CREEPING CRUSADE: INTERPRETATION, DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE LEFT BEHIND CORPUS. RHETORIC AND SOCIETY IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION 7

by

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DECLARATION

Student Number: 536-786-7

I declare that

CREEPING CRUSADE: INTERPRETATION, DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE LEFT BEHIND CORPUS: RHETORIC AND SOCIETY IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION 7

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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MARGARET MOLLETT   3 February 2010

ABSTRACT

While the Left Behind Corpus may be commended for being an effective tool for evangelism, the question arises of whether or not its themes engender a theology of extermination, indeed a creeping crusade; "creeping" in the sense of it being a movement of stealth and not one of high visibility – "crusade" in the sense of a militaristic movement, similar to that of the medieval crusades.

I span my research across three artefacts in the LB Corpus in terms of its embedded interpretation, discourse and ideology; in fact three separate entities for explanatory purposes, but in effect they form a single entity of interaction and cross-production. I am therefore extending many niches of research and critical discourse to what I envisage as the wider context of the LB Corpus: its potential for social construction, and its enigmatic connections with other apocalyptic-driven and crusade-like movements. Based as it is on "consistent literalism," the LB Corpus can only be countered by an exegetical approach that situates the foundational text for the Left Behind phenomenon, Revelation 7, in its historical setting, while taking cognisance of the particularities of early Christianity, with its Jewish heritage lived out in a Graeco-Roman environment.

In offering an alternative reading, I take some cues from Vernon Robbins' socio-rhetorical approach and draw from perspectives of theorists across several disciplinary fields in pointing out anomalies in a consistent literalism driven interpretation of Revelation 7.

Key terms: Apocalypticism; Crusade; Left Behind; LaHaye; Premillennial Dispensationalism; Dominionism; Consistent Literalism; Revelation; Socio-rhetorical Criticism

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PREFACE

Frank Kermode describes Apocalypse as "depending on a concord of recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us 'in the middest'"[1] But many difficulties, he says, arise from the expectation that the figures must conform to the future: "We ask questions as, "Who is the Beast from the land?" the Woman Clothed with the Sun? . . . "Where, on the body of history shall we look for the scars of that three-and-a-half reign?"[2]

Yet as Kermode intimates, "It is not expected of critics as it is of poets that they should help us make sense of our lives; they are bound only to attempt the lesser feat of making sense of the ways we try to make sense of our lives." I come therefore not as poet but as critic, performing the lesser feat of making sense of the ways in which latter-day apocalyptists are making sense of future predictions – the Left Behind Corpus being a prime example.

A number of factors contributed to the compelling interest in the subject chosen: past studies in History of Art, Communication Science, Biblical Studies, and most importantly, even before I opened a Left Behind novel for the first time I beheld in my mind's eye: "Then I saw another angel come up from the East, holding the seal of the living God . . . I heard the number of those who had been marked with the seal, . . . one hundred and forty-four thousand marked from every tribe of Israel . . . "After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue . . . (Rev 7: 9). My questions are who are these people, from whence do they come and "what on earth," and what "for heaven's sake," have they to do with a "Creeping Crusade"?

I am deeply indebted to Professor Eugene Botha who assisted me through the proposal stage, and Professor Gerhard van den Heever who has guided,

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[1] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.
[2] Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 8.

DISCLAIMERS

Given the scope of the thesis one can expect that a sizeable number of primary as well as secondary works have been consulted and cited. With due respect to the intentions of authors and conventions of citation, I wish to clarify the following issues:

1. Citations

The aim as this thesis, as set out in Chapter 1, undertakes the analysis of select passages from the material in the LB Corpus. Three of these are found in Chapter 4: Three Videocasts from the Future, an extract from Tribulation Force, Chapter 23 and a synopsis of the Left Behind video game, in addition to which are random citations in other chapters. The task of identifying rhetorical discourse in these scripts necessitates a verbatim citation of core material. Bearing in mind the risk of misrepresentation, the character of Left Behind is best understood by allowing it to speak for itself. Within the context of critical comment I have attempted to do this within the parameters of fair use.

2. Colloquial Language

It should be noted that much of the discourse, the cited texts in the LB Corpus and samples of responses to it, is in colloquial language, and therefore an integral part of the discourse analysed. This characteristic often flows into the academic discourse, and where required, colloquial terms external to cited material will be enclosed in inverted commas. This leads to the next point.

3. Stock Phrases, Clichés and Buzzwords in the public domain

In a field such as apocalyptic generation of stock phrases especially spun around key words is inevitable. For example, the event of the Rapture is such a pivotal event in the end-time scheme that there is a "before" and an "after," and

therefore to "be ready" is highly desired and to "be left behind" deeply regrettable. From these arise numerous stock phrases, clichés and buzzwords that wend their way into popular apocalyptic discourse and as a result of constant repetition circulate in the public domain, with no further concern to their origin – unless of course a researcher wishes to trace this in a dedicated study. Even researchers and commentators are inclined to repeat words and phrases particularly of a binary kind: "insiders and outsiders," "us and them," being the most common.

4. *Non-cited material*

The informal guide to Dominionist-orientated movements (Table IX) is derived from a broad base of primary and secondary material without reference to any author in particular. While I have scrupulously attempted to construct a true reflection of what may be understood by the term "Dominionism," I cannot vouch for complete veracity of the finer details. The nuanced and sometimes obfuscating nature of the movements and their doctrines, discourse and structures implies that any assessment is approximate and provisional. Ultimately the purpose of the table and accompanying comments is to provide not a definitive study but rather a thumbnail guide to the apparent Dominionist network in relation to issues inherent in the LB Corpus.

GLOSSARY OF SELECT TERMS

Amillennialism is the belief, attributed to Augustine of Hippo, that the thousand year period mentioned in Revelation is not literally a thousand years, but figurative of the reign of Christ between his resurrection and second coming.

Cessationism takes the stand that charismatic gifts – speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, miracles, and so forth, were divinely granted for the establishment of the Church and therefore ceased at the closure of the apostolic period.

Dominionism is based on the belief that the Bible mandates Christians to take over and occupy secular institutions and national government. Dominionists seek to establish a theocracy in United States whereby the Constitution and Bill of Rights will be an extension of Old Testament laws.

Dual Covenant Theory holds that Jews, by virtue of their ethnicity have a covenant with God which dispenses them from believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Jesus Christ; they are saved by Law while Gentiles are saved by Grace.

