the values of freedom, republicanism, and capitalism, but also of Christian mission and evangelism worldwide, the recasting of civil religion asserts a positive role for American temporal power, undermining the Cosmic Narrative's discomfort with the earthly powers.

Second, because these symbols are utilized throughout American discourses of self-definition, rather than being used more exclusively by the Christian Right, the Christian Right's recast meaning for these symbols exists alongside the more traditional understanding, often without manifesting any externally-visible changes in the re-enactment of the rituals of civil religion. This makes the recast symbols of civil religion function as a sort of code language, another epistemological test that cements the identities of protagonist and antagonist in the narrative. The "true" meaning of civil

religious symbols functions in the same role as special revelation, over against the more expansive traditional meaning of civil religious symbols and general revelation—audible only to those who have ears to hear, and visible only to those who have eyes to see.

Recasting Civil Religion

In the discourse I am examining, the traditionally nonsectarian patriotic and nostalgic symbols of civil religion are used as pivot points to circle the conversation into more specifically religious territory. This is, in a sense, a reverse tactic of that identified by Vanessa Beasley in her exploration of American presidential rhetoric and its use of the notion of shared beliefs (and particularly civil religion) to constitute a unified American people from their diversity and complexity.[115] Christian Right discourse invokes that unity (established, in part, through the rhetorical acts Beasley identifies) and then seeks to define it in more sectarian terms. In other words, the American Narrative captures the idea of mass assent to civic piety in all its forms, and recasts it as assent to specifically evangelical piety.

The traditional understanding of civil religion, first detailed by Robert Bellah in 1967, paints it as an entity ambiguous in its details which occasionally has a prophetic function in holding the powers-that-be to a transcendent moral criterion, but more often serves the priestly function, reinforcing the legitimacy of the state. To Bellah, because one of the purposes of civil religion—particularly in a religiously-plural nation like the United States—is to provide a universal set of symbols and rituals around which the people can gather, it portrays an ambiguous God who lacks sectarian or partisan aspects beyond God's favor for the United States, thus decreasing the likelihood that the civil religion will conflict with any religious viewpoint in the nation (such as evangelical

Christianity) that does not undermine the state. Civil religion, for Bellah, posits a transcendent set of values that can (theoretically) coexist alongside individuals' own religious beliefs while also being accepted by those of differing (or no) religious belief in the supernatural. Hart's thesis on civic piety reframed Bellah's civil-religious construct as a contractual agreement, but did not challenge Bellah's basic definition of the deity at the center of the structure as non-sectarian;[116] even Medhurst's direct challenge to Hart's thesis in 2002 suggested that more specific and sectarian religious appeals appeared *alongside* "traditional" civic piety/civil religion, rather than replacing it.[117]

The Christian Right, however, reads the symbols of civil religion in a different way, as evidenced by this quotation from Pat Robertson in his 2004 book *The Ten Offenses*:

> The Christians who settled America embraced Jehovah as their God.
> When we say, 'In God we trust,' the God we mean is Jehovah of the Ten
> Commandments. When we sing 'God Bless America,' we are singing to
> Jehovah God. [...] We have had no other God throughout the history of
> this nation. The God who rescued the Jews from Egypt is the God of the
> founders of America.[118]

It is interesting that Robertson chooses "God Bless America," written by Irving Berlin in 1918 and revised by him in 1938, as an example, as that song could easily be characterized as the quintessential symbol of a Bellah-esque civil religion. In the lyrics to "God Bless America," a nonsectarian, theologically-indistinct, and benevolent God watches over the United States, blessing the nation and calling attention to the expansiveness of its natural landscape without requiring anything of the nation's people;

though God's guidance is sought, it is within the context of God as guardian/protector, "stand[ing] beside" the nation through tumultuous times ("the night with the light from above").[119]

The historical context of the song only bolsters its claim as an archetype of the civil-religious story Bellah suggests we are telling about ourselves. Irving Berlin had a lifelong public commitment to the Judaism in which he was raised, evidence that the civil-religious vision is not exclusively or normatively Christian. Berlin also was a naturalized citizen, having emigrated as a child with his family from their native Russia as they fled the anti-Jewish pogroms of Tsar Nicholas II.[120] That Berlin, a Jewish immigrant, could identify so strongly with the Protestant-dominated United States as to call it "my home sweet home" calls forth an image of America as a beacon of freedom, safety, and prosperity for people of all faiths.

But Robertson reads "God Bless America" in a different way—and in his reading, he undermines the notion of civil religion/civic piety as a transcendent value set that can coexist with individual sectarian religiosity. Though Robertson's references to God's actions in this quotation are from portions of the Bible that Judaism and Christianity have in common (possibly out of awareness of Berlin's Jewish faith), he makes it clear—both in this passage and throughout the book—that the *true* "Jehovah God" to whom "God Bless America" refers is highly sectarian. Robertson's Jehovah God is not, in any meaningful sense, even the ecumenical "Judeo-Christian" Old Testament God, but the God of "the Christians who settled America": the sectarian, triune God worshipped by evangelical Christians, who will condemn every single person who does not embrace Jesus Christ, including non-converted Jews like Irving Berlin, to an eternity of hellfire.

To Bellah, the symbols of civil religion resist the pull of sectarianism in an effort to serve as a symbol that unifies the nation rather than dividing it. Vanessa Beasley goes further to suggest that when these symbols are used by people in power to constitute the nation, they exert a coercive force in stifling dissent: "If faith in a civil religion as well as the self-restraint assumed to be necessary for such faith are themselves quintessentially American characteristics, then the citizenry's greatest enemies would be those who would reject them by calling attention to difference."[121]

Beasley uses presidential inaugural addresses to assert a (theoretically) "overtly inclusive" vision of national identity.[122] But Jerry Falwell makes use of the very same source material in *Listen, America!* to invoke the unity asserted by presidential appeals to civil religion, and turn it toward more sectarian ends: "It can be found when reading the inaugural addresses of our Presidents that there is reference to the Almighty God as the Author of our liberty or to His Providence, without which we would not be blessed."[123] Elsewhere in the book, he utilizes a cluster of symbols to make it clear that the "almighty God" referenced in the inaugural addresses is decidedly sectarian:

> I personally feel that the home and the family are still held in reverence by
> the majority of the American public. I believe there is still a vast number
> of Americans who love their country, are patriotic, and are willing to
> sacrifice for her. […] I believe that Americans want to see this country
> come back to basics, back to values, back to biblical morality, back to
> sensibility, and back to patriotism.[124]

By sandwiching "biblical morality" among the core symbols of civic piety and nostalgia like "basics," "patriotism," "sensibility," and "the home and the family," Falwell presents

a vision of the Christian consensus in which such morality is understood as no more divisive and no more subject to interpretation than those other pillars of the American civil religion, and places his audience among those who, by holding "the home and the family" in reverence, are affirming the "basics" of "biblical morality."

Falwell reinterprets the symbols of civil religion as pointing not to a nondescript and unifying divine providence, or to values shared in common among Americans or even among American Christians, but to an explicitly biblical morality—which he further defines as being based on a specific evangelical interpretation of the Bible as "absolutely infallible, without error in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as well as in areas such as geography, science, history, etc."[125] The American founders' invocation of civil religion and even Christianity as they understood it is thus framed in this light:

> I believe America has reached the pinnacle of greatness unlike any nation
>
> in human history because our Founding Fathers established America's
>
> laws and precepts on the principles recorded in the laws of God, including
>
> the Ten Commandments. God has blessed this nation because in its early
>
> days she sought to honor God and the Bible, the inerrant Word of the
>
> living God.[126]

This positions Falwell to define "biblical morality" by assertion rather than argument. Falwell suggests that his vision of that morality is in conflict—but not with other, equally-American visions of morality or interpretations of the Bible, for that would acknowledge division among the American people who are united by this commonsense assent to a shared civil religion. Rather, he suggests, biblical morality is in conflict with those who seek to undermine the whole of the American edifice. By asserting "biblical

morality" as a common-sense symbol of national unity—the family Bible sitting next to the Stars and Stripes, Mom, baseball, and apple pie atop the hearth of Americana— Falwell removes the contentious question about the role of religion and religion-based morality in American government and society from the field of interpretation and argument. To even *question* Falwell's vision of America, in which *evangelical* "biblical morality" is a central theme, is to attack the whole of the edifice of American civil religion—and thus, to open oneself to the accusation Beasley lays out above, of harming American unity by "calling attention to difference."

> David Barton also uses this tactic in *The Myth of Separation*:
>
> In many areas, with the willing assistance of the Court, the minority belief has become the 'majority' view—the law of the land. An example is the removal of school prayer. The Court's own records reveal that only 3 percent of the nation had no religious ties of any type—no belief in God. Nonetheless, the Supreme Court aligned itself with the 3 percent and declared that, in opposition to the beliefs of the 97 percent, the acknowledgement of God and non-denominational prayer to Him would be prohibited in schools.[127]

It is important to note that this argument occurs some two-thirds of the way through Barton's book; previously in his book, Barton had argued that the nation's founders had intended not only for the nation to be *religious*, but specifically that they had intended a normatively *Protestant Christian* nation. He suggested that when the founders referred to "religion," they were referring not to the generic divine providence of civil religion or to the religious pluralism of the American people, but specifically about Protestant

Christianity. In that context, Barton's suggestion that 97% of the nation is religious takes

on new significance, propelling it out of the general space of civic or nominal religion

and into a much more specific, sectarian space. Priming his audience to read even the

most generic statements of belief in God as calls for the privileging of theologically-

conservative Protestant Christianity, he has already painted the details of the portrait; the

97% number provides the outline into which those details are filled.

Ambiguity as Epistemological Identity Signal

This reinterpretation of civil religion, if taken to its extreme, threatens to create a

kind of epistemological bifurcation between those who use the symbols without knowing

their true meaning, and those who understand that those symbols are calling a specifically

Christian nation into being. Christian Right rhetors assert that the "conventional"

understanding of civil religion as nonsectarian and open to peoples of all (or no) faith is a

product of false consciousness and indoctrination from secular humanist elites, who have

removed America from its Christian roots by positing the nation's founders as secularists

and deists, rather than acknowledging their true commitment to a (proto-)evangelical

Christianity. The ways in which Christian Right rhetors argue for the centrality of

"biblical morality" in the symbols of American civil religion also create a space for a

deep ambiguity, as they assert that their sectarian vision of morality lies at the heart of

what it means to be an American, implying that all Americans who hold the symbols of

the flag, the hearth, Mom, and apple pie in reverence also hold "biblical morality" in

reverence, at least on some level.

Part of the latter may be a matter of necessity for discourse about civil religion, as

opposed to the discourse surrounding secular humanism. Secular humanism as a

rhetorical trope is used predominantly within the Christian Right, and does not have much (if any) of a foothold in the wider political conversation. But the symbols of civil religion are constantly circulating throughout the wider American culture, meaning that even as Barton and others are attempting to present an alternative interpretation of civil religious rituals as carrying specific and sectarian meaning about the intent of the American founders and God's purposes for the nation, other political and cultural figures are utilizing the symbols and rituals of civil religion in their more traditionally-understood inclusive and non-sectarian fashion.

Because the symbols and rituals of civil religion continue to carry a more universal and ecumenical meaning, at least among political conservatives, they suggest the "silent majority" identity of the American Narrative in which evangelical Christians can gather with other pro-moral Americans around a set of symbols that represent a more universal form of "mere Americanism"—patriotism, nostalgia, family, Mom, apple pie, white picket fences, and baseball in the summer—and place sectarian "biblical morality" at the center of these symbols. At the same time, though, as these symbols are recast as signs of the evangelical Protestant founders' deep Christian faith and their intentions for the United States as a Christian nation, they also constitute a more specific form of identity for evangelical Christians that is more in line with the Cosmic Narrative's distinction between "nominal Christians" and born-again Christians, in which they are invited to see themselves as uniquely in tune with the intentions of the founders, in a way that cannot be experienced by those who merely fall into the "pro-moral majority" but who do not have a specifically born-again Christian identity. In other words, the interpretation of civil-religious symbols is another epistemological test to determine who

has eyes to see and ears to hear, while Christian Right rhetors exploit the ambiguities in their meaning to present their interpretation as outside the realm of deliberation.

In the September 13 interview with Pat Robertson that began this project, Jerry Falwell provides an example of this ambiguity in meaning:

> JERRY FALWELL: Pat, did you notice yesterday? The ACLU, and all the Christ-haters, the People For the American Way, NOW, etc. were totally disregarded by the Democrats and the Republicans in both houses of Congress as they went out on the steps and called out on to God in prayer and sang 'God Bless America' and said 'let the ACLU be hanged.' In other words, when the nation is on its knees, the only normal and natural and spiritual thing to do is what we ought to be doing all the time — calling upon God.[128]

Here are both interpretations of civil religion in action. Congress's action falls into the traditional interpretation of civil-religious symbols. In the wake of a devastating terrorist attack (one of the targets of which, the Pentagon, was just across the Potomac River from the Capitol), they have gathered to pray and to sing "God Bless America," the archetypal example of the theological vagueness of traditional civil religion. Falwell, however, recasts the Congressmembers' actions as an assertion of national unity not around a generically provident God, but around a sectarian vision that accepts God-fearing Americans and rejects the disunity fomented by secular liberals and "Christ-haters." Later in the interview, Falwell suggests that the Congressional prayer gathering joins other prayer gatherings throughout the country as signs that "if we will fast and pray, this could be God's call to revival."[129]

Where Congress's action, viewed outside the context of Christian Right discourse, carries a relatively clear meaning as an expression of unification around nonsectarian American civic piety, Falwell muddies the waters and creates an ambiguity in that meaning by asking: *which* God were the members of Congress asking to bless America? Then he answers his own implied question: They were praying to the *evangelical Christian* God, which is of course an indication that they stand with the Christian Right in opposition to the People for the American Way, the ACLU, and "all the Christ-haters." They were doing "the only normal and natural and spiritual thing to do," in preparation for a national revival. Falwell utilizes the ambiguous interpretation of civil-religious symbols to create a gap in meaning, and then stands in that gap as interpreter to provide insight and revelation to those with ears to hear.

Falwell thus creates space to assert a dual vision for the protagonists of his narrative that both unites them with and elevates them above their fellow Americans. On the one hand, the protagonist of the narrative stands with Congress and all of the true American people in singing "God Bless America" and, in so doing, asserting revivalist evangelical piety as the glue that binds America together, and rejecting those who would place that piety into the discursive arena as the true enemies of this new unity. On the other hand, the protagonist (thanks to the education he/she received from Falwell and other Christian Right leaders) is able to properly interpret not only the civil-religious symbology of Congress singing "God Bless America," but also the historical phenomenon of 9/11 itself, connecting it to the modern history of Israel, to instances of violence and redemption in American history, and to the continual cycle of syncretism, discipline, and revival in the Israel of the biblical narrative. This positions the protagonist

as *special*, having received and properly understood a form of revelation that the general public, indoctrinated as they have been by secular-humanist public schools and a secular-humanist culture, cannot perceive.

Conclusion: Code Languages and Revelation

Both the American and Cosmic Narratives have similar mutually-reinforcing epistemologies, in which those who have received special revelation from God in the acceptance of the message of Scripture are said to experience a shift in understanding, which makes them capable of truly comprehending God's revelation to the world. This is not a shift in interpretation or hermeneutics, in which the same phenomena are perceived differently; rather, adherents describe it as an epistemological revelation in which they can see the world as it truly is, through the lens of the whole of God's revelation to humanity, rather than only partially, as those who are capable of perceiving only the vague outlines provided by general revelation.

In contrast to Reconstructionists like Gary North, however, those who put forth the Christian Right's narratives continue to assert some value to general revelation, both in suggesting that it is possible for those who have not experienced Christian conversion to perceive at least some measure of God's moral law through nature, history, intuition, and reason, and in arguing that those who have not experienced Christian conversion can nevertheless form and operate a government undergirded by Christian moral principles so long as they live in a society in which a Christian consensus exists.

A similar dynamic is at play in the identity-forming discursive tropes of the *via negativa* and *via positiva*, in which the enemy of secular humanism and the unifying force of sectarian civil religion are asserted as boundary-building symbol sets despite (or

because of) their ambiguity. The Christian Right narrator creates or exploits these ambiguities in identity and sets him- or herself in the middle as the authoritative interpreter who can tell his or her audience who they *really* are—asserting that they are both *among* and *above* their fellow Americans, just as Americans as a whole are both *among* and *above* the rest of humanity.

Here are epistemological ambiguities and levels of revelation layered inside one another like Russian matryoshka dolls. By virtue of the special revelation of the American Narrative, even if only dimly understood through the indoctrinating lens of the secular humanist version of history, the average American understands more (if only at a gut level) about God's desired order for the world than most of the rest of the human race. But just like the Cosmic Narrative asserts that there are "Christians" and there are *Christians—*the nominal mainliners, and the on-fire evangelicals who truly seek God and engage in spiritual conflict in the great cosmic war—so, too, the American Narrative asserts that there are "Americans" and then there are *Americans*, those who have removed the blinders of false consciousness created by secular humanism and are thus capable of properly interpreting both the Word and the world, who can fully explicate what (the narratives assert) others feel but cannot put into words or understand.

In other words, just as Christian theology asserts that general revelation gives all people at least some kind of glimpse into the nature of the world and of God, so too does the American Narrative suggest that, through the symbol-set of civil religion (patriotism, family, nostalgia), all Americans have some kind of access to American general revelation.

In Christian theology, the general revelation of religion is understood as providing very few details about God, save that God is all-powerful and provident, and that a low-resolution version of God's morality is the basic fact of the universe; the essential details, Christian theology asserts, are filled in by God's special revelation first to the people of Israel and then to the whole world through Christ and his church.

So, too, is American general revelation understood as providing a broad outline, but few details, about the religion of Americanness: the nation's founders are revered as brave people, endowed with virtue and foresight, but the details about the nation they intended to found are murky, liquid, and often misunderstood. The moral values of family, the home, free enterprise, and hard work are honored, but the American general revelation does not spell out *why* exactly they are honored. So the "pro-moral majority," subjected to this general revelation, honor and revere the founders and their values insofar as they understand them, but lack the special revelation that would grant them the *whole* truth about the nation's founders and their intentions for the nation.

It is this placement of the protagonists in the American Narrative both among and above their fellow Americans that gives Christian Right rhetors the tools to manipulate those narrative's visions for the relationship with political power. The Cosmic Narrative asserts that true Christians are to be separate from the world, suggesting an identity defined by difference or agonism; just as God and God's holiness are different from the fallen physical world, so too are Christians (who have been imbued with God's holiness through Christ) to be different from those around them. Because of this, the "powers and principalities" of this world are neutral at best, and antagonistic at worst; the true Christian will more than likely attract the enmity of the earthly powers who understand

through general revelation (if through a mirror darkly) that the true Christians are right, and resent and persecute them for it.

When the reinterpretation of civil religion is added into the mix, however, the Christian American is endowed with the full understanding of both God's special revelation about the cosmos and God's special revelation through history in the American story. At the center of this narrative understanding is the enemy: the satanic agenda of the secular humanists, whose agenda one cannot fully comprehend without access to both the Cosmic and American forms of special revelation. Without the Cosmic Narrative, one can understand secular humanism as a construct that is in opposition to the America intended by the founders, but see it as a rhetorical, social, or political problem alone, which can be solved through the usual rhetorical, social, or political means. Without the American Narrative, one can understand the satanic agenda, but see it as a primarily (or exclusively) spiritual problem, to be resolved through spiritual warfare and soul-winning, and political or social action waste precious resources that could be used on the battlefields of the great cosmic war.

By presenting the achievement of temporal power in the United States as a defensive action, in which America plays an important role in God's plan for the Last Days as the final bulwark against the global domination of secular humanism and the base for world mission, the discomfort with temporal power in the Cosmic Narrative is eased. At the same time, with the recoding of civil religion as the plain patriotic language of the godly American people, despised by the secular elites, it becomes a symbol of restoring power to the real Americans—those who are more truly aligned with the spirit and intent of the nation's founders, and who are truly equipped to properly interpret and

understand the meaning of civil religious symbology. This makes religious religious devotion itself a patriotic requirement.