Dispensationalism divides history into seven dispensations: (1) Innocence – from the creation of Adam and Eve until the fall; (2) Conscience – from the fall to Noah's flood; (3) Human Government - from Noah to Abraham; (4) Promise – Abraham's time to Moses; (5 -6) Law from Moses to grace through Christ; (7) Millennium - the future 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. The interpretative method of dispensationalism, attributed to John Darby rests on three principles: (1) A consistently literal principle of interpretation, particularly of Bible prophecy; (2) The recognition of a distinction between Israel and the Church; (3)

Acceptance that the primary purpose of God is his own glory rather than individual salvation.

Futurism is essentially premillennialist insofar that it projects end-time scenarios as found in the books of Daniel and Revelation to a future period when the Antichrist will emerge after the so-called rapture, and take global control until the Second Coming of Christ when he and the False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire. See Premillennialism for different futuristic views.

Historicism lays the text of Revelation over the panorama of the history of the Church, a prophetic scheme becoming visible in which world events match with passages in Revelation. Contrary to futurism, historicism rejects belief in the rapture or a yet unrevealed antichrist, rather that he has already been identified as the papal institution.

Idealism expresses an amillennialist view that the book Revelation does not relate to any historical events but only symbolises the ongoing struggle between good and evil during the church age until Christ returns. Apocalyptic images do not refer to future events, but are messages written to encourage suffering Christians of any place or era, to persevere until the end.

Millenarianism (millennialism, chiliasm) refers to belief in a literal thousand year period during which Satan is bound and Christ will reign on earth. While Millenarianism and Millennialism are used interchangeably the former is more associated with the thousand years as conceived by a broad spectrum of apocalyptic groups from any tradition, and the latter by apocalyptic groups within Christianity.

Postmillennialism believes that Christ will return after thousand years, during which God's kingdom is established and the entire world becomes Christianised as a result of wide-scale evangelisation and social outreach. This view is held by less radical Dominionists and Reconstructionists.

Premillennialism is divided into (1) Pretribulationists who believe Christians, then alive, will be taken up to meet Christ before the Tribulation begins; (2) Midtribulationists (pre-wrath) that believe the rapture of the faithful will occur halfway through the tribulation, but before it reaches a peak; (3) Post-tribulationists that believe that Christians will only be raptured after the Tribulation has run its course.

Preterism takes an opposite view to premillennialism by insisting that Revelation refers to events during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, and therefore could not have occurred later than 70 C.E. Since Preterism holds the view that Revelation has already been fulfilled in the early centuries of the church and therefore reflects on the victories of the church over Judaism and pagan Rome.

Reconstructionism is a form of Dominionism attributed to Rousas Rushdoony, founder of the Chalcedon Foundation. In view of a mandate given to them by God, believers become "vice-regents" thus reclaiming dominion over human society by enforcement of Pentateuchal law and according to the principles of free market capitalism and anti-socialism.

Supercessionism as a "replacement theology" runs contrary to Dual Covenant Theory in that it views the New Covenant as nullifying all previous covenants, the implication being that all the promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Christ and the Church.

Serpent-Seed Theory (Seedline Doctrine) teaches, with variations and degrees of accent, that the distinction between the elect and non-elect was determined when Eve had sexual union with the serpent, the issue being Jews and other non-Aryan races. This theology is the basis of radical actions by the Christian Identity Movement and other white supremacist groups who believe that they alone are the recipients of divine blessing and "heirs of the covenant."

ABBREVIATIONS

Journals

ATJ	*Ashland Theological Journal*
AJPH	*Australian Journal of Politics and History*
Bib. Sac.	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
IJPR	*International Journal for Philosophy and Religion*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCR	*Journal of Communication and Religion*
JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JFR	*Journal of Religion and Film*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JMMS	*Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality*
JMS	*Journal of Millennial Studies*
JRPC	*Journal for Religion and Popular Culture*
JSH	*Journal of Southern History*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
L&T	*Literature and Theology*
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
PSRP	*Personality and Social Psychology Review*
QJS	*Quarterly Journal of Speech*
R&T	*Religion and Theology*
SA	*Sociological Analysis*
SSQ	*Social Science Quarterly*
WJC	*Western Journal of Communication*

Bible Versions

KJV	King James Version
NAB	New American Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSSB	New Scofield Study Bible

General

OT	Old Testament	LB Corpus *	Left Behind Corpus
NT	New Testament	LB:EF**	Left Behind Eternal Forces
B.C.E	Before the Common Era	PMD	Premillennial Dispensationalism
C.E	Common Era		

* LB Corpus designates all the Left Behind branded products and related end-time works associated with Tim LaHaye, and Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. The words "Left Behind" will be used as shorthand for the phenomenon as a whole, and will only be italicised when occurring in citations.

** LB: EF is an abbreviation for the video game Left Behind: Eternal Forces.

Names of Biblical Books with Apocrypha (NSRV)

Gen	**Nah**	**1-2-3-4 Kgdms**	**John**
Exod	Hab	Add Esth	Acts
Lev	Zeph	Bar	Rom
Num	Hag	Bel	1-2 Cor
Deut	Zech	1-2 Esdr	Gal
Josh	Mal	4 Ezra	Eph
Judg	Ps (pl = Pss)	Jdt	Phil
1-2 Sam	Job	Ep Jer	Col
1-2 Kgs	Prov	1-2-3-4 Macc	1-2 Thess
Isa	Ruth	Pr Azar	1-2 Tim
Jer	Song	Pr Man	Titus
Ezek	Eccl	Sir	Phlm
Hos	Lam	Sus	Heb
Joel	Esth	Tob	Jas
Amos	Dan	Wis	1-2 Pet
Obad	Ezra	Matt	1-2-3 John
Jonah	Neh	Mark	Jude
Mic	1-2 Chr	Luke	Rev

CHAPTER 1

ENTERING THE WORLD OF LEFT BEHIND

1. INTRODUCTION

> *Left Behind* opens on a routine transatlantic flight from Chicago to London. The captain of the passenger jet, Rayford Steele sits at the controls thinking of his attractive senior flight attendant Hattie Durham. Hattie is busy looking after the passengers, including Cameron "Buck" Williams an award-winning reporter for Global Weekly. In a single cataclysmic moment their world changes forever. With no warning and no plausible explanation over a third of the passengers vanish from the plane, leaving their clothing, belongings and loved ones left behind.
>
> Millions around the world have disappeared. Rayford's worst fears are soon confirmed; his wife and twelve-year old son are among the missing. Rayford and his daughter Chloe are among those Left Behind.
>
> As Hattie, Buck and Chloe search for answers amidst the turmoil, their paths cross time and again. Armed with a new sense of purpose, the group bands together with their pastor Bruce Barnes to form the Tribulation Force. But as devastating as the sudden disappearances have been, the darkest days lie ahead …[1]