These dynamics are internal to the text and to the identity categories it sets out—namely, (white) evangelical Christian Americans. The rhetoric of the Christian Right resolves the tensions between the Cosmic Narrative and the American Narrative by reinterpreting civil religion as rhetorically, if not explicitly, prescribing a sectarian, Protestant, and conservative form of Christianity. Those evangelical Christians who fully understand the whole truth about the nation's founders, and who are thus closer to the founders' intentions for the nation, occupy a rhetorical space in which they are both among their fellow Americans (as members of the "silent majority" of Americans who value morality and family) and above their fellow Americans (as those with access to the special revelation of the American Narrative).

The latter stance in particular threatens to create tension with the other members of the conservative/Republican coalition. The most obvious potential tension would be between the Christian Right and those who do not share their fiscal and social conservatism: fiscally-moderate evangelicals, socially-liberal libertarians, or socially-liberal business interests. But because the mixture of the Cosmic and American Narratives has such a sectarian character—born-again evangelical and Protestant, by implication and language if not explicitly laid out—there are also potential tensions between the Christian Right and those who share both their fiscal and social conservatism, such as conservative (but not particularly religious) mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, or people of other faiths such as Judaism or Islam. These tensions require the texts of the Christian Right to engage externally and forge a construct that

enables the formation of coalitions while maintaining their vision of a sectarian,

evangelical Protestant identity not only for the narratives' individual protagonists, but for

the nation as a whole. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the Christian Right grapples

with this challenge.

Notes

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[1] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Quebecois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987), 133-50.

[2] This is a play on C.S. Lewis's notion of "mere Christianity," which he describes in his book of the same title as "the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times" (p. viii) a sort of lowest common denominator of what it means to be a Christian. Similarly, "mere Americanism" is my term for the (always contested) rhetorical construction of the lowest common denominator in terms of what it means to be American. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity,* HarperCollins Hardcover Edition (New York: HarperOne, 2001).

[3] Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 17.

[4] Vincent Crapanzano, *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 33.

[5] It is worth noting that the word "election," as used by Crapanzano, can be fraught with controversy among evangelicals, as the question of whether humans can freely choose to follow Jesus without having been foreordained by God to do so is an ongoing subject of theological dispute. But the larger point remains.

[6] Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 62.

[7] D. James Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth: Basic Christianity and What It Means in Your Life* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1985), 123.

[8] Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 353.

[9] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 208

[10] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 31.

[11] Jerry Falwell, Ed Hindson, and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *Liberty Bible Commentary, Volume II* (Lynchburg, VA: The Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1982), 183.

[12] Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth,* 133.

[13] Ibid., 142.

[14] Ibid., 117.

[15] Ibid., 116.

[16] Ibid., 133.

[17] Ibid., 142.

[18] Ibid., 126.

[19] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 24.

[20] Pat Robertson, *The Ten Offenses* (Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2004), 37.

[21] Ibid., 204.

[22] Jerry Falwell, *Champions for God* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 92.

[23] D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2003), 56.

[24] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 29-30.

[25] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 69.

[26] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 62.

[27] Ibid., 62.

[28] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 63.

[29] Ibid., 63.

[30] James 4:4 (New International Version).

[31] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 62.

[32] II Timothy 3:12 (New International Version).

[33] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 111.

[34] Pat Robertson, *The New World Order* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991), 243.

[35] James Dobson and Gary Bauer, *Children at Risk: The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 212.

[36] Pat Robertson, *The Secret Kingdom* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 248.

[37] Falwell, *Champions for God,* 11.

[38] David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1996), 58-59.

[39] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 80.

[40] D. James Kennedy, *Why the Ten Commandments Matter* (New York: Warner Faith, 2005), 58

[41] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 55.

[42] Ibid., 58.

[43] Ibid., 59.

[44] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 53.

[45] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 17.

[46] Ibid., 317.

[47] Dobson and Bauer, *Children at Risk,* 251.

[48] Ibid., 246.

[49] Ibid., 39.

[50] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 182-84.

[51] Tim LaHaye and David Noebel, *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 82.

[52] Tim LaHaye and Beverly LaHaye, *A Nation Without a Conscience* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), 147.

[53] Ibid., 247.

[54] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege,* 221.

[55] Ibid., 254.

[56] LaHaye and LaHaye, *A Nation Without a Conscience,* 247.

[57] Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56.

[58] Ibid., 56.

[59] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 334.

[60] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse,* 59.

[61] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 216.

[62] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 202.

[63] LaHaye and LaHaye, *A Nation Without a Conscience,* 50.

[64] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 16.

[65] John W. Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution* (Charlottesville: The Rutherford Institute, 1982), 18.

[66] The author freely admits that "God's-self" is an awkward construction. Such are the perils of avoiding gendered pronouns for God.

[67] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 16.

[68] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 147-48.

[69] Ibid.,151.

[70] Ibid., 150.

[71] Ibid., 21.

[72] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 69.

[73] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 33

[74] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 187.

[75] Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 5.

[76] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 95.

[77] Tim LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1994), 11.

[78] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 130.

[79] LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers,* 128-29.

[80] LaHaye and LaHaye, *A Nation Without a Conscience,* 13.

[81] Barton, *Original Intent,* 238.

[82] Ibid., 238-39.

[83] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 63.

[84] Ibid., 64.

[85] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 29-30.

[86] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution,* 86.

[87] Robertson, *The Ten Offenses,* 71.

[88] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 77.

[89] Ibid., 76.

[90] Barton, *Original Intent,* 70.

[91] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 64-65.

[92] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family,* 198.

[93] Miranda Blue, "Marriage Equality Opponent Says 'Bigger Problem' Is No-Fault Divorce," *Right Wing Watch*, 11 March 2013. Online source, accessed February 1, 2015. http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/marriage-equality-opponent-says-bigger-problem-no-fault-divorce.

[94] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 137.

[95] Ibid., 100.

[96] Kennedy and Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?*, 122; also Dobson and Bauer, *Children at Risk,* 22.

[97] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 142.

[98] Ibid., 100.

[99] Jason C. Bivins, *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

[100] LaHaye and LaHaye, *A Nation without a Conscience,* 144.

[101] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 132.

[102] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory, 1492-1793* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009), 282-83.

[103] Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), 60.

[104] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 95.

[105] Ibid., 98.

[106] Pat Robertson, *The 700 Club,* 25 March 2015.

[107] *BarbWire* is founded and edited by Matt Barber, Associate Dean at Liberty University School of Law and one of the chief spokespeople for Liberty Counsel, a Christian Right legal advocacy group.

[108] Gina Miller, "Pamela Geller Maligned over Counter-Jihad Ads," *BarbWire.com*, 1 October 2014. Online source, accessed 4 April 2015. http://barbwire.com/2014/10/01/pamela-geller-maligned-counter-jihad-ads/

[109] LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind,* 9. Emphasis in original.

[110] LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled,* 17. Emphasis in original.

[111] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 29-30.

[112] Marshall and Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory,* 447

[113] Ibid., 447-48.

[114] George Barna and David Barton, *U Turn* (Lake Mary, FL: FrontLine, 2014), 46.

[115] Vanessa B. Beasley, *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 47.

[116] Roderick Hart, *The Political Pulpit* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1977).

[117] Martin J. Medhurst, "Forging a Civil-Religious Construct for the 21st Century: Should Hart's 'Contract' Be Renewed?" *Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002), 86-101.

[118] Robertson, *The Ten Offenses,* 60.

[119] The original lyrics to the song, published in 1918, called on God to guide America "to the right with the light from above." When revising the song for the famous 1938 Armistice Day performance by Kate Smith, Berlin changed the phrase to "through the night," fearing that "to the right" would be understood as supportive of fascism. Virtually all performances since then have used the 1938 lyrics. Sheryl Kaskowitz, *God Bless America: The Surprising History of an Iconic Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 40.

[120] Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 9-10.

[121] Beasley, *You, the People,* 52.

[122] Ibid., 63.

[123] Falwell, *Listen, America!,* 46.

[124] Ibid., 18-19.

[125] Ibid., 63.

[126] Ibid., 29.

[127] David Barton, *The Myth of Separation* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1992), 231.

[128] People for the American Way. *Transcript of Entire Robertson - Falwell Interview Available.* Online source, accessed 11 October 2015. http://www.commondreams.org/news2001/0917-03.htm.

[129] People for the American Way, *Transcript of Entire Robertson - Falwell Interview Available.*

Chapter 5: Narrative Connection

In his sociological study of the distinctive traits of evangelical Christians, Christian Smith argues that the evangelical movement "flourishes on difference, engagement, tension, conflict, and threat."[1] Cultural pluralism, he writes, is not a threat to evangelical faith, as traditional scholarship had supposed it to be; rather, evangelicalism is able to define its own distinctive voice through constant engagement with the pluralistic "other." In particular, he argues, evangelicals are able to use "those whom secularization theory would presume to be threatening to belief—those who believe differently or do not believe at all—as faith-reinforcing negative reference groups."[2]

By standing in polar opposition and enmity to the evangelical Christian patriotic faith (at least as the Christian Right presents them), "secular humanists" and other liberal "others" clearly function in an identity-forming capacity, giving Christian Right rhetors the tools they need to navigate the potentially-conflicting visions of identity laid out in the Cosmic and American Narratives and generate a vision of identity that draws strength from, rather than weakening under, the apparent contradictions.

A different dynamic is at play as Christian Right elites and members have striven to find their place *within* the larger conservative movement. Francis Schaeffer was famous for his call to evangelical Christians to break with the traditional separatism of the fundamentalists and engage others who did not share evangelical Christian belief, but who did share their desire to restore a moral consensus to the culture, as part of a strategy of "cobelligerency" against the threat of secular humanism. But even still, the cultural/historical narratives presented by Schaeffer posed a constant threat to these "cobelligerent" alliances; at the same time as Schaeffer was suggesting that legalized

abortion represented the pinnacle of the humanists' disregard for life and the herald of an oncoming new age of holocaust and chaos and thus justified a strategic alliance with Roman Catholics who had long stood in opposition to abortion, he was also laying out a historical narrative in *How Should We Then Live?* that blamed the institutional Roman Catholic Church, as well as significant Roman Catholic thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, for setting off the chain of cultural events that led to the rise of that humanistic outlook.

In other words, Christian Right rhetors, utilizing the epistemological structures that reside in both narratives, are able to create hierarchies of belonging by appealing to a common enemy (the satanic agenda of secular humanism) and a common rhetoric (the Christian Nation coding of the symbols of American civil religion)—hierarchies in which patriotic evangelical Christians, by virtue of their access to both the special revelation of Scripture and the special revelation of God's plan for the United States of America in history, stand simultaneously both *among* and *above* their fellow Americans.

By crafting these hierarchies of American identity, the rhetorical edifice of the Christian Right also creates potential tensions with those outside the top tier of that hierarchy—not only with the general American public, but also with other political and religious conservatives who do not have access to the fullness of both narratives' forms of special revelation. These tensions have destructive potential; insofar as the rhetoric of the Christian Right asserts patriotic evangelical Christians' superiority and unique access to the whole truth about the cosmos and the country, there exists the danger that the Christian Right could fray or fracture the coalition that comprises the conservative movement in the United States.

The bulk of this chapter will explore the relationship between the evangelical Protestant Christian Right and two of the other religious orientations that occupy an ambiguous place within their vision of American identity: Roman Catholicism and Mormonism (Latter-Day Saints).[3] Because of substantial differences in theology as well as worldview, these two religious orientations have often had a contentious relationship with evangelical Protestants, even in the decades since the emergence of the Christian Right as an identified and organized political bloc. Only in recent years has their partnership with the Christian Right in the "pro-family" movement become anything but nominal, and even then the relationship has often resembled a strategic alliance more than a true sense of consubstantiality. After examining the campaigns of Rick Santorum and Mitt Romney—a Roman Catholic and a Mormon, respectively, who sought the support of the Christian Right in their presidential ambitions—I will conclude with an examination of some of the rhetorical strategies by which the Christian Right and the larger conservative movement "keep the peace" within their coalition, despite potentially coalition-fracturing differences. Similar to the means by which Christian Right rhetors appeal to external enemies and internal symbols with ambiguous meaning to account for dissonant visions of identity between the Cosmic and American Narratives, these strategic choices also work in negotiating the relationship between the evangelical Christian Right and conservatives outside that movement—including Catholics, Mormons, and nonreligious conservatives.

Throughout this chapter, my case studies focus on the attempts of presidential candidates from outside the Christian Right's core evangelical constituency to win the movement's support. I have chosen to highlight presidential candidates because, as

Campbell and Jamieson have pointed out, the presidency occupies a special role in American public address, with the potential to define or redefine the character of the nation through rhetoric.[4] For this reason, presidential campaigns are sites of profound rhetorical struggle over identity—not only for the identity of the nation, but also for the two major political parties and for the various constituencies or interests whose support is at stake.

Methodology: The Presidency

As presidential candidates have sought the support of the leaders, organizations, and grassroots of the Christian Right, presidential contests have served as crystallization points for various stages in the movement's evolution. Journalists, pundits, and historians have used presidential campaigns as opportunities to reflect on the state of the Christian Right at that moment: their electoral power within the Republican Party, their ability to advance their policy goals, and their near-term future.

The Christian Right's activism in the 1980 presidential election of Ronald Reagan over born-again evangelical Jimmy Carter marked the movement's identification by mainstream journalists as major players in the political conversation; Reagan's overt attempts to seek the support of organizations like Christian Voice and the Moral Majority put the leaders of those organizations in a position where they could take credit for his victory and attempt to stake a claim on the policy agenda of the new presidency.[5]

In Reagan's 1984 reelection campaign, Reagan wooed and won the Christian Right despite his administration's unwillingness to invest political capital in pushing Christian Right domestic policy priorities like constitutional amendments banning abortion and legalizing school prayer. He did this by placing a belligerent foreign policy

against the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union at the center of his rhetorical outreach to evangelicals.[6] When Reagan received over 80 percent of the evangelical vote in 1984, it was seen as a sign of the Christian Right's increased influence in the Republican Party.[7]

In 1988, frustrated by the continuing lack of interest in Christian Right policy priorities during Reagan's second term, Pat Robertson ran for the Republican presidential nomination, hoping that the movement would unify behind him. His campaign was dogged, however, by embarrassing video clips from *The 700 Club*, the sexual peccadilloes of prominent televangelists, the discomfort of many fundamentalists with his charismatic faith, and the decision of several prominent Christian Right figures (including the LaHayes and Jerry Falwell) to back other candidates. After a strong second-place showing in Iowa, Robertson could not win enough support in the south to remain in the contest. Robertson's failed run, along with the Moral Majority's decline in the last years of Reagan's presidency, was seen as a sign of the ongoing divisions between charismatic and noncharismatic evangelicals within the movement, and pointed to shifts in emphasis in the movement's rhetoric toward an increased sense of marginalization and a new set of political strategies.[8]

The most evident sign of the Christian Right's strategic shift was Pat Robertson's choice to tap Republican strategist Ralph Reed to head his Christian Coalition, which would focus on local and state politics as well as the presidency. The Christian Coalition broke with many rank-and-file evangelicals to back George H. W. Bush for reelection in 1992 over primary challenger Pat Buchanan (whose GOP convention speech that year brought the term "culture war" into widespread public use).[9] The Christian Coalition's willingness to make compromises for the sake of greater political influence was seen as a

mark of increased political sophistication by many mainstream journalists, but prominent leaders within the Christian Right, like Gary Bauer and James Dobson, saw those compromises as betrayals of evangelicals' core values.[10]

In the 1996 election, most of the Christian Right's leaders lined up behind Bob Dole despite Dole's unease with the movement's more strident domestic policy initiatives—in part because Bob Dole chose Jack Kemp, a long-time ally of the Christian Right, as his running mate, and in part because of their vehement opposition to sitting president Bill Clinton. When Bob Dole lost, in part due to decreased turnout from evangelicals, Christian Right leaders argued that it was a sign that Republican candidates would need to give more than nominal support to the movement to win their enthusiastic support.[11]

In the 2000 election, George W. Bush did well more than that; by publicly talking about his born-again experience as a turning point in his life and citing Jesus Christ as his favorite "political" philosopher in an early debate, he clearly identified as an evangelical Christian and won the support of evangelicals even though one of his primary rivals, Gary Bauer, was already a leader in the Christian Right. As the primary field was steadily winnowed down, Bush called on Christian Right support to help him beat John McCain, who had not made any major effort to woo evangelical voters. While Bush's elevation to the presidency might have been the apex of the Christian Right's influence (given that he would have clearly lost to rival Al Gore had he gotten less than 84 percent support from white church-going evangelicals), he continued in the pattern of prior Republican administrations by not expending political capital on the movement's priorities.[12]

Karl Rove's strategy for Bush's reelection in 2004 was to energize Christian Right voters as a base of support[13]—and to that end, the November 2003 ruling from the Supreme Judicial Court in Massachusetts striking down that state's ban on same-sex marriage was (in historian Daniel K. Williams's words) a "godsend," enabling the Christian Right to mount new fundraising and organizing campaigns in the lead-up to the 2004 election.[14] State constitutional initiatives banning same-sex marriage were also credited with bringing evangelical voters to the polls, particularly in key electoral states like Ohio. The Christian Right had successfully mobilized "values voters" to bring their chosen candidate victory, and expected results in his second term; however, he disappointed them yet again, as his administration was increasingly bogged down by Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, scandals involving administration officials, and a botched Supreme Court nomination.[15]

In each of those electoral instances, the identity of the Christian Right and their role within the Republican Party was at stake; would they force Republican candidates to hew to their positions on abortion and LGBT rights, or would they support candidates that offered workable compromises on those issues? Would they mobilize for any Republican candidate, and would their mobilization see results in the enactment of their political agenda? When there was a contested primary election—such as in the 1988, 1992, and 2000 presidential contests—would they coordinate behind the same candidate? Contemporaneous accounts from journalists, columnists, and movement figures alike suggest that the Christian Right and their observers in the media understood those elections as struggles for the soul of the Republican Party and for the identity of the Christian Right. For this reason, they serve as ideal lenses for exploring the strategic

choices involved as the Christian Right and political figures from outside the Christian Right's narrative identity structure negotiate their political relationship. I will discuss two examples from the 2008 and 2012 Republican primary contests:

- Rick Santorum, a Roman Catholic who sought to identify himself with the Christian Right in the 2012 and 2016 Republican primaries; and

- Mitt Romney, a Latter-Day Saint who lost to John McCain in the 2008 Republican primary, but came back in 2012 to win the Republican nomination.

For each candidate, the narrative structures I have already identified were not "naturally" available to them, as they were for self-identified evangelicals like George W. Bush or Mike Huckabee, or for candidates who had a natural affinity for consubstantiality like Ronald Reagan, as because of their specific non-Protestant religiosity, they could not credibly adopt the Cosmic and American Narratives wholesale, as shall be evident in Romney's example. Rather, they and the Christian Right had to strategically negotiate the tensions between their own narratives and ways of speaking about their faith and political ideology, and the Christian Right's formulations. Examining these negotiations can provide crucial insight into how the Christian Right's narrative structure interacts with other narratives that compete or cooperate for power within the larger conservative movement.

Roman Catholics

The relationship between the Christian Right and Roman Catholics is complicated. The (evangelical Protestant) Cosmic Narrative's treatment of the history of the church in the Common Era is fundamentally at odds with the Catholic identity-forming narrative, and these narrative differences resonate with substantial differences in

worship, practice, and identity-formation between evangelical and Catholic approaches. Additionally, the historical tensions between Protestants and Catholics, which stretch back to the earliest days of the European colonization of North America, not only serve as a contextual background for ongoing divisions within conservative Christianity, but are also specifically discussed within the American Narrative as a part of the Christian Right's formulation of American identity. The Christian Right has always had a predominantly Protestant face, even as tensions existed between evangelicals and fundamentalists within the movement, yet Catholics have contributed significantly to the movement's ongoing development, particularly behind the scenes in connecting the movement's evangelical base with Catholic modes of thought and with the wider right-wing movement.

Since the beginning of the contemporary Christian Right in the late 1970s, the movement's evangelical and fundamentalist thought leaders have identified conservative Catholics as potential, if not actual, fellow-travelers. Many of the Christian Right's social concerns—opposition to abortion and LGBT rights, concern about the family, and unease with public morality as expressed through the media and government—are shared by conservative Catholics. At the same time, there is a great deal more to the ideology of the Christian Right than mere assent to a package of policy positions; those policy positions are, in a very real sense, the political and social implications of a set of narratives whose resonances and dissonances function to shape and mold individual and corporate identity, space, and time for those who accept them. As will be evident, while Catholics may arrive at many of the same positions, they tend to do so on the basis of narratives that

differ from those of the Christian Right in several key places, differences that are expressed in religious and political practice.

The epistemological outlook of the Cosmic and American Narratives runs counter to many of the epistemological assumptions of the Roman Catholic faith, as truth is understood to be comprehensible through Scripture and the witness of history alone rather than requiring the mediation of temporal authorities like the tradition and hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Cosmic Narrative's valorization of the early church and its ambiguous-to-negative judgment of the conversion of Constantine both suggest that the Roman Catholic "additions" to the *ur*-Christianity of the early believers represented a step backwards from which the religion would not begin to recover until Martin Luther more than a millennium later. And the appeal to eschatology (whether premillennial or postmillennial) as a future-historical reference point in both chronic and kairotic time, rather than as a form of spiritual metaphor, does not play a major role in Roman Catholic rhetorical forms, as it tends to play in Fundamentalist and evangelical rhetorics.

Religious/Historical Tensions

Tension between Protestants and Roman Catholics in the United States is, of course, nothing new; it has been a running theme throughout much of the history of European-descended peoples in the Americas. Given that Europe itself was a religious battleground (whether overtly or covertly) between Protestants and Catholics throughout the first centuries of European colonization of the Americas, it was only natural that the conflicts and tensions from the parent continent would spill into the colonies. Even the intra-Protestant tensions that led the Puritans to found the Massachusetts Bay Colony (to

be free to practice their faith without the impositions of the bishops of the Church of England) had a background in Protestant/Catholic tensions, as the Puritans saw the rituals and requirements imposed upon the churches by the bishops as too closely aligned with Catholic practices.

Protestant churches were established in many of the English colonies that would become the United States; after independence, though the First Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed free exercise to all faiths, some states would retain their established Protestant churches for some decades, and Protestantism continued to be the dominant faith of the country. Despite waves of Catholic immigration from Ireland, Italy, Germany, Poland, and eastern Europe swelling the Roman Catholic population significantly throughout the nineteenth century, Protestantism remained the faith of the "establishment," even as the ground of Protestantism shifted from Episcopalians and Presbyterians to Methodists and Baptists as the country expanded westward.[16]

Indeed, historian Robert Wuthnow suggests that the major dividing lines in American Christianity prior to the 1960s were denominational—with tensions between Protestants and Catholics as the most evident signs of that division. Though Protestants acknowledged the differences among their denominations, Protestant leaders often sought to stand united against what they perceived as the Catholic threat, seeing Catholicism as a totalitarian religion incompatible with democratic values (a selling point in the early Cold War period), and individual Catholics as cogs in the Roman Catholic machine who had not thought as deeply about their faith as had individual Protestants.[17]

The mistrust of Roman Catholics has historically been even more pronounced among fundamentalists and evangelicals. Marsden, for example, calls attention to

numerous occasions throughout the history of fundamentalism in which the Roman Catholic Church—and particularly the Pope—was placed at the center of premillennial conspiracy theories,[18] and Roman Catholic believers considered (at best) to be good people who were under the spell of "Popish superstition."[19] Similarly, Wuthnow calls attention to a statement from the president of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1955 numbering Catholicism among the "satanic ideologies" aligned against the true Christian faith.[20]

These sentiments were not limited to the thought leadership of the fundamentalist and evangelical movements either, as the personal accounts of older evangelicals make clear. Sociologist Christian Smith (himself an evangelical convert to Roman Catholicism) writes that during his youth there was a widespread belief among evangelicals that "assumed Roman Catholics were not real Christians and so most likely were not going to heaven."[21] Evangelical theologian Richard J. Mouw describes similar experiences, writing that he was taught growing up that "Catholics believed things we did not believe—things, furthermore, we thought *no one* should believe,"[22] and that "the only hope any Catholics had for salvation was that they would get to heaven 'in spite of what their church teaches.'"[23] In line with fundamentalism's long history of separatism, too, some non-Christian-Right-aligned fundamentalists continue to condemn their fellow fundamentalists or evangelicals who associate with Christian Right organizations that include Roman Catholics within their coalitions; Crapanzano quotes one pastor who claims that those who join such coalitions have "sacrificed the purity of faith for worldly, political concerns."[24]

These sentiments are echoed in the works of Christian Right authors, particularly the "first generation" who came out of historical fundamentalism; even as they were attempting to grow coalitions with Roman Catholics, their rhetoric toward their fellow evangelicals reflected anti-Catholic attitudes. For example, in Jerry Falwell's 1990 commentary about the End Times, *Why I Believe Jesus Christ May Return in the 1990s*— a book published by Falwell's own organization and clearly addressed to his fellow evangelicals—Falwell cautions evangelicals against presuming that Roman Catholics are unsaved[25] or against viewing the Roman Catholic Church as the prophesied apostate "one-world church" under the leadership of the Antichrist that arises during the Tribulation.[26] At the same time, he also suggests that the Roman Catholic Church was responsible for the spread of false eschatological teaching within Christianity, writing that premillennialist eschatology was forgotten as the Roman Catholic Church arose in the fourth century because "Rome viewed herself as God's instrument to usher in the promised kingdom of glory."[27]

Despite his advocacy for cobelligerency with Roman Catholics (particularly on the issue of abortion), Francis Schaeffer also suggested that the historic rise of Roman Catholicism represented a corruption of the true Christian faith, writing that Rome added "a humanistic element" in which "the authority of church took precedence over the teaching of the Bible"—thus spreading "distortions of the original Christian, biblical teaching" that would reign supreme until the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.[28] The tensions between Protestantism and Catholicism can also be seen in Schaeffer's condemnation of Thomas Aquinas (whom the Roman Catholic Church honors as one of the "Doctors of the Church," whose teachings profoundly influenced Catholic theology)

as one of the fountainheads of error in the corruption of Christianity by humanism. According to Schaeffer, because of Aquinas's popularization of the idea that human reason is unaffected by the Fall, "philosophy was gradually separated from revelation—from the Bible—and philosophers began to act in an increasingly independent, autonomous manner."[29]

D. James Kennedy was somewhat more circumspect in condemning practices that evangelical Christians would understand to be Roman Catholic, even if he did not mention Roman Catholicism by name; for example, in writing about the Second Commandment (which forbids graven images), Kennedy singled out for condemnation practices that are sure to be read and understood by his audience as common among Roman Catholics:

> The third use of art—and the only one God condemns—is the devotional use of art. For example, someone bows before a picture or a statue or any kind of representation of anything in Heaven and on earth, especially the things that supposedly represent God.[30]

To an evangelical Protestant, Kennedy's implication is clear: The practice of using icons or religious art in prayer or devotion—a practice that is coded as Roman Catholic—is a violation of the Second Commandment, and thus, the Roman Catholic Church is leading its followers into sin.

But Timothy LaHaye is perhaps the strongest of these ideological leaders in his critique of Roman Catholicism—even going so far as to imply at times that Roman Catholicism and Christianity are separate faiths. For example, as he lays out his "landscape of religion" in making his case for cobelligerency between evangelical

Christians and those of other faiths or Christian denominations as part of the grand "pro-moral" coalition, he notably places Roman Catholicism *outside* Christianity—such as in 1980's *Battle for the Mind*, where he suggests that a pro-family coalition might include 50 million born-again Protestants allied with 50 million more from "Protestants who do not stress a born-again experience, Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and many others whose moral ideas are biblical."[31] Similarly, in 1982's *Battle for the Family*, LaHaye writes that many of the moral values held by "fundamental Christians […] are shared by many others: Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and members of most Western religions."[32] In both of these "landscape" listings, the hierarchical position of Roman Catholics is clear; by placing them between Jews (who are not Christian, by definition) and Mormons (a religious group described by many fundamentalists as a heretical cult), LaHaye implies that whatever values Roman Catholics may have in common with evangelical Christians, they should *not* be considered truly Christian. Other listings of the landscape do place Roman Catholicism next to liberal Protestantism—suggesting that the Roman Catholic Church, like liberal Protestant churches, represents a corrupted form of the faith.

This message is only amplified in LaHaye's works that are more clearly geared towards an evangelical Protestant audience, such as his commentary on the book of Revelation, which he originally wrote in 1974 but edited and republished in 1999 to coincide with the explosive popularity of the *Left Behind* novels.[33] In that commentary, LaHaye describes Catholicism as "more dangerous than no religion because she [Rome] substitutes religion for truth […] Rome's false religion too often gives a false security that keeps people from seeking salvation freely by faith."[34] Like Falwell and other Protestant evangelical writers who condemn the Roman Catholic Church as an institution,

LaHaye is quick to caveat his condemnation by assuring his audience that individual

Roman Catholics can indeed receive salvation as born-again believers in Jesus:

> With respect to sincere Roman Catholics who have personally received
>
> Christ as their Savior and Lord and to those who are evaluating the claims
>
> of Christ on their lives, I must point out that the Church of Rome today
>
> does not teach 'the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints' (Jude
>
> 6). Instead, they have added the baggage of fifteen hundred years of
>
> tradition to the original doctrines of Christianity.[35]

The message here clearly lays out what was an undercurrent in many of the other leaders'

treatment of Roman Catholicism: If a Roman Catholic is saved, it will be because they

found the truth of the Christian faith *despite* the beliefs and practices of the Roman

Catholic Church, rather than because the Roman Catholic Church led them to the truth.

To truly accept Christ and come to salvation, a Roman Catholic must reject many, if not

all, of the things that distinguish Roman Catholicism from the "pure" faith of evangelical

Protestantism. In other words: Roman Catholics are truly Christian (in the sense of

having received salvation from Christ) only insofar as they have become Protestants in

their hearts.

Stylistic Tensions

It is important to note here that while the historic oppositional tensions between

evangelical Protestants and Catholics may have waned in recent years, there are still

important differences in the two groups' approaches to the faith, which are rooted in their

narratives about the cosmos and the history of the Christian religion. While the

evangelical Protestant Cosmic Narrative and the Roman Catholic Cosmic Narrative are

alike in some of their broad strokes, particularly in the biblical events that function as hinges in their history (such as the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, which both narratives see as the major turning point in the thrust of cosmic and human history), there are some key differences between the two denominational groups' narratives that lead to different views on the institutions of the church and the government as well as different ways of approaching, talking about, and practicing the Christian faith.

Most of these differences are found in the narratives' approaches to the historical era following the establishment of Christianity by the Roman emperor Constantine. As has been discussed above, evangelical Protestants valorize early Christianity as the truest and purest form of the faith which, according to their narrative, became compromised by the introduction of state power and the pagan rituals of Rome (which some evangelicals call the "great apostasy"). As the Catholic church descended further and further into corruption and ritual, individual Christians like John Huss, John Wycliffe, and Martin Luther began to read the Bible by itself, rather than filtering it through Catholic church tradition, and thus rediscovered the true Christian faith unburdened by a millennium of unscriptural (and often pagan) tradition. The Reformation, in this narrative, represented the beginning of a return to true Christianity's emphasis on individual salvation by faith alone. Subsequent generations continued the Reformers' work in developing a theological outlook based on Scripture alone and continued to recover the faith and practices of the early church.

As might be expected, the Roman Catholic narrative about the Common Era does not see historical events in quite the same way. Based on a passage in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus appoints Simon Peter as the leader of the disciples, telling him that

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven,"[36] Roman Catholics see Peter as the first Pope. In Roman Catholic doctrine, all of Peter's successors to the bishopric of Rome inherited the leadership role given to Peter by Jesus. The Roman Catholic narrative also does not see the Constantinian establishment as a compromise of the faith, nor the subsequent millennium of church history as a descent into pagan ritual and corruption; rather, for Catholics, the Holy Spirit continued to bless and guide the Church as Christianity was adopted as a state religion throughout much of Europe, even though the humans who ran the church were not free from sin or error. This means that to Catholics, the traditions of the institutional church provide an additional hermeneutical lens for the reading of Scripture; in Catholic epistemology, the traditions of the institutional Church, guided as it has been by the Holy Spirit, can serve as a source of theological knowledge, wisdom, and insight alongside Scripture.[37]

Not surprisingly, the Roman Catholic narrative also has a different assessment of the Reformation. Contemporary Catholics (particularly after Vatican II) acknowledge that because of human sinfulness, the Reformation began as a valid response to real abuses that had arisen in the Church's practices. However, they emphasize that when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the Wittenberg church door, his initial goal was to reform the practices of the Catholic Church from within, not to divide Christianity; it was only after the Church responded badly to Luther's critique that he (and subsequent reformers) felt the need to set up Christian institutions to rival the Catholic Church.[38]

Worldview-forming narratives function to shape identity, space, time, and social and political positions and practices for those who adopt them; the differences between

the Roman Catholic and evangelical narratives about the past two millennia resonate strongly with their stylistic tendencies in religious practice and in the approach of individuals and institutions to the Christian faith. It is important to note here that these differences in approach, while substantial, are not as significant as the evangelical anti-Catholic polemics might suggest; particularly since Vatican II, the areas of overlap in theology and praxis are arguably more significant than the areas in which the two approaches differ. As Christian Smith points out, Catholics agree with Protestants that individuals are justified by faith and not through good works,[39] and both the Catholic and evangelical approaches hold Scripture in high regard as a unique and special form of revelation from God to humanity (even if Catholic doctrine does not teach inerrancy as most evangelicals would understand it).[40] As will be clear, the differences in theology and practice between Protestants/evangelicals and Catholics are small compared to the differences between both of these groups and Latter-Day Saints.

Those differences remain substantial, however, particularly in the ways in which they affect the day-to-day tendencies of evangelicals and Catholics to approach their faith. Richard Mouw presents a useful representative anecdote about miscommunication between a Roman Catholic priest and an evangelical minister at a funeral, and goes on to discuss the broader implications of their differing approaches to the faith:

> The evangelical wants questions about 'how we are saved' to be addressed
> explicitly; he wants unbelievers to be invited to accept the message of
> salvation as it is set forth in simple and direct terms. The Roman Catholic
> wants to expose the unbelievers to the 'normal' rituals of the church

community in the hope that the exposure itself—quite apart from a

conscious response to a gospel invitation—will be a means of grace.[41]

As Mouw lays out, the Roman Catholic approach tends to be much more focused on the

role of the Church as an instrument of divine grace, and the Christian life taking place

within the rhythm of the normal everyday practices of the Church; the evangelical

approach is much more focused on the individual's relationship with God, with the

church serving as facilitator for that relationship and as the catalyst for the individual's

life-changing "born-again" experience accepting Jesus as his or her personal savior.[42]

Similarly, Catholic worship practices are much more liturgically-based than those

of many evangelical Protestants.[43] Evangelical worship practices tend to be centered

around "cognitive teaching, individual subjectivity, aesthetic enjoyment, and worshippers

feeling 'blessed,' 'spoken to,' or having had 'meaningful' experiences," rather than on

fixed, standardized, and historic liturgical forms. [44] In contrast, Catholic worship practices

are centered around formalized and standardized liturgical content, which are portrayed

as vernacular forms of prayers and rituals that have been used within the church for

hundreds of years. As Smith explains, the difference between experiential practices of

evangelical Protestant churches and the standardized liturgy of the Catholic church is not

merely a matter of styles of worship, but gets to "a rather more profoundly different,

basic approach to history, prayer, the communion of saints, the act of worship, human

subjectivity, Christian formation, sense of the movement of time, and more."[45] These

differences in praxis also resonate with the differing narratives about the history of the

church. Catholic narratives see church history in terms of a continuum between ancient

and contemporary practices, which strikes a clear chord with worship as a means by

which believers can experience grace through the traditions of the church. Evangelical

Protestants tend to see church history in terms of the rupture and rediscovery of the faith

in the Reformation and beyond, which resonates with a style of worship that is much

more focused on the individual's relationship with God and much less on the individual's

relationship with the institutions, traditions, and practices of the historical church (which

are dubious at best).

Protestant/Catholic Tensions in the American Narrative

But the tensions with Roman Catholic thinking are not just present in the Cosmic

Narrative; aside from the epistemological resonances between the Cosmic and American

Narratives, many of the particulars of the American Narrative also suggest a hierarchy in

which Protestantism is seen as a more pure and coherent form of Christianity *and*

Americanism than Roman Catholicism. The notion of the United States not only as a

Christian nation but as a *Protestant* Christian nation, explicitly set over against Roman

Catholicism, plays a central role in the American Narrative's *heilsgeschichte* from the

very beginning of the narrative's sweep.

Several tellings of the American Narrative present it as conspicuous evidence of

the divine plan that despite the (Roman Catholic) Columbus's explorations in the New

World, he never set foot on any land that would later become part of the United States.

Marshall and Manuel, for example, see divine import in events that led Columbus into the

Caribbean rather than northward, writing that while Columbus was exploring the northern

coast of Cuba, fierce headwinds forced him to turn back, away from Florida which "lay a

scant ninety miles away in the direction they had been steering," because "it was not

God's time to reveal the true mainland."[46] Even when Columbus reached the mainland of

Central America, it was only with great difficulty, leading the authors to conclude that by going to the mainland Columbus was "defying God's will."[47] Kennedy and Newcombe make a similar assertion, arguing that a flock of birds that led Columbus south to the Caribbean, rather than north to the American mainland, was "the hand of God," without which "America would probably have the same culture and religion as that of South and Central America today."[48] (Those familiar with the biblical story of the Exodus could be forgiven for seeing those headwinds and that flock of birds as modern forms of the pillars of fire and cloud that led the people of Israel through forty years in the wilderness while they were being prepared to enter Canaan; evangelical readers, steeped as they are in typology, might read this as further evidence of the divine plan.)

Marshall and Manuel are even more plain about this hierarchy of identity in their narrative of American history when they suggest that the heroes of their story, the Puritans, understood that God was shaping the course of the history of North America to favor their enterprise:

> A few farsighted Puritans could sense God's hand in a coincidence of
> timing that was too extraordinary to be accidental. Had Columbus landed
> farther north... Had the Spanish colonization of Florida been successful...
> Had Raleigh succeeded in settling Roanoke... Had Jamestown been less of
> a catastrophe... Had America's very existence not remained cloaked until
> the Reformation... Had her northeastern coast not been reserved for the
> Pilgrims and Puritans... To some, it must have seemed almost as if they
> were standing in the middle of a gigantic model of one of those
> newfangled pocket watches, with the wheels and gears of 'coincidence'

swinging around and meshing and turning other gears, which swung and

turned others. But they could see only behind them. Today we can see

what lay ahead of them as well and sense just how extraordinary was the

timing of the Puritan exodus.[49]

The categories of inclusion and exclusion are clear here: The religious, evangelical,

Reformed communities of the Puritans and Pilgrims are those whom God has favored to

settle the North American continent. God steered away the less-desirable elements—pre-

Reformation Europeans, post-Reformation Roman Catholics (Christopher Columbus and

the Spanish colonists in Florida), and irreligious Protestants (Raleigh's Roanoke and

Jamestown)—in a grand design to ensure that the Puritans would be the first successful

colony in the future United States. And lest one be tempted to chalk that up to the

Puritans' tendency to see God's predestined hand in everything, the authors assert that the

American story since the Puritan era has proven their view of the historical narrative even

more right than they realized.

Securing divine ordination for the Protestant domination of the lands that would

become the United States is essential for the American Narrative, as it provides another

thread of unity between the chronic time of history and the kairotic time of divine

intervention and creates typological links that further suggest that the Protestants on the

North American continent, like the Israelites thousands of years earlier, were being sent

into a land of milk and honey that God had prepared for them, while the Roman Catholics

of Spain and France were being deliberately kept out of that land precisely because God

found them morally wanting.