This bird's eye view of the first novel published in 1995, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days*,[2] sets the tone for a massive series, which unprecedented in the history of Christian publishing has run to over 60 million copies – soon escalating to a place on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. Despite phenomenal success these novels, together with three films and a video game, have elicited wide-scale criticism for manifestations of gender discrimination, violence, religious intolerance and elitism. My research question addresses these issues, and after stating it succinctly, I will provide an outline of the chapters of the thesis, an explanation of the methodological framework employed, a review of literature pertaining to the Left Behind novels and a

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[1] Tim LaHaye and Jeffrey Jenkins, *Left Behind: The Interactive Software Companion to the Best-selling Series,* ILumina Edition (Visual Communication and Tyndale Publishers with Alive Communications, 2002).
[2] Tim LaHaye and Jeffrey Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995).

reflection on the contribution of the thesis to the body of knowledge on the Left Behind phenomenon, thus also gaining fresh insights into Revelation 7.

2. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

While the LB Corpus may be commended for being an effective tool for evangelism,[3] the question arises of whether or not its themes engender a theology of extermination, indeed a creeping crusade; "creeping" in the sense of it being a movement of stealth, rather than one of high visibility – "crusade" in the sense of a militaristic movement, similar to that of the medieval crusades. A typical vignette of the crusades portrays mounted knights, slashing swords through the air, setting off on rearing steeds to reclaim Jerusalem from the hordes of God's enemies. In contemporary usage "crusade" usually designates any offensive taken in the name of God, or what is believed to be a righteous cause. Preliminary to a more detailed discussion further on in the thesis, I cite Tony Campolo's[4] observation:

> When political leaders believe they have been called by God to destroy evil nations, there can be terrible consequences. Leaders are never so destructive as when they make war under the banner of religion. War becomes a holy crusade and those who try to make peace are considered enemies of God. This is certainly how the *Left Behind* books present the United Nations, which LaHaye and Jenkins describe as the instrument the antichrist uses to frustrate the will of God.[5]

> Campolo therefore does not find it surprising that President Bush[6] received strong

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[3] Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *These Will not be Left Behind: True Stories of Changed Lives* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2003). See back cover: "People of all ages have read the enormously popular Left Behind series and have witnessed how God has used these books to change lives. The dramatic accounts featured in this book, which includes thirty-one stories and more than fifty e-mails posted on the Left Behind Web site (sic), are the stories of real people and their responses to the Left Behind series." An e-note excerpted from the book captivates the perceived effect of the novels: "A radio station in Milwaukee says that if you can't find the words to help turn someone's life around, just give them a copy of *Left Behind*. I've done it! and turned a few lives around." Angelmom, 35.

[4] Tony Campolo, "The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism," *Tikkun* 66, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2005): 20.

[5] Campolo, "The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism," 20.

[6] See Hugh Urban, "America Left Behind: Bush, the Neoconservatives, and Evangelical Christian Fiction." *JRS* 8, (2006): 5, where Bush is referred to in terms of, "From Prodigal Son to Christian Crusader: George W. Bush as the link between the neo-Conservatives and the Right." In support of this he cites Bush, "I feel like God wants me to run for President. I can't explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me . . . God wants me to do it." Graham Maddox, "The 'Crusade' against Evil: Bush's Fundamentalism," *AJPH* 49, no.3 (2003): 402, sees a "haunting similarity between the extent of Roman imperial power under Constantine and the imperial machine controlled by George W. Bush." See also Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades*

endorsements for brushing off the concerns on UN leaders on the eve of the war in Iraq, a war which according to dispensationalists was the beginning of a struggle leading up to the Rapture and Armageddon.[7] "They almost revelled in the news of the war, pointing it as evidence that their interpretation of scripture was being lived out in current events."[8]

While George Bush may be regarded as the icon of the modern Crusader, his actions are but one facet of the wider phenomenon of the LB Corpus,[9] one based on the principle of consistent literalism, which interfaced with artistic license in novels, film and real time video game-playing, generates an ideological discourse, which at different levels of engagement give rise to violent and militaristic attitudes and behaviours. I will structure these outcomes within the triad of Interpretation − Discourse − Ideology, undertaking a qualitative research process into all possible resources undergirding the LB Corpus, and to critique its consistent literal reading of Revelation 7 with an alternative reading, one that reckons with the social, cultural, and ideological dimensions of the text in its original setting.

My point of departure is that the question of the LB Corpus as a manifestation of the spirit of the medieval crusade cannot be researched on the basis of one or more books, any one of the three films or even the video-game LB: EF alone. Certainly, incidents and verbal expressions in the books, even the first, belie Left Behind's propensity towards violence. It is, however, only in scrutinising the entire corpus from its minutiae to the broader strokes that interpretive, discursive and ideological patterns in relation to violence emerge. Important in this regard is that "one of the tenets of discourse analysis is that meaning originates in ever-widening circles of signification: words-in-sentences, sentences-in-texts, texts-among-other texts, texts/literature-amidst-practices and

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and Their Impact on Today's World (New York: Doubleday, 1991) xiii, who argues that the Crusades were one of the direct causes of the conflict in the Middle East today.

[7] Campolo, "The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism,"66.

[8] Campolo, "The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism," 66.

[9] The overview of the Left Behind novels, films and the video game warrants the term "Corpus," which may be defined as a large collection of writings of a specific kind, or by one or group of authors. Thus we speak of books written by the apostle John, as the Johannine Corpus. In volume, the LB Corpus is on a par with the ancient Hermetic Corpus, a collection of writings from the first three centuries after Christ, combining magical, religious, astrological, cosmological, geographical, medical, and hymns and instructions on how to worship. Most of the texts are presented in the form of a dialogue, a favourite form of didactic material in classical antiquity in which Thoth-Hermes enlightens a disciple. Uniquely, the LB Corpus is situated within the larger corpus of end-time literature, and because of media technology, it has taken shape within little more than a decade.

practices in society."[10] Equally important is that shifts in emphasis are traced against a sequence of titles, both fiction and non-fiction, published over of a period of time.[11] While it is impossible to engage with all the titles in the LB Corpus, I will mainly be drawing from the first four novels of the Left Behind series, the Left Behind Interactive Software, a few of LaHaye's important non-fiction works, the three films and Left Behind: Eternal Forces, and extra-Left Behind material. With the contents of Chapter 1 already stated, the remainder of the thesis will develop as outlined below.