It is no accident that Marshall and Manuel spend multiple pages outlining the depredations inflicted by the Roman Catholic Spaniards against the indigenous peoples they encountered in the Caribbean and in Latin America. Even where Roman Catholics' dealings with indigenous peoples are portrayed in a positive light (such as Junipero Serra), they are the sole exception to "the sorry state of complacency and hypocrisy" of the Roman Catholic Church of that era;[50] as a consequence, God places artificial limits on the extent of their efforts, for example by preventing the missions on the California coast from discovering the gold that might have led Spain to devote more resources to that area and possibly put up more resistance to the Protestant citizens of the United States once the new nation's expansion reached the western coast.[51] The Roman Catholic Spaniards' enslavement of the indigenous peoples of the lands they colonized is presented as evidence that God's hand was in the failure of their efforts on the North American mainland.

In contrast, Marshall and Manuel's treatment of the conquest of North America by European-descended Protestants is much more ambiguous. The epidemics that wiped out many Native American settlements in New England in the years prior to the Puritans' landing there are presented as a form of divine providence to the Puritan colonists, providing them with ready-made cropland without the inconvenience of dealing with the land's present inhabitants.[52] When conflict inevitably does arise between the colonists and the Native Americans, the authors provide their audience with the gory details of Indian raids on New England colonies and make it clear that Wampanoag King Philip held a "thinly-veiled hatred of Christianity,"[53] thus justifying the colonists' war against his people. In Marshall and Manuel's rendition of the American Narrative, the indigenous

peoples are a literary tool rather than being agents, illustrating the superiority and divine favor bestowed upon the Protestant cause by serving as God's instrument of discipline upon Protestants while displaying the depravity of the Roman Catholics.

A Protestant Constitution

Placing the divine imprimatur on the specifically Protestant settlement of North America is crucial to the American Narrative's sweep, as it tees up the notion of the founding documents of the United States as reflective of Protestant theology and ecclesiology, and thus implicitly argues that the nation's historical success is due to the superiority of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism. The American Narrative argues that the U.S. Constitution is not only a Christian document, but a *Reformed* Christian document, which enabled the nation's founders to craft a government that would avoid the pits into which the European nations had fallen or would fall.

"The Constitution was a product of Reformation thinking," writes John W. Whitehead, crediting Martin Luther and John Calvin as having "laid the foundation for both the American revolution and the Constitution" without their knowledge (yet more evidence of the divine hand).[54] Whitehead and Schaeffer, whose *Christian Manifesto* was intended as a precursor to Whitehead's *The Second American Revolution*,[55] argue that the most important influence of Reformed Christianity on the U.S. Constitution was in the balance between two ideas. On the one hand, Whitehead writes, Reformed Christians believed that "both the church and the civil authorities were under the Bible—the law."[56] Because everything on earth and in heaven is subject to divine sovereignty, no institution has the right to defy the laws of God as expressed through Scripture; a Reformed Constitution would neither countenance nor permit any governmental action that runs

contrary to God's moral code, which is understood as the single fundamental fact that ties together the very universe. But to balance that out, Whitehead also argues that the Reformed worldview allows for "*liberty of conscience* for each man [sic] to decide what the Bible actually says," and that "no authority […] had the powers to dictate matters of conscience."[57] Schaeffer argues that over against the Roman Catholic governments of the time, which had been corrupted by their acceptance of Renaissance humanism and its "put[ting] man himself in the center of all things"[58] and privileging human institutions as mediators of divine law, the Reformed worldview could properly balance "form and freedom"—a view of positive liberty in which freedom is defined as the freedom to determine and fulfill the divine purpose, in one's own life and in society as a whole.[59]

Authority is a key axis in the Reformed worldview as presented by Schaeffer and Whitehead; while liberty of conscience and divine sovereignty are in productive tension with one another under good government, they resonate with one another when the Christian is faced with a situation in which the demands of the legal authorities run afoul of his or her understanding of divine law as expressed through the Bible. Whitehead argues for Calvin's belief that "if the civil government transgressed the divine law, the Christian was at liberty to disobey," enabling Calvin to lay out "an authoritarian political structure" that was nevertheless "under law and not above it";[60] this belief, he argues, was reflected in the Constitution as well, even if the political structure lacked Genevan authoritarianism.

Schaeffer and Whitehead thus suggest that the Reformed balance between liberty of conscience and divine authority functions as a check on the power of government by subjecting the Christian to a higher allegiance. Interestingly, though, Barton uses the

same elements to imply that Protestantism is a truer form of Americanism because

Protestants can be trusted to have full allegiance to the United States, unlike Roman

Catholics, whose devotion to the earthly authority of Rome makes their loyalty suspect:

> The Founders were not fearful of Roman Catholics but rather of the aspect
>
> of Catholic doctrine which they viewed as repugnant to America's unique
>
> form of government. Specifically, they opposed the vesting of total,
>
> absolute, and irrevocable power in a single body (the Papal authority)
>
> without recourse by the people—and they were able to point to specific
>
> examples to bolster their argument. […] It was the implications of this
>
> Roman Catholic doctrine which caused many States to exclude from office
>
> those who claimed a sole and absolute allegiance to a 'foreign power.'
>
> […] However, as already noted, this was not a rejection of Roman
>
> Catholics in general, just of those who embraced doctrines 'subversive of
>
> a free government established by the people.'[61]

Even as Barton asserts that the American founders did not intend to fully exclude Roman

Catholics from American identity, he nevertheless grants that the founders' fears about

Roman Catholic ecclesiology were valid, and that the doctrine of "the Papal authority,"

as channeled through the hierarchy of the institutional Church, was irreconcilably

incompatible with American government. Implicit in that assertion is that one who

embraces the whole of Roman Catholic doctrine (as Barton presents it) cannot be a good

or trustworthy American; insofar as any individual Roman Catholic can be trusted, it is

because he or she has abandoned the Church's doctrine of papal and institutional

authority in favor of American republicanism. In other words, Barton suggests, the

American founders intended that in order to become truly and fully American, individual Roman Catholics must be *less* Catholic. Barton suggests that Roman Catholics are obligated to prove their loyalty to the country in rejecting what Barton asserts is their denomination's doctrine of allegiance to the "foreign power" of the Pope; Protestants are subject to no such requirement.

It is useful to contrast Barton's parsing of the question of Roman Catholic loyalty with the famous example of John F. Kennedy, who defended his Roman Catholic faith against accusations of disloyalty during his 1960 campaign for the presidency in a speech to Protestant clergy:

> I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.[62]

Here Kennedy is, in effect, making an argument from what Reformed Christians might call "sphere sovereignty"—in which he saw no conflict between the American government's authority in secular matters and the Roman Catholic Church's authority in spiritual matters. Kennedy asserted that one could be both American and Roman Catholic, because those two identity categories were not mutually exclusive; he did not have to sacrifice his Roman Catholic identity in order to be a loyal American.

Barton, on the other hand, asserts that the separation of church and state is a myth and that American government has always been and was always intended to be a kind of spiritual authority as well as a secular one, promoting "Christian standards of conduct for social behavior" even while permitting those of other faiths to continue to practice them freely.[63] In effect, he suggests that Roman Catholics must become *more Protestant* in order to be loyal; they must abandon the doctrine of Papal infallibility entirely and pledge allegiance to the American government as an institution whose authority supersedes that of the Church.

Roman Catholics in the Christian Right

Despite the public face (and the bulk of the membership) of the Christian Right being primarily Protestant (and predominantly evangelical), Catholics have played significant roles throughout the history of the Christian Right. Until recently, however, those relationships tended to be more strategic than consubstantial—based less on a common vision of the nation's history and future than on bridging the divide between the evangelical leadership and grassroots of the Christian Right and the larger conservative movement (particularly the New Right).

As Ruth Murray Brown has outlined, one of the formational events for the Christian Right as a political bloc was the campaign to reject the Equal Rights Amendment in the late 1970s. For many evangelical women, the anti-ERA campaign was their first taste of political activism, and gave them an opportunity to experience cooperation as part of a truly ecumenical movement—a movement that was spearheaded by Phyllis Schlafly, a Roman Catholic[64] (even if much of the anti-ERA movement's outreach to fundamentalist and evangelical women was through evangelical Lottie Beth

Hobbs rather than Schlafly herself).[65] As historian Daniel K. Williams notes, in their

willingness to cooperate with Schlafly and other Catholics as well as with Mormon

women in the Mountain West, the evangelical women who were part of the anti-ERA

movement often found themselves well ahead of their male pastors, many of whom were

still wary about ecumenical cooperation with non-Protestants.[66]

While Schlafly enjoyed the respect and esteem of many evangelical Christian

Right leaders, she was more commonly associated with a larger conservative movement

within the Republican Party: the emerging coalition of young conservative activists who

dubbed themselves the "New Right." (This was particularly true after the anti-ERA

movement's final success in 1982; while Christian Right organizations continued to press

a primarily social agenda, Schlafly returned to her focus on national defense and foreign

policy.[67]) Other major New Right figures, also Roman Catholic, played major roles in

organizing and building the Christian Right—such as Paul Weyrich, who orchestrated the

1979 meeting between Jerry Falwell and other New Right leaders that led to Falwell's

founding of the Moral Majority,[68] and direct-mail pioneer Richard Viguerie, whose

advancements in fundraising and organizing were crucial to the success of the anti-ERA

movement and the formation of nascent Christian Right organizations.[69]

These alliances tended to be based more in political calculus (on both sides) rather

than on a shared theological vision or consubstantiality; as Williams notes, Terry Dolan,

another major New Right figure who worked to strengthen the Christian Right, was a

closeted gay libertarian who did not sympathize with the social conservatism of

evangelicals or his conservative Catholic compatriots in the New Right, but worked with

Viguerie to build Christian Right fundraising because he "wanted to do whatever he

could to oust liberals from office."[70] Further, with the exception of Schlafly in the early stages of the Christian Right (the anti-ERA movement), the alliances between Catholic leaders in the New Right and the evangelical Christian Right tended to take place behind the scenes; the faces of the Christian Right in public were evangelical figures like the LaHayes, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson.

The dominant position of evangelical Protestants within the Christian Right is not completely due to a lack of effort on the part of Christian Right organizations, which have consistently (if perhaps not wholeheartedly) made efforts to make their coalitions look less exclusively evangelical and more ecumenical. Particularly beginning in the mid-1990s, a newer generation of leaders (such as Ralph Reed) began to realize the limitations of a strategy of outreach primarily to evangelicals[71] and attempted to broaden the movement's support among Roman Catholics. As Matthew Moen writes, this attempt to broaden the movement's reach was accompanied by a shift in rhetorical strategy, from a focus on morality in culture to a focus on liberal value terms such as "choice."[72] But as he notes, even this shift in themes grew out of evangelical theology's heavy stress on "individual choice—to commit to Christ, to be 'born-again,' to live as godly a life as possible."[73] Given the Roman Catholic tendency to emphasize moral and religious life as embedded in the rituals and life of a community, rather than as a choice made by an autonomous individual standing alone before God and accepting Jesus as his or her "personal Lord and Savior," this emphasis on individualism may have undermined evangelical Christian Right outreach to Catholics in the 1990s.

More than any other issue, opposition to legalized abortion has served to knit together the evangelical Christian Right and Catholics in a common cause, even if they

have remained largely organizationally separate outside the right-to-life movement.

Notably, the story of evangelical and Catholic cooperation on abortion is largely the story

of shifting priorities and emphases among evangelicals to a position that more closely

matched that of the Catholic Church; in a very real way, evangelicals joined Catholics—

not the other way around—in making opposition to all (or virtually all) legal abortion a

major theme in their political activism. At the same time, forces at work within Roman

Catholicism throughout the 1980s and 1990s made abortion a higher-priority issue for

many conservative Catholics, thus bringing them closer to the Christian Right.

Prior to the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling and throughout much of the 1970s, political

activism in opposition to legalized abortion in the United States was generally regarded

as a Catholic position[74]—a factor which, by itself, may have contributed to some

unwillingness among evangelicals to take activist stances on the issue.[75] While many

fundamentalists opposed abortion in terms similar to those being used by Catholics, their

political influence was limited by the unwillingness of many fundamentalist leaders of

the time to work with those (like Catholics) with whom they disagreed on matters of

doctrine and theology.[76] Most other Protestants (including evangelical Protestants)

tended to view abortion as a tragic decision or as a symptom of deeper social problems

rather than as a mortal sin in and of itself.[77] Evangelical opposition to abortion prior to

Roe v. Wade was largely centered on a view of abortion as "a manifestation of sexual

permissiveness."[78] In other words, evangelical rhetoric about abortion prior to the mid-

1970s was centered on the behaviors and morals of the adults involved in the sexual act,

viewing rising abortion rates not as a sign of society's devaluing of human life, but rather

as a sign of society's steadily-declining sexual mores as the feminist movement gained ground.

Due in large part to the efforts of Francis L. Schaeffer, his son Franky, C. Everett Koop, and Tim LaHaye[79] throughout the latter half of the 1970s, evangelical opinion on abortion began to shift. Schaeffer was similar to pre-*Roe* evangelicals in framing abortion as a symptom of a society in decline—but rather than viewing it primarily as an indictment of the sexual mores of American culture, he saw it as a sign that the culture was abandoning the notion that human life itself had intrinsic value as secular humanism steadily replaced the nation's Christian underpinnings. In other words, he framed the discussion not primarily around the adults involved in the sexual act, but rather around the humanity of the fetus and its inherent right to life. Legalized abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia were framed as the ultimate signs that society had abandoned the Judeo-Christian tradition for the arbitrary ethics of secular humanism; because they represented a culture in which life itself had no value, Schaeffer saw them as tipping points that would lead inexorably to the complete dissolution of society and divine judgment if Christians did not stand up and turn the tide.

The reframing of abortion as a "life-or-death issue"[80] reflecting the decline of the very fabric of society, rather than mere sexual decadence, enabled Schaeffer to make several crucial rhetorical moves. First, with lives at stake, he could set out abortion as a *political* issue in and of itself; as a kind of tipping point between Christian and secular society, abortion could be the focus of an agenda of political activism, rather than just another data point alongside out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates in a litany of signs that Americans were abandoning the sexual mores of their parents' generation or

that feminism was causing the downfall of the American family. Abortion could be recast as a bellwether issue that reflected society's view of the value of human life: opposition to legal abortion, like slavery in the antebellum 19th century, represented an opportunity for Christians to take an absolutist, no-compromise stand and draw contrasts between their worldview and that of secular humanism.[81]

But perhaps more crucially, reframing abortion as a bellwether issue and as a sign of society's inexorable decline enabled Schaeffer to depart from the separatism of his fundamentalist tradition and advocate that evangelicals and fundamentalists work alongside any who would join them in combatting the scourge of abortion—whether they were Protestant, Catholic, or non-Christian—in a strategy of "co-belligerency." Though Schaeffer argued that those who were not Jewish or Christian would not have "any adequate basis for [believing in] the unique dignity of human beings" (as that could only be found in the "Judeo-Christian position"[82]), as long as they understood the dire social consequences of continued legal abortion, they could nonetheless be allies in working against "this individual problem."[83] Certainly if working with those *outside* the Judeo-Christian tradition was acceptable, then allying with fellow Christians—including Catholics, with whom Schaeffer had profound and irreconcilable theological differences—would also be. Abortion, being an issue of life or death, trumped any theological differences—at least for the time being.

As abortion continued to rise on the list of conservative evangelicals' issue priorities throughout the 1980s and 1990s, prominent Catholic conservatives—most notably Richard John Neuhaus—were seeking to "repoliticize" the moral and political message of Catholicism, with abortion as the centerpiece of that program.[84] Though he

had initially been part of the New Left in the 1960s, by the late 1980s Neuhaus had come

to largely the same conclusions as Schaeffer had in the 1970s and early 1980s: that

legalized abortion represented a tipping point in the decline of American society. By

declaring unborn children outside the protection of the law, Neuhaus wrote, the *Roe v.*

Wade ruling had started the nation inexorably down a path that could lead to infanticide,

euthanasia, and possibly even genocide.[85]

Importantly, in presenting abortion as a bellwether issue for Catholics, Neuhaus

was drawing not only on his own construction of American history, but also on the

writings of Pope John Paul II, who assailed legalized abortion as part of the "culture of

death." Though John Paul II wrote and spoke against abortion throughout his papacy,

perhaps his most complete argument against legalized abortion was found in a 1995

encyclical *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*; in that encyclical, he suggested that

abortion (along with euthanasia and embryonic stem-cell research) reflected "a perverse

idea of freedom, which is seen as disconnected from any reference to truth and objective

good, and which asserts itself in an individualistic way, without the constitutive link of

relationships with others."[86] This argument is remarkably similar to that of Schaeffer,

who also suggested that abortion reflected secular humanism's rejection of divine law in

favor of individualized freedom. Though John Paul II's writing could be seen more as a

summary of previous Catholic thought on abortion (where Schaeffer and Koop's

perspective on abortion represented a more significant departure from previous

evangelical attitudes on the issue), it is notable that he, along with well-known Catholic

conservatives in the United States, placed such a heavy emphasis on abortion (and other

"life issues") as a bellwether issue.

Rick Santorum, Christian Right Catholic

Rick Santorum, the most prominent Roman Catholic who explicitly allied with the evangelical Christian Right to date, has credited his awakening on social issues to the congressional debate over partial-birth abortion in 1995-96, which happened at roughly the same time as the birth of his son, Gabriel Michael, who died within hours of his birth due to severe birth defects. Prior to that experience, he had characterized himself as a "reformer" in Congress, never mentioning social issues for fear of the controversies they would awaken; after that experience, he put opposition to abortion (and, subsequently, opposition to LGBT marriage) at the center of his agenda.[87] Historian Damon Linker suggests that Santorum was one of several prominent political figures (including former Congressman Henry Hyde and Supreme Court justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia) whose views reflect the influence of a group of prominent conservative Catholics he describes as "theocons"—primarily Richard John Neuhaus, George Weigel, and Michael Novak. The theocons, Linker argues, sought to build an intellectual framework for uniting Catholics with the Republican Party's politically-conservative agenda.[88] Santorum lays out his complete moral vision in his 2006 book *It Takes a Family,* the title of which is an intentional reference to then-First Lady Hillary Clinton's 1996 book *It Takes a Village*; this moral vision, while compatible with that of the evangelical Christian Right in many ways, is based in a fundamentally different worldview.

First, Santorum explicitly cites as a foundational tenet of his political worldview the Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity: that social problems should be resolved at the level of the smallest possible social unit.[89] In other words, if a social problem can be resolved by strengthening the ability of the family (the smallest social unit) to resolve it, then it

should be resolved by doing that rather than by strengthening larger institutions, such as the institutions of civil society or the government. While this doctrine could be implicit in the worldview-forming narratives of the evangelical Christian Right, there remains in Santorum's work a fundamentally *Catholic* vision of the individual's relationship to the collective. As discussed above, evangelicals tend to emphasize religion as a matter of individual choice and individual salvation; even when evangelical Christian Right rhetors emphasize the nation as a locus for religious identity as part of the American Narrative, they are careful to distinguish this sense of religious or moral identity from salvific Christianity. One cannot be Christian, they contend, simply by one's membership in a community—whether that community is a "Christian nation," a church, or even a Christian family. Rather, one is only *truly* a saved Christian after he or she has been born again through commitment to Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior. While Santorum does not explicitly address soteriology in *It Takes a Family*, the book is saturated with the notion of subsidiary social groupings as mediating all relationships and interactions—a notion that is mirrored in the Catholic approach to religion and theology, in which the individual's relationship with God is mediated by the church's traditions and hierarchy.