3.   OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2: *Left Behind in Context of Christian Media* firstly provides an overview of the LB Corpus in terms of its literary output, its relation to the genre of the Christian novel, representative responses to the novels, film and video game. Secondly, it looks at the social context of media with attention to cultural production, cultural industries and culture wars, with an overview of the association of Purpose Driven Ministries with Left Behind Games as a case in point.

Chapter 3: *Interpretation: What stands written here?* defines the concept of *consistent literalism* as understood and applied by premillennial dispensationalists, and makes a dense analysis of LaHaye's application of consistent literalism in both his commentaries and novels, with focus on Revelation 7. The epistemological framework of Common Sense Realism is offset by the Pragmatism of the "Evangelical Imagination" as expressed in the historical novel, or even science-fiction.

Chapter 4: *Discourse: Who speaks here?* examines the discourse distinctive to apocalypticism, in particular the LB Corpus, by analysing select apocalyptic scripts from the LB Corpus in establishing to what extent its discourse can be said to be the harbinger of an imminent crusade against non-believers and apostates.

Chapter 5: *Ideology: Who wins what and how much?* examines the outcome of such discourse on a wider communal and global scale, as suggestive in two evolving

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[10] As stated by Gerhard van den Heever, "Loose Fictions and Frivolous Fabrications: Ancient Fiction and the Mystery Religions of the Early Imperial Era." (DLitt et Phil Thesis, University of South Africa, 2005), 77.

[11] For a good analysis of shifts in attitudes, strategies over the twelve Left Behind novels see Jennie Chapman, "Selling Faith without Selling Out: Reading the *Left Behind* Novels in the Context of Popular Culture," in *The End All Around Us: Apocalyptic Texts and Popular Culture* (eds. John Walliss, and Kenneth G.C. Newport; London: Equinox, 2009), 164.

scenarios, firstly that of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem as the prelude to Armageddon and secondly, the establishment of a theocracy in the United States whereby the Constitution and Bill of Rights will be an extension of Old Testament theocratic law, thus reinstating capital punishment for infringers of the law.

Chapter 6: *Society and Rhetoric in the Light of Revelation 7* focuses on the social and cultural, as well as ideological textures of Revelation 7 as a counter-reading to that of the LB Corpus. Being essentially a study in reception history, the reading will show how society and culture are reflected in the writing of such a text, how it would have been understood by persons living in the world of this text, and how contemporary readers bring their own ideology to bear on the text.

Chapter 7: *Leaving Behind Left Behind* concludes the thesis with an assessment of the evidence that substantiates, or not, the allegation that the LB Corpus, with its exterminatory strategies is a creeping crusade in the mode of the medieval crusade. The future of the LB Corpus is reviewed in terms of its self-understanding of materialising a utopia, and the prospects of it either retaining its best-seller status or becoming a non-sustainable market commodity. Finally I will review some fields of tension that have been highlighted in the thesis, with the anticipation that further conversations and debates, even interventions, across a number of disciplines will ensue.

4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework of the thesis is structured by the sequence of chapters, each of which as a self-contained unit, nevertheless links to the preceding and successive unit and to the overriding research question. Leading into the thesis, *Chapters 1 and 2* introduce the reader to the nature and scope of the thesis within the context of the LB Corpus, and the social and cultural context in which it functions. The core of the thesis, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 analyses select works from the novels, film and video game, with Chapter 6 discussing and tabulating various perspectives from which Revelation is interpreted. Leading out of the thesis, Chapter 7 is summative in so far it comments on the research question and speculates on future of the LB Corpus and possible developments in research in this field. The chapters are grouped into three blocks as illustrated below:
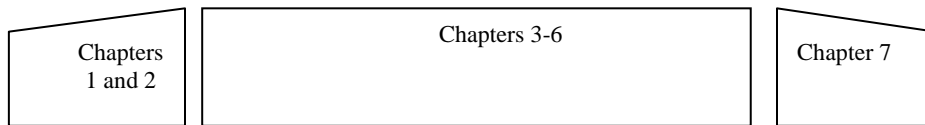
Chapters 1 and 2	Chapters 3-6	Chapter 7
INTRODUCTORY /CONTEXTUAL	**DISCURSIVE / ANALYTIC**	**SUMMATIVE/ SPECULATIVE**

Since the thesis is qualitative by nature, analyses will be content-orientated; analyses taking the form of reviews and the identification of rhetorical language, metatexts and other literary features by which the message of the text is constructed.

While the theories of Pierre Bourdieu on social construction and Barry Brummett on apocalyptic rhetoric play a prominent role in the analysis of texts, the thesis is overall representative of the work of Michel Foucault who laid down an indispensable framework from which the influence of a literary work can be critiqued. "A Foucauldian style of textual criticism would analyse a text with the following questions in mind: what is its effects; why this collection of statements and not others; what subject positions does it open up; what political interests does it serve; what role does it play in the politics of truth; what specific speakers' benefit can be attributed to it; what are the modes of existence, distribution and circulation? [12] These questions will not be sequentially addressed, nor as they have been individually phrased, but they will be woven into the text of the thesis as appropriate to the context.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON LEFT BEHIND

5.1 The Scope Outlined

The multidisciplinary nature of the thesis – its incorporation of insights from hermeneutics, sociology of religion, communication science, philosophy, as well as

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[12] Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) 14. The first questions are grouped under the heading of "Emergence of the Statement." The last questions starting with, "What political interests does it serve?" fall under the heading "The Politics" of Discourse." According to Barker these questions extend into the wider discursive field in terms of effects rather than internal organisation. Relevant works are Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A.M Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock, 1980); Michel Foucault,*The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1980);

works on Revelation, the Left Behind texts, critiques of Left Behind and critiques of PMD[13] in general, results in three tiers of material: academic, documentary and popular. As relevant, these will be introduced as the thesis progresses. However, what I will review in this section of the chapter is the field of literature which specifically critiques the Left Behind novels; how these researchers articulate their own purview of the subject is relevant in assessing what contribution this thesis can make to countering Left Behind with an alternative reading. I group authors and researchers of Left Behind into these categories: (1) Research into Reader-responses and Literary Genre; (2) Apologetic Works; (3) Theological and Pastoral Critiques; and (4) Scholarly Perspectives. One may expect that some authors straddle over more than one grouping, but particular accents tend to group them together.

5.2 Research into Reader-responses and Literary Genre

Two research projects, both first attempts at surveying reader-responses into the Left Behind novels are of note, firstly that of Paul Gutjahr, and secondly that of Amy Frykholm. In this section I introduce their respective methodologies, but the findings of both projects will be reviewed more fully in the context of Left Behind's position in the Christian media in Chapter 2, Section 3.

With the understanding that the popularity of the novels is "usually left to the realm of conjecture and anecdotal evidence," Gutjahr discovered that there does exist another source of information concerning what has moved readers – particularly Christian readers – "to embrace these books." [14] This source is Amazon.com, the world's largest Internet bookseller. He found that information made available on this website would

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[13] A rising tide of scholars has subjected Dispensationalism and the Rapture to rigorous critical examination: Greg Bahnsen, and Kenneth Gentry Jr. *House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology* (Tyler Tex: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989); James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978); Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Atlanta: American Vision Press, 1998); Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001); John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: a Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood:Wolgemuth and Hyatt Publishers, 1991); Philip Mauro, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*: *With an Examination of Modern Dispensationalism* (Swengel: Reiner Publications, 1966); Dave McPherson, *The Incredible Cover-up: Exposing the Origins of Rapture Theories* (Medford: Omega Publications, 1975); Gary North, *Rapture Fever: Why Dispensationalism is Paralyzed* (Tyler, Tex: Institute of Christian Economics, 1993).

[14] Paul Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind: Amazon.com, Reader Response, and the Changing Fortunes of the Christian Novel," 218. [Cited 18 September 2008]. Project Muse http://www.muse.jhu.ed*)*

enable him to gain a much fuller picture of what reasons lie behind the "colossal sales statistics"[15] of this series.

One of the many services Amazon.com offers its customers is an opportunity to write reviews of various books. As of 9 September 1999, seventeen hundred readers had chosen to post reviews of the Left Behind series on the Amazon.com website. Gutjahr, noting the necessary caveats[16] found this site to be a suitable resource for his project. Amazon.com has a five-star rating system whereby readers can give five stars to their favourite books and one star to books they hate. The majority of those responding, an impressive 73 percent, gave the books five stars. The average number of stars for the seventeen- hundred reviews posted was 4.25.[17]

Amy Frykholm spent three years interviewing readers and visiting readers' churches, homes, Bible study groups and Sunday school classes. [18] She conducted a qualitative study of thirty-five in-depth personal interviews, each one lasting between one and three hours. If readers were members of a religious body, she would attend their churches and visit Sunday school classes more than once. Because Left Behind was an increasing important part of popular culture at this time, she had no trouble in identifying several readers through colleagues and friends with whom she could begin the project.[19] She employed what cultural anthropology calls the "snowball method," thus "allowing these readers to lead her to other readers, and in this way interviewing "evangelical and non-evangelical readers, believers in the rapture, and those who did not believe;" these included Mormons, Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, agnostics and

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[15]Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 218, credits the Evangelical-Christian publishing firm of Tyndale, which is small compared to most trade publishing enterprises, for doing a "magnificent job" in accomplishing basic tasks such as producing and distributing the book in sufficient volume, along with getting the book placed in sales venues that will make it widely available to the reading public. The outlets he names include grocery stores; retail chains such as Wal-Mart, Target, and K-Mart; airports; and hotel shops.

[16] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 219: "Amazon.com appeals to a specific, computer-literate, credit-able(sic) clientele, thus making it impossible to say just how accurate a representation this clientele is of the nation's reading public as a whole, as it is also impossible to say how representative these readers are of those who read this particular series. Second, it is impossible to tell much about the readers themselves. Aside from offering the content of their reviews and an occasional note on geographical location, the reviewers remain largely anonymous. There is no way to confirm either the content or the identity of those who write these reviews. Finally, those who write the reviews tend to have strong opinions about the book upon which they are commenting. They need to be motivated to get back online to key in their thoughts, and the majority of the Left Behind reviews are unabashedly positive."

[17] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 219.

[18] Amy Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[19] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 7.

others "with less definable labels."[20] The main point of her findings, namely that premillennialism must be understood as "a fluid part of the broader culture, not as the realm of isolated believers, widened the scope of her research."[21]

Frykholm's disclosure that the origin of her scholarly work is personal introduces an element of subjective evaluation: "I write not only as literary scholar, researcher, but as granddaughter, cousin, and niece. I tell not only the story of strangers, but also the story of my own family. To fail to acknowledge this would be to engage, as Charles Strozier says, in a kind of 'false positivism' that remains all too prevalent in our scholarly practice."[22] It also leads her to set parameters for herself:

> The question of how reading becomes a part of the process of making meaning is not a scientific one for me, and this book is not a piece of social science . . . I do not attempt to find the answers in the sociological survey data or generalizations about readers and their reading practices. This is a study founded on the particularities of readers and their social networks. As such, it has all the limits of that kind of study – it cannot see the larger picture, it lacks numbers for proof, its methods are attached to details rather than broad strokes.[23]

However, she adds: "It claims the benefits as well – the richness and detail of thick description, the sympathy that only one particularity can build, and the revelation of complexities often obscured by generalized methods."[24]

5.3. Apologetic Works

The dispensationalist eschatological scheme, and its theological implications, posited in the LB Corpus, has challenged the eschatological doctrines of Reformed, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and non-dispensational evangelicalism; several authors have critiqued the Left Behind series through the lens of the particular doctrines of their Christian

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[20] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 7.
[21] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 7.
[22] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 4.
[23] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 9.
[24] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 9, further argues that "ethnographic methods at their best, should disconfirm our assumptions and discomfort us with the complexity with which human beings construct their social worlds. They should detotalize, rather than sum up. Ethnography should allow for readers to speak about the real concerns of their everyday lives, and should turn us, at least temporarily and partially from critics to listeners."

tradition, which are embedded in a particular view[25] of the book of Revelation, one that has emerged over the centuries of Christendom.