Second, Santorum's view of original sin is much more limited than the conservative evangelical perspective tends to be, rooted as it is in the Reformed tradition. Santorum presents original sin as a natural inclination of human beings toward immoral personal behavior, characterizing that position as "the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview" and contrasting it with what he characterizes as "liberal" positions: Rousseau's idea that all people are naturally good, or the "postmodern materialist" idea

that people are products of their environment.[90] This, to Santorum, suggests that the solution is "*disciplining* our sinful inclinations, so that we can become something other (and better) than what we 'naturally' are."[91] Original sin, then, is a spark for personal growth and improvement, which can be overcome through the exercise of self-control and adherence to "traditional morality and traditional orthodox religion."[92]

Contrast that with the much more expansive view of original sin found in the work of evangelical American Narrative rhetors—a view which, as we have seen, they place at the very root of the governmental structure instituted by the American founders, and deeply embedded in the theology of the Reformation. Schaeffer, for example, was strongly critical of Thomas Aquinas for presuming that human reason could operate outside of the constraints of original sin, as Schaeffer maintained that "total depravity" would compromise and corrupt every single area of human life, including the human mind. The Reformed solution to the problem of "total depravity" is not (merely) self-discipline for personal improvement, but a complete reorientation of one's thinking to consistently test one's own conclusions against the timeless truth of God, as expressed through general revelation (in the lessons of history reflecting divine morality) and special revelation (in the Bible). The theistic humanism of Aquinas, Schaeffer writes, was itself a tipping point that caused the Catholic church to lose its moral bearing and slide steadily into the moral relativism of the Renaissance and, ultimately, secular humanism.[93]

Historian Damon Linker suggests that during the 1980s and 1990s, prominent conservative Catholic thinkers like Neuhaus and Weigel went to a great deal of effort to "Catholicize" American history by presenting the nation's founding principles as reflective not of a generalized Judeo-Christian worldview or specifically of Reformed

Protestantism, but instead as a "default quasi-Catholic religiosity"[94] rooted in medieval

Catholic scholars' view of the relationship between the individual and society and

centered on the *Catholic* notion of "natural law."[95] Insofar as the Protestants who founded

the nation were indebted to a theological viewpoint, it was *not* to the Reformed ideas of

total depravity or sphere sovereignty, but rather to the *Catholic* idea of natural law.

Linker summarizes the ultimatum presented by Wiegel to the nation: "Either the United

States would return to its medieval Catholic roots or the very existence of its democratic

order would be imperiled—those were America's only options."[96]

    In a 2008 speech at Ave Maria University, Santorum did not go so far as Wiegel

or Neuhaus in suggesting that the United States was "quasi-Catholic" at its founding—

but while he did acknowledge the Protestantism of the nation's founders, he implied that

it was largely a *cultural* and *institutional* distinction rather than a *theological* one.

Because the nation had been founded by Protestants, it was the Protestant institutions of

the church and higher education that were charged with defending the nation's moral

center:

> And so we saw this domino effect: once the colleges fell, and those who
>
> were being educated at our institutions, the next was the church. Now,
>
> you'd say, the Catholic church? No. We all know that this country was
>
> founded on a Judeo-Christian ethic, but the Judeo-Christian ethic was a
>
> Protestant Judeo-Christian ethic. Sure, the Catholics had some influence,
>
> but this was a Protestant country, and a Protestant ethic. Mainstream,
>
> mainline Protestants, and of course we look at the shape of mainline
>
> Protestantism in this country and it is a shambles. It is gone from the

world of Christianity, as I see it. And so they attacked mainline

Protestantism, they attacked the church, and what better way to go after

smart people who also believe they're pious, to use both vanity and pride

to go after the church.[97]

The contrast between Santorum's view and that of evangelical historians like Marshall

and Manuel is evident: While evangelical historians suggest that the particularities of

Protestant faith were the source of the nation's strength, in Santorum's narrative,

Protestantism was not strong enough to stand up to the attacks of Satan and his minions,

particularly after academia succumbed to the demonic offensive. While Santorum does

make a point to distinguish "mainline Protestantism" as the branch of Christianity that he

thinks is "gone from the world of Christianity"—a perspective that he shares with many

fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants—the thrust of his argument is that the

institutions of Protestantism lacked the qualities necessary to withstand the slings and

arrows of the enemy.

Latter-Day Saints

It is important to note that the theological differences between evangelical

Protestants, mainline Protestants, and Roman Catholics are small in comparison to the

theological differences between all three of those groups and the Latter-Day Saints. The

former three approaches (as well as Eastern Orthodox Christianity) can be described as

"Nicene," in that they accept the consensus of the First Council of Nicaea, an ecumenical

council convened in 325 CE, which established a standard theology for the church, as

expressed in the Nicene Creed.[98] Furthermore, while there are some minor differences

among the various branches of Nicene Christianity over the books that comprise the Old

Testament canon, all agree that once the books of the New Testament were completed early in the second century of the Common Era, the canon of Scripture was closed; works created after the canon's closure may be accepted as more or less authoritative by one or more of the branches of Nicene Christianity, but nothing more will reach the Bible's level as God's unique special revelation.

Latter-Day Saints, on the other hand, hold to a theology in which an additional testament is added to the Bible: a set of previously-unknown scriptures that Joseph Smith claimed he discovered buried in upstate New York. These additional books of the Bible reinterpret the basic theology of Christianity in such a way as to create irreconcilable incompatibilities between Mormon theology and the theological viewpoint laid out in the Nicene Creed. For example, Nicene Christianity holds that God is triune in nature; while there are three separate persons in the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), they remain one God and one being, a paradox that human beings cannot comprehend. Further, in Nicene Christianity, God's fundamental nature is noncorporeal; while Nicene Christians do believe that Jesus Christ was a physical human being, the Nicene Creed makes clear that this was the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity as a physical being for a short time in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation, rather than an expression of God's true nature as a physical being.[99] In Mormon theology, conversely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate beings, not a single being with three persons, who sit in council as the "Godhead." Mormon theology also holds that the Father and the Son are corporeal and physically embodied:

> The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son
>
> also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a

personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.[100]

Those are but a few of the theological differences that lead many Nicene Christian theologians to argue that Mormonism is not Christian, at least not in the same way as Protestants, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anabaptists, evangelicals, etc. are Christian. (As Richard Benjamin Crosby notes, Mormonism's own tradition of isolation and, at times, antagonism toward Nicene Christianity also contributes to the perceived separation between Nicene Christians and Mormons.[101])

For evangelicals in particular, the question of whether a given faith is "Christian" is theologically significant. Evangelical theology generally holds that while Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and other denominations of Protestantism are imperfect or corrupted forms of the true Christian faith, they are still essentially Christian; individuals within those traditions can come to know the true Jesus Christ and be saved through the teachings of their churches. Where those churches fail, it is because they have allowed compromise with the world, bad theology, or the corruption of sin to interfere with the core beliefs they purportedly espouse.

This is not the case with evangelical theologians' presentation of Mormonism, which evangelical theologians do not believe is a path to salvation alongside the Nicene branches of Christianity. Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention has described Mormonism as the fourth Abrahamic religion (alongside Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)[102], and even moderate evangelicals like former Fuller Theological Seminary president Richard Mouw, who was criticized at one point by many of his fellow

evangelicals for his outreach to Mormons, has maintained that Mormons are in need of evangelism toward the gospel (rather than having it already).[103]

Evangelical Christian Right leaders clearly also consider Mormonism a separate religion; for example, in *Mind Siege*, LaHaye and Noebel use juxtaposition to place Mormons in between Jews and Muslims (and, by implication, outside of Christianity), writing that "we are in a desperate situation, and we need to awaken the 85 to 90 percent of Americans—Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Mormon, Muslim—to the true condition of the country."[104] Similarly, Whitehead (literally) damns the Mormons with faint praise, writing that "the Mormon Church in many ways mirrors the Christian religion with its belief in the Creator and moral absolutes"[105]—defining Mormonism as *outside* "the Christian religion," albeit with enough superficial similarities as to establish a potential base for limited cobelligerency.

Hostilities and Suspicions

As Wuthnow outlines, from the 1960s to the late 1980s, tensions between evangelicals and Catholics—like denominational tensions within Nicene Christianity as a whole—eased as American Christianity reoriented itself around the liberal/conservative divide.[106] As conservatives within Protestantism and Catholicism began to more closely align with one another around shared cultural, political, and familial values, one might have expected a similar kind of *rapprochement* between evangelical Protestants and Mormons during the same time period, and particularly in the 1980s as the Christian Right was identified as a visible political force.

Even as tensions between evangelicals and Catholics were becoming less potent, however, anti-Mormon rhetoric continued to circulate throughout the evangelical world

during the 1970s and 1980s. Historian Neil J. Young argues that the 1982 film *The God Makers*, which was widely circulated within evangelical circles, played a major role in perpetuating hostilities between evangelicals and Mormons. By suggesting that the popular image of Mormon families as clean-cut, stable, and strong was a deceptive veneer designed to lure suburban American Christians into the satanic "cult" of Latter-Day Saints, the film cast a more sinister light on what might otherwise have been a major factor to connect Mormons with evangelicals in a political and cultural coalition. Screenings of the film at evangelical churches were often accompanied by literature describing efforts by Mormons to proselytize among evangelicals, or by an "expert" speaker or ex-Mormon evangelical convert who could attest to the real agenda of the LDS Church. *The God Makers* also portrayed Mormonism as part of the satanic agenda to weaken true Christianity and deceive the people of God, thus placing Mormonism in the context of "spiritual warfare."[107] Anti-Mormon rhetoric like *The God Makers*, Young argues, served an important role for evangelical identity formation in the 1980s, enabling evangelicals to "draw the limits of conservative political ecumenism" as alliances with Catholics and other Protestants around family values threatened the distinctiveness of evangelicalism.[108]

While evangelical anti-Mormon rhetoric portrayed the supposed cultural and political similarities between evangelicals and Mormons as a seductive and sinister ruse to further the satanic Mormon agenda, the LDS Church was making efforts to reorient the public face of the Mormon faith, seeking to portray it as part of "the pantheon of Christian denominations" rather than a separate and distinctive faith.[109] By establishing a link between Mormons' attempts to ingratiate themselves with evangelical Christians and

the satanic agenda of spiritual warfare against the forces of God, evangelical anti-Mormon rhetoric cast the LDS Church's ongoing attempts to portray itself as a Christian denomination and enter the political mainstream in a new light. Seen in the context of *The God Makers*, the fact that Mormons shared evangelicals' family values did not represent a potential alliance to reorient politics and culture, but rather a demonic and cultic threat to true Christianity—and efforts to bring evangelicals and Mormons together around those shared values as a political and cultural bloc amounted to a trap designed to seduce Christians into giving power to Satan.

This perspective percolated throughout fundamentalist and evangelical rhetoric, particularly those works which directly articulated their primary audience as other fundamentalists and evangelicals. For example, both of the American history textbooks for fundamentalist or evangelical high-school-age students (whether in a Christian school or homeschooled) that I examined described Mormonism as a cult, with one warning students that the religion's "false doctrines" result from "additions to God's Word."[110] (Given the likelihood that evangelical or fundamentalist high-schoolers will be familiar with Revelation 22:18, which evangelicals interpret as a warning that the curses of Armageddon will be inflicted on anyone who adds to Scripture, this is a rather potent critique.[111]) Similarly, in his book about basic Christian doctrine, D. James Kennedy set Mormonism alongside Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Science as "modern cults" that "deny the basic foundational tenet of the Christian faith, the Gibraltar upon which all of Christianity stands, that Jesus Christ is the unique God-man come in the flesh."[112] The use of "cult" language is significant, in that it sets Mormonism apart from "legitimate"

non-Christian religions (most prominently, Judaism) and strongly implies an ulterior agenda and an alliance (witting or unwitting) with demonic forces.

Anti-Mormon rhetoric presented a teleological conflict between the Cosmic and American Narratives. If evangelicals formed an alliance with Mormons, their combined forces stood a stronger chance of reclaiming the levers of political and cultural power and reinstating "traditional morality," thus reversing the moral decline portrayed in the American Narrative. In so doing, however, they would be giving not only some share in political and cultural power but also a degree of theological or cultural approval to a cult whose agenda was being guided by Satan himself—thus strengthening the Enemy's side in the great spiritual war of the Cosmic Narrative. So while Christian Right political leaders sought to include Mormons within the pro-family coalition, and Mormons played a major role in maintaining cultural conservatism in their home base of the Mountain West, anti-Mormon rhetoric set out a hard outward boundary for evangelical political identity—and Mormonism was on the other side of that boundary. This hostility and tension would ensure that for at least the first few decades of the Christian Right as an identified political force, Mormons would occasionally be fellow-travelers, but would never be treated as full allies.

Mitt Romney 2008: Assimilation

This was the context into which Willard "Mitt" Romney emerged as a national political figure in the Republican Party and a presidential contender in 2008. Mitt Romney was the first Mormon to seriously contend for the Republican nomination since the rise of the Christian Right as an identifiable political force.[113] Iowa's first-in-the-nation nominating caucuses posed a challenge for Romney, as some 60 percent of that

state's Republican caucus-goers described themselves as evangelicals.[114] While Romney did win some early endorsements from key religious conservative figures—most notably Bob Jones III—he was still facing a great deal of hostility from evangelicals like Dallas pastor Robert Jeffress, a prominent Southern Baptist minister. Jeffress denounced those of his co-religionists who had endorsed Romney, saying that Romney was "not a Christian" and his Mormonism was "a cult."[115]

While an analysis of polling data by political scientist Kimberly H. Conger in early November 2007 suggested that Romney had strong potential to connect with Iowa evangelicals because his positions on social issues were more conservative than those of rivals Rudy Giuliani, Fred Thompson, and John McCain, by the end of the month he found himself losing evangelical support in Iowa to former Southern Baptist pastor Mike Huckabee.[116] Huckabee, whose social-issue positions were at least as conservative as Romney's, offered an identity appeal for Iowa evangelicals that Romney could not match; as Conger puts it, "when Evangelicals were given the choice to vote for a viable Evangelical candidate, that is precisely what they did."[117] Huckabee explicitly courted the evangelical vote, as is evident in a Christmas-themed campaign ad in November/December 2007 in which he told viewers that "what really matters [about the holiday season] is the celebration of the birth of Christ." Some critics—particularly non-evangelical religious conservatives—saw a more sectarian message in the ad in the form of a bookshelf in the background that was lit in such a way as to look like a Christian cross, which they suggested was a not-so-subtle signal to evangelicals that Huckabee, unlike the other candidates, was one of them.[118]

But in seeking to appeal to Iowa evangelicals on the basis of shared religious identity, Huckabee (whether intentionally or unintentionally) also amplified doubts about Mitt Romney's Mormonism. In several instances on the campaign trail, Huckabee alluded to the evangelical anti-Mormon rhetoric of earlier decades, highlighting not only the theological differences between the two traditions but also the long history of suspicion and conspiracy rhetoric from evangelicals toward Mormons—a history that had been stoked by the rhetoric coming from Huckabee's own Southern Baptist denomination for decades.[119] While these allusions hurt Huckabee's standing among non-evangelical Republicans, they strengthened his appeal for many evangelicals.

Because of Huckabee's rise, questions about Romney's Mormon faith—particularly as it related to evangelicals in the Republican Party—began to increase in volume throughout November 2007. Romney responded by portraying himself as a fellow Christian with evangelicals; he emphasized his personal religiosity while downplaying the theological differences between Mormonism and Nicene Christianity, implying that Latter-Day Saints were another branch of Christianity, similar to Catholics, Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox, or Methodists, and casting evangelicals who were wary of his Mormon faith in the mold of their schismatic fundamentalist forebears. This exchange from a September 2007 interview with Collin Hansen of *Christianity Today* is emblematic of this strategic choice:

> [HANSEN:] *How do you answer evangelicals who want their President to*
> *have faith but not your faith?*
> [ROMNEY:] It depends on what they worry about. Do they want
> agreement on doctrine, and does that really effect [sic] how someone leads

as President? Or does someone want a President who shares values and

will preserve the values and culture of America? That will only happen if

people band together where we share common values.[120]

Hansen's characterization is emblematic of evangelicals' conception of the relationship

between their faith and Mormonism. To Hansen, Mormons and "Trinitarian Christians"

(as he describes Nicene Christians elsewhere in the interview) are not merely members of

different branches of the same Christian religion; instead, they are completely different

"faiths." However, by explicitly using the term "doctrine" rather than "faith" to describe

the beliefs of Mormonism in relation to evangelicalism, Romney attempted to place the

disagreement in a different frame which suggested that the differences between Mormons

and evangelicals lie in the particulars of their theology.[121] This was a potent frame,

particularly for the evangelical audience of *Christianity Today*, a magazine founded by

neo-evangelicals who defined their movement as a rejection of the tendency of old-style

fundamentalists to split with one another over minor doctrinal differences.[122] By

characterizing the differences between Mormons and evangelicals as differences in

"doctrine," Romney implicitly argued that evangelicals who rejected him because of his

Mormonism were doing so not because of differences in the basics of their faith, but

because they were seeking doctrinal purity—in effect, accusing those who rejected his

Mormonism of emulating their schismatic fundamentalist brethren in rejecting all

Christians whose doctrinal views did not exactly match their own.

This strategic choice is also evident in an interview with *National Review* reporter

Byron York in which Romney responded to criticisms from evangelicals by continuing to

elide the question of whether or not Mormonism was a separate religion from Christianity:

> You know, the term 'Christian' means different things to different people
> […] Jews aren't Christian. That doesn't preclude a Jew from being able to
> run for office and become president. I believe that Jesus Christ is the
> savior of the world and is the son of God. Now, some people say, well,
> that doesn't necessarily make you a Christian because Christian refers to a
> certain group of evangelical Christian faiths. That's fine. That's their
> view. Others say, no, anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as the son of
> God and the Savior should be called Christian. That's fine, too. I'll just
> describe what I believe and not try to distinguish my faith from others.
> That's really something for my faith to do and for the churches amongst
> themselves to consider.[123]

Romney shifted the ground of dispute from theology to authority, suggesting that the question at hand is not what Mormons believe about Jesus Christ, but rather who gets to determine the boundaries of Christianity. While stating that non-Christian religious faith should not be a disqualifier for public office in the United States, Romney also subtly set up negative self-definition as one marker of authority, creating a hard outer boundary for the circumference of Christianity: Those who identify as non-Christian, such as Jews, are not Christian. By following that statement with a personal testimony, he also suggested that the converse—positive self-definition—is also valid: Those who *do* claim Jesus Christ as savior have the authority to proclaim themselves Christian. Then, Romney presented two options for defining the circumference of Christianity: either Christianity is

defined by assent to "a certain group of evangelical Christian faiths," or it is open to *anyone* who professes their faith in Jesus Christ. In doing this, he was attempting to paint his evangelical critics into a corner, just as he did in the *Christianity Today* interview: Would they be like their fundamentalist forebears in excluding all who do not assent to the doctrines of "a certain group of evangelical Christian faiths"—thus excluding not only Mormons but also Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and many Protestants— or would they accept anyone who acknowledges Jesus Christ as savior? Finally, by suggesting that the boundaries of Christianity are ultimately a question for "the churches amongst themselves"—with the implication that the Mormon church is among those churches—he suggests that the question of whether Mormons are Christians is an *internal* dispute *within* Christianity, and thereby inappropriate for the political arena.

Romney continued on this tack several weeks later with his major address about religion, titled "Faith in America," at the George Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas; the location, theme, and text of the speech itself drew comparisons to John Fitzgerald Kennedy's famous 1960 speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association in which Kennedy attempted to assuage wary Protestants that his presidency would be guided by his belief in the separation of church and state, not the particulars of his Catholic faith or the authority of the Pope. However, as several scholars have noted, Romney in 2007 struck a substantially different tone from Kennedy in 1960[124]; while the latter expressed his belief in a secular government and proclaimed that his religious faith would not affect his decisions, the former asserted religion's importance in the foundation of the country and argued for a return to a "common creed of moral convictions."[125] Despite Romney's insistence that he did not need to submit to any

religious test in order to be a good president, he also included a proposition of his own

faith: "There is one fundamental question about which I often am asked. What do I

believe about Jesus Christ? I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of

mankind."[126] This statement of faith has been identified by journalists and scholars as an

attempt to inject sectarian discourse and identify with evangelicals who are wary of

Mormon Christology[127]; as Richard Benjamin Crosby notes, that statement's function as

a "kind of shibboleth" for wary evangelicals was made all the more stark because such

statements about Christ are uncharacteristic of Mormon political discourse.[128] Crosby

argues that this shibboleth is indicative of Romney's strategy to use the speech as an act

of "paraliptic-oath-taking"—a strategy in which Romney denied that he needed to pass

any religious test in order to be worthy for office while attempting to use subtext to

assure the evangelicals in his audience that he was one of them, in spirit if not exactly in

doctrine.[129]

Romney's strategic choice to downplay theological differences did not go

unnoticed by evangelical Christians, and many responded negatively. For example, Rep.