David Reed, a former Jehovah's Witness, takes a robust historicist position in *Left Behind Answered Verse by Verse*, a compilation of quotes reflecting the traditional Protestant understanding of Bible verses from Wycliffe in the 1300s, through Albert Barnes, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, John Huss, Robert Amieson, John Knox, the London Baptist Convention, the Westminster Confession; William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Isaac Newton, John Owen, John Wesley to Charles Spurgeon in the 1800s.[26] Equally robust is Carl Olsen's examination of the claims of Left Behind against scripture passages enlightened by patristic writings, conciliar documents and papal encyclicals.[27]

As can be expected from authors imbued with dedication and conviction, Reed and Olsen display rigorous understanding of the inner dynamics of Dispensationalism and familiarity with all the relevant eschatological texts from the scriptures, but they do not elaborate on the exegetical method they themselves employ in approaching these texts. Since historicism was grounded on a grammatical-historical method, and Reed is an avowed historicist, one may assume that Reed employs this method, though he does not name it as such.[28] Olsen subscribes to a partial preterist-cum-idealist position exemplified by the Navarre Bible.[29] Ultimately Reed and Olsen have taken a line of confessional theologising, without consideration of the social, cultural and ideological dimensions underlying an alternative reading of Revelation.

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[25] See Glossary of Select Terms for definitions of historicist, preterist, futurist and idealist views of the book of Revelation. A complicating factor is that any one tradition – depending on degrees of conservatism – may espouse two or more of these views.

[26] David Reed, *Left Behind Answered Verse by Verse*. [Cited 27 April 2009]. Online: leftbehindanswered.com

[27] See Carl Olsen, *Will Catholics be Left Behind?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 20. The official Catholic documents he refers to include two documents from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965): The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*. Also two papal documents: Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* ("On the Church," 1964) and Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* ("Mission of the Redeemer," 1990).

[28] David Reed, *Left Behind Answered Verse by Verse,* n.p.

[29] "Revelation: Texts and Commentaries," in *The Navarre Bible.* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), 19. "The Apocalypse is a theological vision of the entire panorama of history, a vision which underlines its transcendental and religious dimension . . . .The book does depict the cosmic struggle between good and evil, but it takes for granted Christ's ultimate triumph. This is in our view, the most valid interpretation of the book and therefore it is the one we follow in the commentary provided."

Craig Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung argue in *A Case for Premillennialism: An Alternative to "Left Behind" Eschatology*[30] for a historic or classical premillennialism, as was held widely in the history of the Church, and promoted in the writings of George Eldon Ladd.[31]

5.4 Theological Critiques

A leading researcher in the Trinity Millennialism Project,[32] Crawford Gribben, notes in *Rapture Fiction and the Evangelical Crisis* that "Left Behind, in spite of its remarkable success, is a symptom of an unhealthy evangelicalism."[33] Gribben views the earlier series and its more recent titles as diverging from the message preached by the apostles in so far as they are "uncertain on the purpose of the Church, the importance of the sacraments, and the life of the Christian under the law and under the cross. *Left Behind* – like much of the evangelicalism that celebrates its success – is a product of a shrinking theology."[34]

Gribben does not propose any specific exegetical method other than qualifying his belief in the validity of the dispensations.[35] He positively notes the shift to progressive dispensationalism which denies distinction between Israel and the Church,[36] and

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[30] Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung, *A Case for Premillennialism: An Alternative to "Left Behind" Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

[31] George Eldon Ladd, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* ed., R.G. Clouse (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977); *The Last Things; Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1978); *Blessed Hope: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1980; *The Last Things; Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1978). Ladd was critical of dispensationalism and held the position that "the final word" . . . is to be found in the New Testament reinterpretation of the Old Testament prophecy.

[32] The Trinity Millennialism Project, of which Frykholm is also a participant, operates under the auspices of the Centre of Irish-Scottish and Comparative Studies at Trinity College, Dublin. This group investigates the intellectual history of Protestant millennial belief, and particularly the history of the dispensational premillennialism that emerged in circles associated with Trinity College. The project has organised a series of colloquia in Dublin, Oxford and Liverpool. From the project has come a number of volumes, with a few in preparation: Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World* (in preparation, contracted for 2010); Kenneth Newport and Mark Sweetnam, eds., *Reading the Revelation: Protestants and the Apocalypse, 1150-1700* (in preparation); Kenneth Newport and Crawford Gribben, eds., *Expecting the End: Millennialism in Social and Historical Context* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006); Crawford Gribben and Timothy C. F. Stunt, eds., *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelicalism and Irish society, 1800-1880* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004); John Walliss, *Apocalyptic Trajectories: Millenarianism and Violence in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004).

[33] Gribben, *Rapture Fiction*, 108.

[34] Gribben, *Rapture Fiction*,108.

[35] Gribben, *Rapture Fiction*, 118.

[36] Gribben, *Rapture Fiction*, 118.

explains the relation between New Covenant Theology and Reformed Baptist Covenant theology with paedobaptism as the "mark of the covenant."[37] Gribben may be credited for the most comprehensive documentation available on "rapture novels," [38] and he will be referred to in Chapter 2 and Chapter 7.

Barbara Rossing, argues in *The Rapture Exposed: the Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*[39] that "the Left Behind script for the world's future is nothing more than a distortion of the Bible, one based on a psychology of fear."[40] Citing questions about Left Behind's support for US Middle East policy, including the rebuilding of the Temple, she writes: "What is at stake here is our reading of the Bible. Prophecy novels and televangelists offer people one storyline for our world, one reading of Revelation. I seek to offer a very different reading."[41] The reading she offers has overtones of a socio-rhetorical reading – the intertextuality of the Exodus event, the victory motif in Roman imperial theology, the ascendance of the peaceful Lamb over the ferocious Lion, to mention the most prominent she refers to. While Rossing presents many views of Revelation that are more consistent with the New Testament and the first-century Mediterranean world than those of PMDs, however, she does not present these in a coherent systematic socio-rhetorical commentary. This was obviously not her intention as the book is actually a compilation of lectures presented at a retreat centre, churches and other settings. Her book includes a Reader Discussion Guide suitable for use in these situations.

In *Left Behind? The Facts Behind the Fiction*,[42] LeAnn Snow Flesher expresses her motivation thus: "This book is an attempt to unearth the theological underpinnings of the Left Behind series and to challenge that claim, while providing an alternative means of understanding the books of Daniel and Revelation."[43] In exposing the use and abuse of Scripture to support the peculiar doctrines of "Rapture" and "Tribulation," she has

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[37] Gribben, *Rapture Fiction*, 121-123.

[38] Gribben, *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[39] Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

[40] Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed,* xviii.

[41] Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed,* xviii.

[42] LeAnn Snow Flesher, *Left Behind: The Facts Behind the Fiction*? (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 2.