Bob Inglis, a Republican from South Carolina, told reporters that he had advised Romney

on the matter: "I told him, you cannot equate Mormonism with Christianity; you cannot

say 'I am a Christian just like you.' […] If he does that, every Baptist preacher in the

South is going to have to go to the pulpit on Sunday and explain the differences."[130]

Similarly, Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention took issue with Romney's

statement of personal faith: "When he goes around and says Jesus Christ is my Lord and

savior, he ticks off at least half the evangelicals."[131] Conger similarly speculates that the

controversy over Romney's religion and his response to the controversy may have,

despite the thrust of his strategy, highlighted rather than minimized the differences in religious identity between him and the evangelicals he was wooing in a caucus contest where "identities were more important than issues."[132]

Because less than one percent of Iowa's population is Mormon, it is possible (if not likely) that for many evangelicals in that state, their only encounter with Mormonism prior to the 2008 campaign season had been evangelical anti-Mormon rhetoric, which portrayed Mormon family values and social positions as honeypots positioned to draw in unsuspecting evangelicals and ensnare them with the false teachings and cultic rituals of Joseph Smith.[133] In that context, Romney's attempts to portray his faith as being basically similar to that of Nicene Christians may have strongly resonated with that narrative—a resonance that could only have been strengthened by mainstream commentators' suggestion that Romney's positions on social issues (particularly abortion) were disingenuous, as he had shifted rightward on those issues since his statewide campaigns in the socially-liberal state of Massachusetts in 1996 and 2002.[134]

Regardless, though, Romney's rhetorical presentation of his Mormon faith did not win him back enough support among evangelical Iowans to eclipse Mike Huckabee, who went on to win the Iowa caucuses. Though Romney did win some caucuses in Mormon-heavy Mountain West states, John McCain's victory in the New Hampshire and Florida primaries gave him enough momentum to carry a big victory in the twenty-one Republican primaries and caucuses of "Super Tuesday" on February 5, 2008. Two days later, Romney dropped out of the contest, effectively tabling the question until Romney's next presidential run in 2012.

Mitt Romney 2012: The Lesser Evil

Romney's Mormonism was again an issue in the 2012 election; despite his courting conservative support throughout Barack Obama's first term as president, Romney still faced evangelical suspicions as the beginnings of the 2012 primary season approached. In October 2011, the Family Research Council held their annual Values Voter Summit, where Republican presidential candidates would seek the Christian Right's support for the nominating contest. At that summit, Robert Jeffress delivered a speech endorsing and introducing Texas governor Rick Perry, in which he praised Perry as a "born again follower of the Lord Jesus Christ," while describing Romney only as a "good, moral person"[135]—a comparison that many members of the press quickly tied to Jeffress's attacks on Romney's Mormonism four years earlier. In press appearances following the incident, Jeffress did not back away from his earlier statements, standing by his proclamation that Mormonism was "a cult"—but adding nuance by arguing that it was a "theological cult," not a "sociological cult" like the Peoples Temple of Jim Jones.[136]

Though Jeffress was strongly criticized by many prominent conservatives (most notably former Secretary of Education Bill Bennett), he was still voicing opinions and suspicions held by many evangelicals.[137] Political reporter David Weigel wrote that as he talked to evangelicals at the Values Voter Summit, they agreed with Jeffress's characterization of Mormonism as a cult.[138] Southern Baptist leader Richard Land also defended Jeffress's statement by explaining in a *Christian Post* editorial that Jeffress had spoken as "a Baptist pastor answering a theological question with a theological answer" and suggesting that "secular political reporter interrogators simply did not have the

cognitive grid to assimilate and understand [Jeffress's statements] accurately."[139] But notably, Land and Jeffress were both very careful to make it clear that if Mitt Romney became the Republican nominee, they would support him in his campaign against Barack Obama.

But even insofar as evangelical leaders were hesitant to support Mitt Romney because of his Mormon faith, they were unable to unite behind another candidate to challenge him. An early 2012 meeting of evangelical leaders was convened with the intention of solidifying support behind a single Republican candidate, but that process resulted in a tepid endorsement of Sen. Rick Santorum amid accusations of rigged voting—and, according to Young, "revealed […] the lingering divisions that were also apparent in the larger Religious Right electorate," instead of unifying the movement behind a single standard-bearer.[140] Amid evangelical disunity and a series of rapidly rising and fading Republican frontrunners-of-the-moment to challenge him, Romney won the 2012 Republican nomination for the presidency and, in doing so, became the only person who could conceivably defeat Barack Obama in the November 2012 general election.

The idea that Romney was preferable to the alternative was cited by many evangelical leaders as they endorsed Romney. Land's *Christian Post* editorial is a particular example of a Christian Right leader positioning himself to support Romney in the 2012 general election; while the editorial was written in October 2011 in response to Jeffress's Values Voter Summit comments, it anticipated Romney's nomination and suggested that evangelical Christians would be the *least* likely to make Romney's Mormonism an issue. Evangelicals, Land wrote, had been "taught about Mormonism by

their pastors who have seen it as their duty to inoculate their flocks against Mormonism," but were still strongly inclined to vote for Romney if he were the nominee "when the alternative is President Obama." Land suggested that if Mormonism became an issue during the general election campaign, it would not be because of evangelicals like Robert Jeffress, but rather as part of an effort by the secular press (which had "abandoned any semblance of objectivity on political matters") to sow confusion and doubt among independent voters who were not as well-versed in Mormonism as evangelical Christians.[141]

Indeed, there seemed to be an unspoken arrangement between Romney and evangelicals throughout the 2012 campaign—an arrangement that seemed to be in place even before the nomination was decided, as Romney's status as frontrunner throughout the run-up to the primary elections meant that damaging his support among evangelicals might hurt the campaign of the only person who stood a chance of unseating Barack Obama in the general election. Romney's part of the arrangement was not to engage in the kind of rhetoric he had used in 2008 to downplay the differences between Mormonism and Nicene Christianity and claim consubstantiality with evangelicals; were he to engage in that kind of rhetoric in 2012 after winning the nomination, it would force evangelical leaders' hands and require them to explain the differences yet again in a way that would almost certainly soften Romney's evangelical support. Young notes that even in his outreach to evangelicals (such as his May 2012 commencement address at Liberty University), Romney "avoided ever calling himself a Christian or suggesting close similarities between Mormonism and evangelical Christianity."[142] Instead, Romney "name-checked beloved evangelical institutions" and appealed to "shared moral

convictions" while referring to the differences between his Mormon faith and that of the evangelical Liberty graduates.[143]

Evangelicals like Land, for their part, emphasized the danger of four more years of an Obama presidency as an alternative to Romney and some (though certainly not all) softened their own characterizations of Mormonism in their external rhetorics. As Young notes, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association removed sections of their publications and websites that referred to Mormonism as a cult after a meeting between Romney and Billy Graham at which the latter had "all but endorsed" the former.[144] Franklin Graham (Billy's son) also wrote an editorial in support of Romney's candidacy in September 2012, in which he sought to destigmatize Romney's Mormonism for evangelical voters by appealing to the "common values" shared by Mormons, evangelicals, Catholics, and Jews—values he contrasted with those of Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.[145]

As these selections indicate, there were several major differences in context between the 2008 and 2012 elections which might have contributed to the differences in rhetorical approach. First, as Young notes, Romney seemed to have "learned his lesson" about evangelical suspicions of his Mormon faith; while in 2007-08 he sought to portray his faith as (essentially) another branch of Christianity, by 2012 he tacitly acknowledged that evangelicals did not consider him Christian. Evangelicals responded by softening some of the external rhetorics that had stigmatized Mormonism as a "cult." Second, in late 2007 as Romney's trouble connecting with evangelical voters was reaching its apex, there was a candidate on the Republican side in Mike Huckabee whose past as an evangelical minister gave him the authority and the trust level to fully take advantage of

Romney's difficulties, while evangelical voters in the 2012 Republican primary did not have an alternative figure to unify around.

But perhaps more significant is that at the height of the controversy over Romney's Mormonism in October and November 2007, the threat of a Democratic president was hypothetical—and both of the top Democratic candidates were emphasizing their own Protestant faith in an effort to reach out to evangelicals.[146] As Daniel K. Williams writes, one reason that many evangelical voters warmed up to Huckabee during the 2008 campaign was that Huckabee appeared to be trying to change the image of political evangelicalism, from a hard-right stance to one that could also embrace compassion for the poor and concern for the environment; leaders in both parties thought that evangelical voters, whose enthusiasm for the Republican Party was damaged by eight years of George W. Bush, could potentially be a "swing constituency" rather than automatic votes for the Republican.[147]

But after four years of the very real Democratic presidency of Barack Obama— four years in which marriage equality had become more accepted in the country, in which the Affordable Care Act had mandated that even some religiously-based organizations fund contraceptive coverage in their health insurance plans regardless of whether contraception was compatible with their beliefs, in which the Tea Party movement had emerged as a hardline, no-compromise alternative to the Republican "establishment"— conservative evangelicals had retrenched in opposition to Barack Obama and the Democrats. And as the 2012 Republican primary campaign approached and Romney emerged as the early frontrunner (and thus, as potentially the only hope of unseating President Obama), evangelical leaders began arguing that whatever suspicions they might

still hold about Mitt Romney's faith were trumped by the known danger to their worldview posed by four more years of Barack Obama.

Strategic Ambiguity

One common critique of the Christian Right from their political opponents focuses on what kind of country they envision: if the nation's legal codes were to be reinterpreted according to their understanding, with all American laws being subject to higher "biblical principles," *which* principles would those be, and *whose* Christianity would prevail? Would it be a theology of biblical inerrancy—a doctrine held by many evangelicals, but rejected by other conservative Protestant denominations as well as many mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Mormons? Which Bible would be considered inerrant in the first place: the one used by most Protestants, the one used by Anglicans and Catholics (which includes additional Old Testament books known as the Apocrypha), or the one used by Mormons (which includes the material added by Joseph Smith)? Many Christian Right rhetors answer this critique by pointing to certain moral beliefs held in common by many Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons, as well as Jews and "pro-family" individuals who do not subscribe to organized religion.

But as discussed throughout this project, those beliefs are rooted in remarkably different narratives about the cosmos and about the country, which lead to remarkably different notions of identity and teleology. I have outlined the ways in which the Cosmic and American Narratives shape identity and time to set out a vision for the country and for the cosmos that is rooted not in a baseline "mere Christianity," as C.S. Lewis might call it—to the extent that even the "mere" form of Christianity includes those outside the Nicene circle, such as Mormons—but rather in an evangelical, Reformed, *Protestant*

worldview. Certainly, "mere" Judeo-Christianity has a place in the American Narrative as a clear outer line of circumference, outside which one is certainly *not* part of the in-group of "pro-family Americans," but there remains a clear hierarchy of American identity even within that circumference: Mormons, Catholics, mainline Protestants, and irreligious conservatives have to prove that they are willing to compromise where the policy or identity implications of their beliefs differ from the evangelical Protestant vision for the country, whereas evangelical Protestants need present no such proof, assumed as they are to be the true *heirs apparent* of the founders' vision for the country.

On September 23, 2015, Glenn Beck published a post to his Facebook page about that night's upcoming broadcast of his television show, writing:

There are seven hills of culture. If you plan on surviving as a culture you

must have these seven hills.

We have completely lost all but two and we are on the verge of losing the

last two:

Family and religion.[148]

Later on in the evening, David Barton would clarify the meaning of the "seven hills" to which Beck referred, connecting them to a theological/ideological movement known as "Seven Mountains Dominionism." That movement's main thesis is that God intends for Christians not to eschew power and wealth, but rather to adopt what C. Peter Wagner defines as the "cultural mandate[149]" to seize from Satan positions of power in culture, and use those positions to further the Kingdom of God on earth. Dominion theologians like Wagner and Lance Wallnau (the originator of the "seven mountains" concept[150]) argue that there are seven sectors of culture that Christians are called to dominate: religion,

family, education, media, government, arts and entertainment, and business.[151] Dominion

theologians argue that when the Church (aided by the Holy Spirit and guided by apostles

and prophets) has taken dominion over those seven mountains, it will be able to

transform cities, nations, and ultimately the world into the Kingdom of God on earth.[152]

What is interesting about this particular instance, though, is that Glenn Beck is a

Mormon—and thus *not*, by the standards of the dominion theologians, part of the Church

that God intends to take dominion over the seven mountains of culture.[153] While Wagner

is careful to preface his own work about dominion by claiming that he opposes theocracy

and supports a democracy with religious freedom, that is his last mention of either

concept in the book; elsewhere, he argues that where Christians encounter a cultural

phenomenon that they believe to be a result of Satan having "usurped dominion of

creation from Adam" and thus not part of the Kingdom of God—such as poverty or

disease—they are called by God to eradicate it.[154] Why would heresy or apostasy (which

is what dominion theologians believe Mormonism to be, at best) not also fall under

Wagner's mandate? And yet, here Beck stands alongside Barton, espousing the dominion

of the seven mountains—a theology in which Mormons like him are not numbered

among the divinely-empowered dominant.

This is perhaps a too-pedantic illustration of one of the strategies used by

Christian Right rhetors to account for the dissonances I have discussed: a strategic

ambiguity in terms. To evangelicals who espouse Seven Mountains theology, the

invocation of that theology is referred back to the whole edifice of dominionism as an

ideological, theological, and political philosophy; to those unfamiliar with that particular

theological outlook but who hold to another worldview associated with the Christian

Right, the reference might be seen through the lens of a softer formulation of the same idea, such as Schaeffer's notion of restoring "Christian consensus" (a consensus in which Beck's Mormonism might be less unwelcome). Similar to civil-religious language (and, at times, *incorporating* much of that civil-religious language), this ambiguity simultaneously unites and divides, creating hierarchies of identity while setting linguistic boundaries of circumference for the movement. Everyone within the larger "pro-family" movement can agree that the forces of darkness have overtaken many cultural institutions that once were dominated by Christian thinking. But "let those with ears to hear, hear"; to Christians who sympathize with dominion theology, such rhetoric functions to tell them not only that they understood the *whole* message, but also that others *did not*—thus centering them in the hierarchy of identity.

A similar phenomenon may be at play in Protestant Christian Right rhetors' invocation of "natural law" as a justification for their political beliefs. As I have indicated about Rick Santorum, prominent Roman Catholic writers have suggested that the American founders' references to natural law mark them as having an outlook rooted not in the Protestant Reformation, but rather in medieval Catholicism. Because natural law is a view held in common by Protestants and Catholics, they suggest, it represents a means by which the theological differences between various Christian traditions might be overcome; George Wiegel explicitly argues that natural law could unite conservative Christians around a common cultural agenda in a way that the evangelical Protestantism of Jerry Falwell, which is rooted in exclusivity and singularity, could not.

While the terminology and perhaps even the specifics of evangelical Protestant and Catholic renditions of natural law may be similar, the roots are quite different.

Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the most significant figure in Catholic discussions of natural law, maintained that humans are capable of understanding and pursuing the basic principles of natural law, writing that "since the rational soul is the proper form of man, there is in every man a natural inclination to act according to reason: and this is to act according to virtue."[155] For Aquinas, even the particulars of natural law could be grasped through the application of human reason alone, so long as human reason was not obstructed or "perverted by passion, or evil habit, or an evil disposition of nature";[156] he argued specifically *against* the idea that the natural law could only truly be known by those who have "the Law and the Gospel" (in other words, special revelation).[157] Though contemporary Catholic doctrine agrees that some form of supernatural revelation is necessary to enable a person to overcome what the *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes as "the power of passion, prejudice, and other influences which cloud the understanding or pervert the will," it is because these are *obstructions* to divinely-created reason, with which one can derive "a full knowledge of the moral law."[158]

As we have seen, Aquinas looms large as a villain in Francis Schaeffer's narrative about the adoption of humanism by the medieval Catholic Church, precisely *because* of Aquinas's argument that human reason is not *in itself* corrupted by the Fall, and that errors in moral reasoning are the result of other, fallen human capacities interfering with the proper application of human reason. To Reformed thinkers like Schaeffer and Whitehead, human reason is in itself a fallen capacity, and thus in need of correction from special revelation. Whitehead writes that "law in the true sense is bibliocentric, concerned with justice in terms of the Creator's revelation,"[159] and explicitly argues that notions of natural law based on human reasoning from nature (such as those developed

by the Greeks) "cannot be an effective base to law," because nature and human reason alike are fallen.[160] Thus, he writes, "any law that contradicts biblical revelation is illegitimate."[161] This view is not unique to the Calvinist wing. Wagner, a Pentecostal Christian, also implicitly argues against a Thomist perspective on natural law, writing that because Satan had seized humanity's God-given authority to hold dominion over the earth, the moral condition of humanity prior to the coming of Christ was "miserable":

> Think of the lawlessness, the atrocities, the bloodshed, the oppression, the immorality, the idolatry, the witchcraft, the wars and the disease that characterized whole people groups in all parts of the world. […] Yes, there were godly exceptions, like Job, Noah, repentant Nineveh and the Israelites during seasons when God was being glorified. However, these exceptions were few and far between compared with the bulk of the whole human race, which was under the dominion of Satan, which he had usurped from Adam.[162]

This is not merely an academic argument, either; as I have suggested, the (explicitly Protestant) American Narrative argues that the worldviews of the nation's founders were rooted in the notion that all human capacities—including reason—were corrupted by the Fall, and thus required checks and balances in governmental structure, and correction from God's revelation in moral structure, in order to be properly exercised in a sustainable, prosperous republic. The Catholic and Protestant/evangelical versions of natural law also have different teleological endpoints. Catholic natural law could work reasonably well, even if not perfectly, in a pluralistic society, so long as the members of that society were properly exercising their capacity for reason (and thus agreed on the

general outline of natural law). But Protestant/evangelical natural law requires the Christian consensus to be in place, because without a general social agreement that the moral rules for government and individual conduct are subordinate to the witness of Scripture, there can be no consensus on any legal framework whatsoever; it is impossible for an individual to authoritatively understand the outlines of natural law by general revelation alone, limited as it is by the fallenness of human reason and the fallenness of the natural world itself.

Despite this gulf between the Catholic and Protestant *approaches* to natural law, there remains at least on the surface a general agreement on most, if not all, of the *particulars* of natural law. This surface similarity functions to enable Catholic and Protestant rhetors alike to present natural law as a potentially unifying figure, and the arrangement holds so long as a certain ambiguity is maintained about natural law's epistemological roots and teleological ends. Conservative Catholics and Christian Right Protestants can agree that natural law absolutely forbids the practice of abortion and the legality of abortion as a violation of the fetus's right to life. The Catholic natural law approach, however, views legalized abortion as a sign that the culture has allowed the desire for individual license or convenience to interfere with the capacity to understand that life in all stages from conception to natural death is sacred; according to this logic, one need not be Catholic or even Christian to be able to reason similarly, as the capacity for understanding natural law through reason is shared by all people. The Protestant natural law approach, on the other hand, sees legalized abortion as evidence that the culture has lost the moorings it once had in biblical law, and is slowly descending into humanist paganism; the remedy in this approach is not to reason non-Christians into

believing in the sanctity of life, but rather to (a) bring more non-Christians to Christianity, where they can understand the sanctity of life through special revelation, and (b) persuade nominal or inactive Christians that the values they claim to hold require that they oppose legal abortion.

Internal vs. External Rhetorics

One of the means by which this strategic ambiguity is maintained is through a distinction between internally-directed and externally-directed rhetoric. Many Christian Right rhetors explicitly call for their fellow movement members to be aware of their audiences, particularly when discussing controversial issues that could be easily taken out of context or misinterpreted due to the ignorance of those who simply do not have the "ears to hear," or due to the malevolence of the movement's secular humanist enemies.

Richard Land's editorial about the 2012 presidential election in which he called Mormonism the "fourth Abrahamic religion" separate from Christianity, rather than a branch of Christianity, is a cogent example; in that editorial, Land also criticized Robert Jeffress for not "recognizing his audience" and being aware of how the "secular media" might take his words out of context to foment dissension among the ranks of religious conservatives. The "secular political reporter interrogators" to whom Jeffress was speaking, Land wrote, "simply did not have the cognitive grid to assimilate and understand correctly" what Jeffress was saying; in particular, they lacked the ability to parse the idea Mormonism is a "theological" cult (defined by Land as any religion outside "the parameters of orthodox, apostle's creed Trinitarian Christianity") that "does not behave as a cult culturally or socially." Land implied that Jeffress should have known

that describing Mormonism as a cult would invoke "'Branch Davidians' or 'Jim Jones.'"[163]

It is important to note here that Land is not suggesting that the purpose of distinguishing between internally-directed and externally-directed rhetorics is to hide the true agenda of the Christian Right or to deceive the public; rather, he suggests that giving members of the secular media or the general public content that they are incapable of properly understanding (due to their lacking the "cognitive grid" to understand it) is needlessly inviting them to misinterpret or misunderstand that content:

> Most Evangelicals who attend church on a regular basis understand the basic tenants [sic] of the Mormon faith and how they differ from the doctrinal teachings of orthodox Christianity. They have been taught about Mormonism by their pastors who have seen it as their duty to inoculate their flocks against Mormonism. And, knowing Mormonism's belief system, at least four-fifths of them are prepared to vote for Romney when the alternative is President Obama. Even Pastor Jeffress himself said he would vote for Romney in a general election campaign against President Obama.
>
> However, the vast majority of the 40 percent or so of the American public who identify themselves as "Independents" (and who decide every American presidential election) have only the most cursory understanding of the truth claims or belief system of the Mormon faith.[164]

This hearkens back to the hierarchical distinction that began this chapter; those who have the insider gnosis of "ears to hear" and to truly understand what Jeffress was saying are

elevated in the hierarchy above those who do not understand, and yet who may still ultimately act the right way (voting for Mitt Romney) even if they lack that understanding.

"Religious Freedom" as Dominant Trope

Land's editorial also gets at another strategic choice used by the Christian Right to transcend potentially coalition-fracturing dissonances between the narrative worldview put forth by their rhetoric and those of other religious conservatives. Even as the distinctions within the circumference of in-group identity remain fuzzy and ambiguous, he makes the outside edge of that circumference as clear as day: despite theological disagreements or concerns about "cult" language, evangelicals like Land and Jeffress are fearful enough of four more years of Barack Obama that they are willing to overlook their wariness of Mormonism.

This is, of course, a strategy as old as rhetoric itself: uniting one's allies by appealing to one's enemies. But as I have tried to demonstrate, the secular enemy has always been a major figure in discourse associated with the latter-day Christian Right, just as the communist enemy was a major figure in right-wing discourses throughout the Cold War. And yet, it is only recently that the supposed enmity of "secular humanists" has overcome the deep-seated distrust between the evangelical Protestant leadership of the Christian Right and Catholics or Mormons, enabling them to form strong strategic partnerships. Throughout the first few decades of the latter-day Christian Right as an identifiable political bloc, interfaith cooperation with Catholics and Mormons tended to be either nominal (claiming an interfaith constituency while still being dominated by evangelical Protestants) or tactical (one-issue campaigns like Stop-ERA or the anti-

abortion movement). So how did the relationship between Christian Right rhetoric and the situation "on the ground" change in ways that would enable more effective partnerships between evangelical Protestants, conservative Catholics, and Mormons?

The trope of societal decline has always been a staple of Christian Right rhetoric, just as it has been a staple of American rhetoric as a whole. For the Christian Right, the idea that the nation is descending into the moral abyss is one of the ideas that resonates both with the American Narrative's valorization of the halcyon days of the founding generation, and the Cosmic Narrative's pessimism about human endeavors in history. But historical events in the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century have served as crystallization points for this sense of crisis, both among the Christian Right and among their socially conservative Catholic and Mormon allies, functioning to provide a decline narrative that trumps the suspicions and mistrust that have been barriers to deep, strategic cooperation among them in the past. In particular, I highlight two such crystallization points that enabled Christian Right and other social conservative rhetors to make a narrative case not just for co*belligerency*—a tactical alliance for a single cause, like the Schaeffers and Koop argued was necessary to mobilize opposition to legal abortion—but for *consubstantiation*. In effect, social conservatives have used these crystallization points of social decline to make the case for an imagined community in peril, whereby the ambiguities of the positive message are trumped by the clarity of the negative message.

The first crystallization point I will highlight is the shift in legal and public opinion on LGBT rights over the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century. On January 1, 2001—the first day of the new millennium—the law and public opinion were

both in alignment with social conservatives' views on LGBT rights. Many states still had enforceable laws on the books banning sodomy (despite few such cases actually being prosecuted). Though a few states allowed same-sex couples to form civil unions with most of the benefits of civil marriage, civil marriage itself was not available to same-sex couples anywhere in the United States, and a majority of the public supported a constitutional amendment restricting civil marriage to opposite-sex partners.[165] The U.S. military barred openly gay or lesbian service members with its "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Only the most progressive corporations and businesses provided benefits to their employees' same-sex domestic partners or openly opposed anti-LGBT discrimination.

But over the next decade and a half, the landscape shifted rapidly. State laws against sodomy were struck down as unconstitutional in the Supreme Court's 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling. A series of court rulings, culminating in 2013's *Windsor v. United States*, established same-sex civil marriage as a right nationwide. The Uniform Code of Military Justice was revised in 2011 to end "don't ask, don't tell" and allow gay and lesbian service members to serve openly. Public opinion reversed to an almost 2:1 margin in support of same-sex civil marriage.[166] States began enforcing anti-discrimination laws against florists and bakers for refusing to serve same-sex couples. Most major corporations became openly supportive of LGBT rights, not only in their employment policies but also in their public outreach.

Advocates for LGBT liberation, conscious of the barriers that still remain in place for LGBT people, would (rightly) caution against an attitude of triumphalism on the part of supporters of LGBT liberation and equality. But from the perspective of social conservatives, developments since 2001 have represented a seismic shift in society's

acceptance of LGBT people. In 2001, the law and public opinion were both in alignment with social conservatives' views on LGBT acceptance; now the law not only acknowledges same-sex partnerships as valid and equal to opposite-sex partnerships, but also (from their perspective) *requires* social conservatives to "support" same-sex relationships by outlawing discrimination against LGBT people. If ever an evangelical Protestant needed evidence of a society losing its sense of Christian identity, or a conservative Catholic needed evidence that the culture was allowing carnal pursuits to trump natural law, or a conservative Mormon needed evidence that they would still be a persecuted minority even in a pluralist society, the public shift on LGBT issues over the thirteen years between 2001 and 2014 provided more than enough.

Young identifies one particular incident as a major crystallization point in creating consubstantiality between the evangelical-dominated Christian Right, Catholics, and Mormons: the 2008 backlash by LGBT rights activists against the LDS church in the wake of California voters' approval of Proposition 8, banning same-sex marriage. November 4, 2008, had largely been a disappointing day for conservatives, as Barack Obama won the presidency and the Democratic Party increased its congressional majorities; one of the few bright spots for social conservatives was the victory of an anti-LGBT-rights bill in California—a supposed liberal bastion. But it was quickly met with a backlash, as supporters of LGBT rights engaged in protest against the people and organizations who had backed Proposition 8—and the LDS Church, which had been one of the most visible and prominent backers of the campaign to pass the proposition, and which also conveniently had locations nationwide where protesters could express their opposition to the church's actions, bore much of the blame. Protest rallies emerged

outside LDS temples across the country, from Temple Square in downtown Salt Lake City[167] to the LDS temple on New York City's Upper West Side.[168] The vehement protests from supporters of LGBT rights garnered sympathy for the LDS Church from both evangelical and Catholic opponents of same-sex marriage—including prominent figures in the Christian Right like Chuck Colson, James Dobson, and Tony Perkins.[169]

According to Young, this was a moment of real solidarity between evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons that enabled the Christian Right to reconfigure the outward border of political ecumenism, as evangelicals and Catholics were able to identify with what they characterized as the victimization of Mormons for standing up for their beliefs about marriage. In this consubstantial vision, Young writes, they formed an alliance not around shared politics (as previous attempts, including the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition, had tried) or shared theology, but rather around the threat posed by liberals to their religious liberty[170]—a sort of shared victimage, where each group saw in the others the potential that if they did not all hang together, they all might hang separately at the hands of the secular liberals.

The 2008 election also provided the Christian Right (and the American right-wing more generally) with a symbol for all that threatened their values and worldview: the newly-elected president, Barack Obama. Since his emergence as a presidential candidate in 2007, Barack Obama's religious allegiance was continually in question. His March 2008 speech "A More Perfect Union," one of the most significant speeches of the whole campaign, was his response to videos of controversial statements made by the pastor of the church he attended, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, and Rev. Wright's connections to black theology.[171] Another theory, promulgated by former *Saturday Night Live* cast member

Victoria Jackson, charged that Obama was the Antichrist of premillennial eschatology.[172]

Some commentators on the right and the left suggested that Obama is secretly an

atheist.[173]

The most prominent conspiracy theory about Barack Obama's religion,

particularly among the Christian Right, is that he is secretly a Muslim. Promoters of this

theory argue that Obama's Islamic allegiance is rooted in his upbringing, which included

time spent in Indonesia living with his mother and his Muslim stepfather[174]; in the

meantime, they charge, Obama has publicly claimed to be Christian in order to get

political power, which he could then use to aid Muslims in their ongoing war against the

Christian West.[175] Right-wing wiki site *Conservapedia*, which is run by Phyllis

Schlafly's son Andy Schlafly, keeps a long (and continually-updated) list of bullet-point

"evidence" for Obama's Muslim allegiance.[176] These conspiracy theories took particular

hold among the Christian Right, to the point where 2015 polling found that even in the

seventh year of Obama's presidency, after two presidential campaigns and seven years as

the most recognizable and most-analyzed political figure in the country, some 43-54% of

Republicans still believed that Barack Obama was a Muslim, despite his openly

identifying as a Christian.[177]

If Mormonism still had a place in the right-wing pantheon of dangerous and

sinister religious movements at the beginning of Barack Obama's administration, the

various religious and ideological allegiances that mainstream and conspiracist right-wing

discourse attributed to President Obama soon came to occupy a much higher rung. No

matter whether he was an atheist, Muslim, Antichrist, garden-variety secular humanist

liberal, or somehow more than one of the above, he soon emerged as the personification

of the danger he posed to the Christian Right and their "religious liberty," and defeating

him dwarfed concerns about the theological differences between evangelicals and

Mormons, who shared many socially-conservative values in comparison. After he

publicly declared support for LGBT marriage equality in May 2012, Pat Buchanan

described the date of his reelection as "the Antietam of the culture war," proclaiming that

the day would decide "whether we still call the United States of America God's

country."[178]

Barack Obama's signature legislative accomplishment, the Patient Protection and

Affordable Care Act (a.k.a. "Obamacare," or the ACA), which passed in 2010, provides a

representative anecdote for the ways in which the threat to "religious liberty" has become

an overarching theme in Christian Right discourse that has served to minimize

differences between evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons. One of the requirements of

the ACA was that with the exception of explicitly religious organizations (like churches),

all employers who provided health insurance for their employees were required to include

contraceptive coverage at no cost to the employee. That provision of the law was

challenged by Hobby Lobby, a craft-supplies retail chain which sought exemption from

the contraceptive mandate because its evangelical owner, David Green, believed that

some medical contraceptives are "abortifacients," preventing fertilized eggs from

implanting in a woman's uterus—thus amounting to the abortion of a conceived child—

rather than preventing fertilization altogether.[179]

It is noteworthy that the case against the contraception mandate was brought by

an evangelical Protestant, rather than a Catholic. Opposition to all forms of abortion or

contraception has historically been identified with Catholicism, while evangelical

Protestants have tended to take a more nuanced approach in which they strongly opposed abortion while supporting the legality of contraception (if used by married, heterosexual couples) as a means of preventing unplanned pregnancies. While Green's opposition to contraception was rooted in different ideas than the Catholic opposition to contraception,[180] the fact that an evangelical Protestant was the face of a legal case that would have been viewed as the sole province of Catholics a few decades ago is further evidence that historic tensions between evangelicals and Catholics are being eroded, or subsumed, by the perceived threat posed by secularism.

It is perhaps even more noteworthy that the Hobby Lobby dispute was not over the medical or scientific question of whether or not the contraceptives in question actually *were* abortifacients, but rather over whether David Green's *belief* that the contraceptives were abortifacients was, in itself, enough to justify an exemption from the contraceptive mandate.[181] (In fact, an amicus brief filed by numerous medical organizations made the case that the contraceptives in question were *not* abortifacients.[182]) The case made by Hobby Lobby and its conservative allies—both in the courts and in the media—centered around the question of whether the government could force Hobby Lobby's owners to participate in a structure they found morally objectionable on the basis of their "deeply-held religious beliefs," without reference to whether or not those moral objections were themselves defensible according to an internal cohesiveness or logic, or an external reference point.[183]

This represents a subtle rhetorical shift on the part of the Christian Right. The central narratives of evangelical Christian Right discourse have sought to define "religion" narrowly, particularly when discussing the meaning of the term as used by the

American founders in the First Amendment—generally restricting the meaning of the term to Protestantism or (at the very least) Nicene Christianity. Other religious beliefs would be *tolerated*, but the American Narrative lays out that the clear intention of the founders of the country was for the nation to be dominated not just by a vaguely-defined "religion," but specifically by Christian (or "Judeo-Christian") values. The fact that the American Narrative roots its concept of the Christian nation in the founding era—an era that predated Joseph Smith's founding of Mormonism in 1830—excludes Mormons from this national vision. As I have indicated, one of the means by which Christian Right rhetors address the internal dissonances in identity formation between the Cosmic and American Narratives is by reconfiguring civil religion as explicitly *not* referring to a generalized sense of "religion," but specifically to Judeo-Christian theism.

In the *Hobby Lobby* case, though, the case being made to the general public by the litigants and their supporters against the contraceptive mandate was not that it violated Judeo-Christian theism, but rather that it required the business's owners to violate their own consciences. While David Green's opposition to contraception was based in his evangelical Christian faith, the public case for Hobby Lobby was that it did not matter *which* faith Green espoused, or whether his opposition to contraception was actually based in sound theological, ethical, or scientific principles; the fact that he claimed a deeply-held religious objection to contraception was *in itself* enough to justify Hobby Lobby's exemption from the mandate.

But, of course, it *did* matter that Green's objection was based in his evangelical Christian beliefs, just as it has mattered that the other prominent religious liberty cases that have been supported by the Christian Right's various legal networks have all been

defenses of the rights of conservative Christians (including Mormons) to refuse to comply with local or state laws banning discrimination against LGBT people or the Supreme Court's *Windsor* ruling requiring that civil authorities provide same-sex couples with access to civil marriage nationwide. While many Christian Right advocates defend freedom of conscience and religious liberty seemingly without reference to which religious worldview is at the basis of that conscience and liberty, their critics have rightly pointed out that their concern for such matters only extends as far as the circumference of Christian Right identity—an identity which has expanded somewhat as Mormons and Catholics were steadily accepted as consubstantial in the ongoing fight against social liberalism and relativism, but which has still not expanded to include liberal or mainline Christians, Muslims, agnostics, atheists, or practitioners of other non-Judeo-Christian faiths.

This is another case of strategic linguistic ambiguity at work, in the phrase "religious liberty." As we have seen, the concept of "liberty" is defined within the Cosmic and American Narratives both negatively *and* positively: liberty is not just the freedom from government interference in one's own affairs, but is specifically the freedom to follow the absolute authority of God's law and to fulfill God's purpose in one's own life. To put it in Schaeffer's terms, liberty is not simply *freedom*—for that is the secular humanist/libertarian view, in which all is permissible—but freedom with *form* in society, the freedom of godly and moral people to do what is godly and moral. However, the overall public perception of the term *liberty* leans much more to the negative or civil-libertarian side of the equation, where religious liberty is seen as the

ability of the individual or family to hold and practice their own faith without interference

from others, so long as their practice does not violate the rights and liberties of others.

Conclusion: The Christian Right in the Era of Trump

In September 1999, after the failure of congressional Republicans' attempt to

remove President Bill Clinton from office for his conduct in the aftermath of the Monica

Lewinsky affair—an attempt strongly supported by the leading lights of the Christian

Right at the time—the influential evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* devoted an

entire issue to questioning "Is the Religious Right Finished?"—a question sparked by the

thesis of a book by former Falwell lieutenants Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson. While several

other leaders of the movement at the time, including Ralph Reed, Charles Colson, and

Jerry Falwell, continued to insist that the Christian Right's cultural mandate remained in

full force and that there was still a prospect for winning the culture war, movement

founder Paul Weyrich took the opposite tack, arguing that while the conservative

movement had seen electoral success, it had not translated into success for the social

conservative agenda—because the culture war had already been lost:

> I no longer believe that there is a moral majority. I believe that we
>
> probably have lost the culture war. That doesn't mean the war is not going
>
> to continue and that it isn't going to be fought on other fronts. But in terms
>
> of society in general, we have lost. This is why, even when we win in
>
> politics, our victories fail to translate into the kind of policies we believe
>
> are important.
>
> Therefore, what seems to me a legitimate strategy for us to follow is to
>
> look at ways to separate ourselves from the institutions that have been

captured by the ideology of Political Correctness, or by other enemies of

our traditional culture.[184]

Weyrich's pessimism was somewhat short-lived, as the election of the openly-evangelical

George W. Bush cheered the Christian Right after the disappointment of the Clinton

years. But as Barack Obama won two terms as president, and as LGBT marriage equality

experienced one win after another in the courts, the more culturally-expansive rhetorics

of the 1990s and 2000s have been steadily supplanted—at least in terms of public-policy

priorities—by the concern for religious liberty.

Multiple commentators on religion and politics have identified this tactical shift,

particularly in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell* and

the ongoing attempts by the Christian Right on the state and local level to exempt

business owners and public officials from laws prohibiting discrimination against LGBT

people or requiring government acknowledgement of same-sex marriages. The main

public-policy priority of the religious-liberty movement is to lay out enclaves for

conservative religion by limiting the reach of government (and particularly the federal

government) on their private property or within their own private spheres, ensuring that

they will enjoy the freedom to live out their values without government interference or

coercion.[185] As journalist Elizabeth Bruenig put it in her analysis of Mike Huckabee's

2016 presidential campaign, the prioritization of religious-liberty laws indicated that

Huckabee's (and the movement's) goals were "markedly foreshortened," seeking to

"create enclaves of protection for the practice of conservative Christianity" rather than

"rescue America wholesale."[186]

In other words, Bruenig sees this shift in tactics as a complete turn from the culturally-expansive mission laid out by Schaeffer, in which there is no distinction between religious/private spaces and secular/public ones; to Schaeffer, it is the Christian's mission to sacralize the whole of culture and permeate it with Christian values, creating a cultural environment in which freedom with form can ensure prosperity and blessing from God. The notion of an entire culture in covenant with God, so prevalent throughout Marshall and Manuel's histories of the United States and throughout the evangelical reading of the Cosmic Narrative, is at odds with the short-term goal of the religious-liberty movement, which represents a return to the attitude of the evangelicals' Fundamentalist forebears: to separate from a fallen and depraved culture so that they can live holy and pure lives, awaiting Christ's return in glory. To Bruenig's eyes, the religious-liberty movement represents a tacit admission by the Christian Right that they have permanently lost the culture war.