[43] Snow Flesher, *Left Behind: The Facts*, 2.

recourse to the World of the Writer, the World of the Text and the World of the Reader construct.[44] In highlighting the importance of understanding history, context, and literary genre, she is basically taking a historical-critical approach, but does not apply this systematically. Like Rossing, Flesher is an academic of standing, but with a pastoral focus. [45]

5.5 Scholarly Perspectives

Several authors have made significant scholarly contributions on specific aspects of Left Behind in books, journal articles and monographs. These include Craig Koester,[46] Malcolm Gold,[47] Sheryll Mleynek,[48] Loren Johns[49] Jennie Chapman,[50] and Glenn Shuck.[51] Besides these are a wide variety of articles by analysts, journalists and bloggers, all of whom will be introduced as the thesis progresses.

A masters' thesis that is oriented to the wider cultural and political perspectives of Left Behind, and that warrants due acknowledgment, is *Mass Market Mayhem: The Conservative Discourse and Critical Function of the Left Behind Series*[52] by Michael Einstein. He defines the scope of his study in terms of "two different Donigerian perspectives: telescopic and the microscopic in an attempt to balance individual responses to the novels with greater evangelical cohesion."[53] "Regarding the telescopic

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[44] Snow Flesher, *Left Behind: The Facts*, 58-67.

[45] Snow Flesher, *Left Behind: The Facts Behind the Fiction: A Companion Guide* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006).

[46] Craig Koester, "Revelation and the Left Behind Novels," *Word & World* 25, no.3 (2005), n.p.

[47] Malcolm Gold, "The *Left Behind* Series a Sacred Text?" in *Reflections of Faith and Practice in Religious Materials* (Arweck, Elizabeth, and Peter Collins, eds., in *Reading Religion in Text and Context: Reflections of Faith and Practice in Religious Materials.* Hampshire, England/ Virginia, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 34-49.

[48] Sheryll. Mleynek "The Rhetoric of the 'Jewish Problem' Left Behind Novels." *Literature and Theology* 19, (2005): 367-383.

[49] Loren L. Johns, "Conceiving Violence: The Apocalypse of John in the Left Behind Series." *Direction* 34, no.2 (2005): 194-214.

[50] Jennie Chapman, "Selling Faith without Selling Out: Reading the *Left Behind* Novels in the Context of Popular Culture," in *The End All Around Us: Apocalyptic Texts and Popular Culture* (eds. John Walliss and Kenneth G.C. Newport; London: Equinox, 2009), 148-172.

[51] Glenn Shuck, "Marks of the Beast: The *Left Behind* Novels, Identity, and the Internalization of Evil," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 8, no. 2 (2004): 48-63. This essay is a significantly revised version of a paper Shuck presented to the Millennialism Studies Group at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Toronto, Canada, 2002.

[52] Michael Einstein, "Mass Market Mayhem: The Conservative Discourse and Critical Function of the *Left Behind Series.*" (Master of Arts Thesis, Miami University, Oxford: Ohio, 2004).

[53] Einstein, "Mass Market Mayhem," vi.

analysis, Frederic Jameson's critique of 'late capitalism' and Theodore Adorno of the Frankfurt School's 'analysis of the Culture Industry' will provide an in depth analysis of the effects American popular culture and consumption have on individuals."[54] In an exploration of the religious and political motifs of the Left Behind series Einstein draws parallels with the other famous political fictions like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and George Lippard's *The Quaker City, or the Monks of Monks Hall: a Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery and Crime.*[55] Einstein concludes his thesis with the recognition that the Left Behind series "must be evaluated within the context of late capitalism and use of commodified religious goods."[56]

6.   THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

Every one of the writers referred to in the previous section may be regarded as relatively authoritative according to his or her purview. It has, however, neither been in the purview of any one of these authors to go beyond the novels to the film and video game, examining a crusader-orientation in a cross-section of texts nor to analyse it in the light of Revelation 7. Moreover there has been scant attention to how LaHaye's dual-ideology (that of PMD *and* Dominionism) has been formative in the creation of the LB Corpus. Although there may be some points of concurrence between the perspectives of Einstein on religious and political motifs in the Left Behind series, and the crusader-orientation expressed in this thesis, both studies are distinct in the resources selected, research pursued and exegetical approach applied.

Having established the parameters of a number of critiques of Left Behind, how do I justify yet another critique of this series, and in particularly Revelation 7? Firstly, I will not be attempting any reader surveys. These have been conducted by Gutjahr and Frykholm within the parameters of select audiences. Secondly, I will not be critiquing Left Behind from any particular confessional tradition or theological perspective. Thirdly, I will not be proposing any pastoral programme to counter the effects of Left Behind on communities or individuals. Focusing on the research question, I will span

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[54] Einstein, "Mass Market Mayhem," vi.
[55] Einstein, "Mass Market Mayhem," 39-46.
[56] Einstein, "Mass Market Mayhem," 57.

my research across the LB Corpus in terms of its embedded interpretation, discourse and ideology. These are in fact three separate entities for explanatory purposes, but in effect they form a single entity of interaction and cross-production. In taking this approach, I am extending many niches of research and critical discourse to what I envisage as the wider context of the LB Corpus: its potential for social construction, and its enigmatic connections with other apocalyptic-driven and crusade-like movements. Based as it is on "consistent literalism," the LB Corpus can only be countered, it would appear, by an exegetical approach that firmly situates a text in its historical setting, taking cognisance of the particularities of early Christianity, with its Jewish heritage, lived out in a Graeco-Roman environment.

The socio-rhetorical method of Vernon Robbins[57] promises to provide such an exegesis with its *inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture* and *sacred texture.* I found this method very effective in an analysis[58] of John 4:1-42. Focusing on intertexture, complemented by the other textures, I was able to draw connections with Jewish Targums, Philo, texts in the Hebrew Bible and Graeco-Roman texts that drew out rich dimensions in the discourse between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Indeed, this would be the experience of anyone attempting to apply the socio-rhetorical method to texts in the gospels and narrative sections in the Old Testament, even in Revelation with its epistolary, prophetic and visionary nature.

Robbins has, however, since developed his methodology to include new concepts such as "Conceptual Blending" and "Spatial Theory."[59] This development does not render the five textures redundant; on the contrary they are still integral to the newly developed method. Confining myself, therefore, to the early phase of socio-rhetorical criticism, I have selected inner texture, social and cultural, and ideological texture as the tools to probe relevant dimensions of Revelation 7, complemented by insight from

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[57] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996). Also Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[58] Margaret Mollett, "An Assessment of Vernon Robbins' Socio-rhetorical Method: John 4:1-42 as Test Case." (MA Diss., University of South Africa, 2005).