Political commentator Ed Kilgore reads this phenomenon differently; instead of seeing the religious-liberty movement as a shift in the overall goals of the Christian Right, he argues that the push for religious liberty laws is a shift in tactics, while the overall goal of Christianizing the culture remains. In other words, the push for religious liberty represents a new phase of the culture wars, rather than surrender by the losing side; the Christian Right is seeking not to create enclaves for their values, but rather beach-heads, which can serve as a base for expansion and growth.[187] Pointing to the widespread acceptance of religious-liberty language and culture-war tropes among the (then) 2016 Republican presidential primary field, Kilgore argued that the culture wars

remain alive and well within the conservative movement, even if they were represented

by the tactical shift to a religious-liberty strategy.

The dissonances between the Cosmic and American Narratives regarding the

future of the American experiment (and, indeed, the future of all human endeavor) create

spaces for rhetorical flexibility as well as contradiction; because the narratives contain

positive and negative visions for the future of the human institutions of the nation, rhetors

have the tools to suggest that the nation is constantly hanging on the precipice, with the

decisions of the present moment representing a critical turning point not only for the

present generation, but implicitly for the entire future of the cosmos. And by reading the

symbols of Americanism as a coded language representing Christian domination and by

demonizing the secular-humanist "other," the Christian Right has been able to resolve

issues of intramovement identity and circumference. The increasing use of the language

of religious liberty has enabled Christian Right rhetors to expand the circumference of

consubstantiation even further, by presenting Mormons and Catholics as similarly

aggrieved and under threat from the increasing power of the enemy.

It is noteworthy that in the 1999 *Christianity Today* column I highlighted earlier,

Paul Weyrich characterized the victor of the culture wars, the antagonist of the Christian

Right, as "the ideology of Political Correctness."[188] Negative rhetoric about "political

correctness" abounded through the Christian Right literature of the 1990s and 2000s, as

rhetors suggested that it represented the linguistic arm of the secular-humanist agenda.

Political correctness, D. James Kennedy argued, was infiltrating the teaching of history,

erasing "any good that America has done" and removing any hint of the influence of

Christianity on the nation.[189] Robertson argued that political correctness represented an

attack on the family by the "new world order," and that it was normalizing sins like adultery, fornication, and homosexuality.[190] Tim and Beverly LaHaye wrote that political correctness was leading people to disdain the "wholesome kind of lifestyle" of previous generations, and (Tim) LaHaye and Hindson argued that political correctness was destroying Western culture entirely by removing Christian morality from the culture's language.[191]

In a rhetorical context such as that, the religious-liberty movement could easily be seen as the final battle against the forces of political correctness and their efforts to control not only the language people use, but also the way they behave; to a Christian Right adherent, laws requiring Christian bakers or florists to serve same-sex weddings, or laws requiring county clerks to sign off on same-sex civil marriages, represent yet another encroachment by the forces of "political correctness" into the lives of traditional Christians.

Perhaps this explains evangelical Christians' general support for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election—a relationship that will certainly be a major topic of discussion among future rhetorical scholars as they analyze the 2016 election. Though evangelicals' relationship with Trump was not nearly as strong as the relationship they had with other 2016 contenders like Bobby Jindal or Mike Huckabee, he still garnered significant support among evangelical Christians, netting the endorsements of evangelical leaders like Jerry Falwell, Jr., and Tony Perkins, and enjoying slightly more evangelical support in the polls than Mitt Romney did at a similar point in his 2012 campaign.[192] The depth of Trump's evangelical support has mystified some political commentators, who see him as the candidate of the 2016 field who would have been *least* appealing to the

Christian Right in many ways. Trump has proudly engaged in numerous extramarital dalliances on his way to his third marriage (to a former model who is decades younger than he is), his culture-war bona-fides of opposition to abortion and LGBT marriage equality are shaky at best, he enjoys an ostentatious and luxurious lifestyle in New York City that seems completely at odds with the "wholesome kind of lifestyle" celebrated by Christian Right commentators of the past like the LaHayes, and where he has expressed his nominally-Christian beliefs, he has revealed an understanding of Christian theology that is flawed *especially* by evangelical standards. The perspective offered by this project might offer several potentially fruitful starting points for understanding this relationship.

In justifying their support for Trump, several prominent evangelicals have engaged in typological arguments, reading history backward (as in the Cosmic Narrative) as well as forward. In his endorsement of Trump in March 2016, Jerry Falwell, Jr. drew a typological comparison between Trump and the biblical character of King David: a man who, despite his personal flaws, nevertheless earnestly sought after God and received God's blessing as a result.[193] Similarly, Lance Wallnau (originator of Seven Mountains Dominionism) suggested that Trump is a latter-day Cyrus, the biblical Persian king who allowed the exiled Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple; while Cyrus would remain a "heathen king" (in Wallnau's words), he nevertheless served as God's "anointed" to restore Israel, just as Trump, while not a Christian himself, represented a "direct promise to the church and restoration to society."[194]

Wallnau also explicitly alludes to the notion that Christians are "losing influence" in society, as a "powerful elite" in the "peak institutions of government, law, academia, journalism, banking, and entertainment" are holding the gates and keeping the Christian

majority out of those arenas, in part by demonizing conservative Christians using the terms of political correctness.[195] One of the themes of Trump's campaign has been his opposition to political correctness. The very first event of his campaign featured a tirade against Mexican immigrants that easily transgressed the boundaries of "politically correct" campaign rhetoric, and the pattern of his campaign ever since has been to find new and different ways to break the "rules" of ordinary political campaign rhetoric. He has ridiculed a physically-disabled reporter,[196] engaged in sexist attacks against his female critics[197], and railed against Muslims (and particularly the Muslim parents of a U.S. Soldier killed in Iraq, who spoke at the Democratic National Convention).[198]

Could Trump's ongoing quest to transgress the boundaries of acceptable discourse in the 2016 election be a major factor in his appeal to Christian Right rhetors, who see themselves as consubstantial with him as he is subjected to a chorus of critique from the national press, the "establishment" of both political parties, and other cultural elites? Could they see the hope that their beliefs, which they also characterize as "politically incorrect," could be given more expression and space by his relentless attacks on the edifice of political correctness? As Trump promises his supporters that "we are going to say 'Merry Christmas' again," (as opposed to "Happy Holidays"), do evangelical Christians see a promise that Christianity will be restored to its position at the top of the culture's religious hierarchy, or that the "true" meaning of American civil-religious symbology will be respected and revered by all?[199]

Notes

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[1] Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 153.

[2] Ibid., 105.

[3] I use "Latter-Day Saints" and "Mormons" interchangeably; the official website of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints consistently refers to LDS members as "Mormons," and does not suggest that the term has any pejorative meaning in their definition of the term. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, "Mormons." Online source, accessed 2 January 2017. https://www.lds.org/topics/mormons?lang=eng

[4] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7.

[5] Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 192.

[6] Ibid., 205.

[7] Ibid., 207.

[8] Ibid., 217-20.

[9] Ibid., 231.

[10] Ibid., 234-35.

[11] Ibid., 240-41.

[12] Ibid., 250-52.

[13] Ibid., 251.

[14] Ibid., 259.

[15] Ibid., 264-67.

[16] Robert Wuthnow, The Restructuring of American Religion, Paperback ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 21-23.

[17] Ibid., 75.

[18] George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture.* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150.

[19] Ibid., 68.

[20] Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 74.

[21] Christian Smith, *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 1.

[22] Richard J. Mouw, *The Smell of Sawdust: What Evangelicals Can Learn from their Fundamentalist Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 109.

[23] Mouw, *The Smell of Sawdust*, 109-10.

[24] Vincent Crapanzano, *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 329.

[25] Jerry Falwell, *Why I Believe Jesus Christ May Return in the 1990s* (Lynchburg, VA: Old Time Gospel Hour, 1990), 31.

[26] Ibid., 46.

[27] Ibid., 62.

[28] Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), 32.

[29] Ibid., 52.

[30] D. James Kennedy, *Why the Ten Commandments Matter* (New York: Warner Faith, 2005), 47.

[31] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 182.

[32] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 39.

[33] Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 10-11.

[34] Ibid., 269.

[35] Ibid., 269.

[36] Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

[37] Smith, *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps,* 60. Later in the same chapter, Smith also echoes many Catholics' critique of the evangelical claim to a tradition-free epistemology based on *sola scriptura*, pointing out that the concept of the Trinity, while initially based in Scripture, was heavily influenced by the very church fathers condemned by many evangelicals as part of the "great apostasy" of the fourth century of the Common Era.

[38] Ibid., 64.

[39] Ibid., 80.

[40] Ibid., 71.

[41] Mouw, *The Smell of Sawdust*, 113.

[42] Ibid., 112.

[43] This is, again, a generalization, as some evangelical denominations—like the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church or the Anglican Church of North America, which broke away from the Episcopal Church over the perceived liberalization of the latter—have

retained their denominations' historical focus on liturgy in worship practice.

Additionally, many scholars of Christian worship would argue that evangelical worship

follows liturgical patterns as well, even if those patterns are not written or codified in any

formal way.

[44] Smith, *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps*, 98.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *God's Plan for America: The Light and the Glory, 1492-1793* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2009), 45.

[47] Ibid., 65.

[48] D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2003), 12.

[49] Marshall and Manuel, *The Light and the Glory,* 192-93.

[50] Ibid., 72.

[51] Ibid., 76.

[52] Ibid., 160.

[53] Ibid., 271.

[54] John W. Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution* (Charlottesville: The Rutherford Institute, 1982), 201-02.

[55] Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 195.

[56] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution*, 202.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 51.

[59] Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 71.

[60] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution*, 202.

[61] David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1996), 26-27.

[62] John F. Kennedy, "Transcript: JFK's Speech on His Religion," *NPR*, 5 December 2007. Accessed September 7, 2015.

http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16920600

[63] Barton, *Original Intent*, 70. Emphasis removed from original.

[64] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 242.

[65] Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), 61.

[66] Williams, *God's Own Party,* 110.

[67] Brown, *For a "Christian America,"* 172.

[68] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 295n18.

[69] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 242

[70] Williams, *God's Own Party,* 169

[71] R. Scott Appleby, "Catholics and the Christian Right: An Uneasy Alliance," in *Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective,* Corwin E. Smidt and James M. Penning, eds. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 93.

[72] Matthew C. Moen, *The Transformation of the Christian Right* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 129.

[73] Ibid., 129.

[74] Brown, *For a "Christian America,"* 205.

[75] William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America,* revised trade paperback ed. (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 193.

[76] Williams, *God's Own Party,* 116.

[77] Ibid., 114-15.

[78] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 243.

[79] Brown, *For a "Christian America,"* 205.

[80] Francis Schaeffer, C. Everett Koop, and Mildred F. Jefferson, "The Common Questions," in *Plan for Action: An Action Alternative Handbook for Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* Francis A. Schaeffer, C. Everett Koop, M.D., Jim Buchfuehrer, and Franky Schaeffer V, eds. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 68.

[81] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 223.

[82] Schaeffer et al., "The Common Questions," 67.

[83] Ibid., 68.

[84] Damon Linker, *The Theocons: Secular America Under Siege* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 69.

[85] Ibid., 77.

[86] "The Vatican's Summary of *Evangelium Vitae*." 30 March 1995. Online source; found on the website for "Priests for Life," accessed 15 February 2016.

http://www.priestsforlife.org/magisterium/evvatsummary.htm

[87] Rick Santorum, "Speech at Ave Maria University." Delivered 29 August 2008.

[88] Linker, *The Theocons*, 89.

[89] Rick Santorum, *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 69.

[90] Ibid., 212-13.

[91] Ibid., 212.

[92] Ibid., 213.

[93] Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 81.

[94] Linker, *The Theocons*, 70.

[95] Ibid., 73.

[96] Ibid., 72.

[97] Santorum, "Speech at Ave Maria University."

[98] While some branches of evangelicalism—particularly those from the Church of Christ or Disciples traditions—explicitly reject the whole notion of creeds, their theological outlooks nevertheless continue to be compatible with the Nicene Creed.

[99] Nicene Creed.

[100] Doctrines & Covenants 130:22

[101] Richard Benjamin Crosby, "Mitt Romney's Paralipsis: (Un)Veiling Jesus in 'Faith in America,'" *Rhetoric Review* 32, no. 2 (2013), 125.

[102] Neil J. Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 291.

[103] Ibid., 258, 292-93.

[104] Tim LaHaye and David Noebel, *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 254.

[105] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution*, 106

[106] Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*.

[107] Young, *We Gather Together*, 194-96

[108] Ibid., 197

[109] Ibid., 196

[110] Rachel C. Larson and Pamela B. Creason, *The American Republic for Christian Schools* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1999), 282.

[111] Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, *Exploring Bible Prophecy from Genesis to Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2006), 545.

[112] D. James Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth: Basic Christianity and What It Means in Your Life* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1985), 41.

[113] Mitt Romney's father George Romney (also a Mormon) had been a contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968, running as a moderate Republican in an era when evangelicals did not hold nearly as much sway within the GOP as they would forty years later. (In other words, the Republican Party of Mitt Romney was, in a very real sense, not his father's Republican Party.) More recently, Orrin Hatch ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000, but because he was a distant also-ran in the shadow of George W. Bush and John McCain who ended his campaign shortly after finishing fifth in the Iowa caucuses, the tensions between Mormons and evangelicals did not become a prominent part of the political discourse during that election season.

[114] Young, *We Gather Together*, 270

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[116] Kimberly H. Conger, "Evangelicals, Issues, and the 2008 Iowa Caucuses," *Politics and Religion* 3 (2010), 144.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Young, *We Gather Together*, 270-72

[119] Ibid., 270, 273

[120] Collin Hansen, "Latter-Day Politics: Mitt Romney Believes American Values, Not Mormon Doctrine, Should Rule a President," *Christianity Today*, 26 September 2007. Online source, retrieved 30 December 2015.

http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/september/34.74.html

[121] In other instances, Romney did refer to Mormonism as a "faith"; for example, in his "Faith in America" speech: "My church's beliefs about Christ may not all be the same as those of other faiths." However, notably, he defines Mormonism as a faith not in opposition to a *singular* Christian faith, but in opposition to *plural* Christian faiths—suggesting, again, that Mormonism is another branch of the Christian tree, like Catholicism, Lutheranism, etc. Mitt Romney, "Faith in America," speech delivered 6 December 2007. Transcript of remarks as prepared for delivery available online, accessed 21 December 2016. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16969460

[122] Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 32-33, 54-55.

[123] Byron York, "Downplay My Faith? 'That's Not Going to Happen,'" *National Review*, 19 November 2007. Online source, retrieved from Internet Archive on 30 December 2015.

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[125] Romney, "Faith in America."

[126] Romney, "Faith in America."

[127] Medhurst, "Mitt Romney, 'Faith in America,' and the Dance of Religion and Politics in American Culture," 203-05, 214.

[128] Crosby, "Mitt Romney's Paralipsis," 127.

[129] Ibid., 120.

[130] Michelle A. Vu, "Romney Advised Not to Equate Mormons, Christians," *Christian Post*, 31 October 2007. Online source, retrieved 30 December 2015.

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Conger, "Evangelicals, Issues, and the 2008 Iowa Caucuses," 144.

[133] Mormons comprised 0.52% of the Iowa population in 2000, rising to 0.81% of the Iowa population by 2010. "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints States (2010)," *Association of Religion Data Archives*. Online source, accessed 16 January 2016. http://www.thearda.com/ql2010/QL_S_2010_2_1026c.asp. "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints States (2000)," *Association of Religion Data Archives*. Online source, accessed 16 January 2016. http://www.thearda.com/ql2010/QL_S_2000_2_1026c.asp.

[134] When running for statewide office in the socially-liberal state of Massachusetts during the 1990s and early 2000s, Mitt Romney had staked out a moderate position on abortion, proclaiming in a 2002 debate that while he was personally opposed to abortion, he would "preserve and protect a woman's right to choose." But during his tenure as governor, citing the debate over stem-cell research, Romney shifted his position on reproductive choice, and by the beginning of the 2008 campaign season he had adopted a stance in opposition to abortion rights. "Romney on Abortion - 2002." YouTube video, posted by *Open Source Politics* on 19 February 2007. Online source, accessed 16 January 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_w9pquznG4. Brian C. Mooney, Stephanie Ebbert, and Scott Helman, "Ambitious Goals; Shifting Stances," *The Boston Globe*, 30 June 2007. Online source, accessed 16 January 2016. http://www.boston.com/news/politics/2008/specials/romney/articles/part7_main/

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[136] Luke Johnson, "Robert Jeffress: Mormonism is a Cult, but a 'Theological Cult,'" *The Huffington Post*, 10 October 2011. Online source, accessed 7 September 2015.

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[137] David Weigel, "Mitt Romney Zings Perry on Mormon-Bashing — Very, Very,

Subtly," *Slate*, 8 October 2011. Online source, accessed 23 January 2016.

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[138] David Weigel, "Values Voters Summit: Ron Paul in a Godly Mood, Bill Bennett in a

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[140] Young, *We Gather Together*, 288

[141] Land, "Mormons, Christianity, and Presidential Elections."

[142] Young, *We Gather Together*, 288

[143] Ibid., 288-89

[144] Ibid., 291-92

[145] Franklin Graham, "Franklin Graham: Substance Trumps Sectarianism," *USA Today*,

25 September 2012. Online source, accessed 24 January 2016.

http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2012/09/25/graham-evangelicals-mormons-

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[146] Williams, *God's Own Party,* 273. While Barack Obama's own religious faith and his relationship with the Rev. Jeremiah Wright would become a source of controversy during the 2008 primary campaign, that controversy had not yet surfaced in a major way by the end of 2007. The height of the Obama/Wright controversy occurred in March 2008, one month after Romney had dropped out of the contest, tabling the question of his Mormonism for the time being. In late 2007, all of the major Democratic candidates were still highlighting their faith as central to their narratives.

[147] Ibid., 272-73

[148] Glenn Beck, 23 September 2015 post on Facebook. Accessed 27 February 2016. https://www.facebook.com/GlennBeck/posts/10153659768883188

[149] C. Peter Wagner, *On Earth as it Is in Heaven: Answer God's Call to Transform the World* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2012), 48.

[150] Lance Wallnau, "The Seven Mountain Mandate," in *Reformers Pledge*, Linda Radford, ed., (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2010), 178.

[151] Wagner, *On Earth as it Is in Heaven*, 144.

[152] It is important to note here that many prominent evangelical theologians associated with the Christian Right, such as John MacArthur, disagree strongly and vehemently with Wagner and his fellow dominion theologians, particularly in the latter's acceptance of "open theism" which holds that God allows human beings to shape history through their own actions in ways that God chooses not to foreknow, as well as the latter's rejection of premillennial dispensationalism and its pessimism toward worldly structures of government and culture. However, that is not germane to my point here.

[153] Jim Garlow makes this clear in his discussion of the battle over Proposition 8 in California; evangelical Protestants and Catholics working together fall under the banner of "ecumenism" *within* the Christian religion, while Mormons appear alongside Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims when Garlow discusses "bridging" *between* religions. Jim Garlow, "Reformation of Marriage," in *Reformers Pledge*, Linda Radford, ed., (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2010)*,* 135-137.

[154] Wagner, *On Earth as it Is in Heaven*, 174-75.

[155] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 94.3. Online source, found at *newadvent.org*, accessed 5 March 2016. http://www.newadvent.org/summa/2094.htm#article1

[156] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 94.4.

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[158] "Natural Law," *Catholic Encyclopedia*. Online source, newadvent.org, accessed 5 March 2016. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09076a.htm

[159] Whitehead, *The Second American Revolution*, 73

[160] Ibid., 74

[161] Ibid.,, 74

[162] Wagner, *On Earth as it Is in Heaven*, 69-70.

[163] Land, "Mormons, Christianity, and Presidential Elections."

[164] Ibid.

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Mart Green, and Darsee Lett, Civil Action No 13-354. Online source, accessed 4 June 2016. http://sblog.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/13-354-bs-1-copy.pdf

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