[59] Vernon K. Robbins and Duane Watson, "Guidelines for Writing Sociorhetorical Commentary" [Cited 15 September, 2009]. Unpublished working paper. See also Vernon K. Robbins, "Beginnings and Developments in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30033, USA (May 1, 2004www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/SRIBegDevRRA.pdf

theorists across several disciplinary fields in pointing out anomalies in the features of consistent literalism driven interpretation of Revelation 7.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This introductory chapter has served to set the direction in which the thesis will develop. The statement of the research question is an important starting point, and will be referred to throughout the thesis, thus binding together a diverse amount of material that in its multifariousness may appear to go beyond the parameters of the study. Such is the world of Left Behind. Having taken on the appellation of "phenomenon" – "An unusual, significant, or unaccountable fact or occurrence; a marvel"[60] – it draws unto itself, not only unbounded readership from fans who relish its storyline, but also scrutiny from critics who question its presuppositions.

We have seen how these critics, representing varied traditions in Christianity, in different capacities, using different formats, have pinpointed not only what they perceive to be flaws in the Left Behind series, theologically, exegetically, pastorally, ethically, and so forth, but also the contexts in which the series has been embedded and empowered to become the phenomenon just mentioned. These critiques, steadily becoming a corpus in own right, are flanked by the works of a number of theorists who although not critiquing apocalypticism, or Left Behind, together with specialists in apocalyptic literature contribute perspectives that are of perennial value in the analysis and contextualisation of texts.

I now focus on the position of the LB Corpus, within the ever-widening field of Christian media. Important aspects to be overviewed are responses to the Left Behind novels, films and video-game and how these media forms function within a cultural and commercial milieu.

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[60] *Great Illustrated Dictionary* (London: Readers' Digest Association, 1984), 1277.

CHAPTER 2

LEFT BEHIND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHRISTIAN MEDIA

1.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly provides an overview of the LB Corpus in terms of its literary output, its relation to the genre of Christian novel, responses to the novels, film and video game, Secondly, it looks at the social context of media with attention to cultural production, cultural industries and culture wars, with an overview of Purpose Driven Ministries and Left Behind Games as a case in point. In a dense clustering of voices from consumers, theorists, researchers a number of issues that will arise in varying contexts is foregrounded.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE LB CORPUS

The Left Behind series of novels made its entry into the publishing world in 1995. The authors were Tim LaHaye, a renowned prophecy teacher and author of over fifty non-fiction books translated into thirty-seven languages and Jerry B. Jenkins, author of more than one-hundred-and-fifty fictional titles. LaHaye provided the theological input while Jenkins cast this input into fictional form.

The first novel in the series *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* was soon followed by one sequel after the other:[61] *Left Behind: The Interactive Software*

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[61] Tim LaHaye and Jeffrey B. Jenkins, *Tribulation Force: The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind Days* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996); *Nicolae: The Rise of Antichrist Days* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997); *Soul Harvest: The World Takes Sides* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998); *Apollyon: The Destroyer is Unleashed* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999); *Assassins: Assignment − Jerusalem, Target −Antichrist* Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999); *The Indwelling: The Beast Takes Possession* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000); *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World Desecration: Antichrist Takes the Throne* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000); *Desecration: Antichrist takes the Throne* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001); *The Remnant: On the Brink of Armageddon* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002); *Armageddon* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003); *Glorious Appearing: The End of Days Kingdom Come: The Final Victory* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).

Companion to the Best-selling Series[62] appeared in 2002, offering users "a whole new experience." The complete text of the first novel *Left Behind*, as well as access to the other nine available titles on Microsoft Reader or Palm Reader, an encyclopedia of biblical prophecy, including the text of the *Are we Living in the End Times?*[63] exclusive video clips portraying the authors, pictures of the Holy Land, an interactive Time Line, and an inside story of the writing of the LB series by Jerry B. Jenkins. Besides *Are we Living in the End Times?* LaHaye authored a number of non-fictional works[64] first published in the 1970s and 1980s and later reprinted, or running concurrently, with the Left Behind series; a few titles were co-authored.[65] The *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*[66] contains the KJV with notes by forty-eight prophecy commentators.

In October 2004, Tyndale Publishers announced there would also be three prequels, which may be seen as a kind of back-dating of the books − though published in 2005 the first of these three prequels,[67] *The Rising: Antichrist Is Born – Before They Were Left Behind* portrays events before commencement of the first novel in 1995. The other two prequels are *The Regime: Evil Advances* and *The Rapture: In the Twinkling of an Eye.* As from 1998, running concurrent with the Left Behind Series, came *Left Behind: the Kids,*[68] a series of forty titles for ten to fourteen year olds.[69] A complete illustrated

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[62] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind: The Interactive Software Companion,* ILumina Edition (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002).

[63] Tim LaHaye and Jeffrey Jenkins, *Are we Living the End Times: Current Events Foretold in Scripture and What They Mean* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999*).*

[64] Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999); *The Beginning of the End* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers,1991); *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990); *The Rapture: Who will Face the Tribulation?* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House Publishers, 2002); and Texe Marrs, David Breese, William T. James and David A. Lewis, *Storming Towards Armageddon: Essays in Apocalypse* (Green Forest, Ariz: New Leaf Press, 1995).

[65] Tim LaHaye with Steve Halliday, *The Merciful God of Prophecy: His Loving Plan for you in the End Times* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), and Jerry Jenkins and Sandi Swanson, *The Authorized Left Behind Handbook* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005); *The Regime: Evil Advances* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005); *The Rapture: In the Twinkling of an Eye* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006).

[66] Tim La Haye, *The Tim La Haye Prophecy Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

[67] Tim LaHaye and Jeffrey Jenkins, *The Rising: Antichrist Is Born – Before They Were Left Behind* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005); (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005); *The Regime: Evil Advances* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005); *The Rapture: In the Twinkling of an Eye* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).

[68] Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye *The Vanishings: Four Kids Face Earth's Last Days Together – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 1), Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye (Tyndale, 1998); *Second Chance: The Search for Truth – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 2) (Tyndale, 1998); *Through the Flames: The Kids Risk Their Lives – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 3), (Tyndale, 1998); *Facing the FutureX – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 4), (Tyndale, 1998); *Nicolae High – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 5), (Tyndale, 1999); *The Underground – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 6), (Tyndale, 1999); *Busted! – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 7), (Tyndale, 2000); *Death Strike – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 8), (Tyndale, 2000); *The Search – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 9), (Tyndale, 2000); *On the Run – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 10), (Tyndale, 2000); *Into the Storm – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 11),

Graphic Novels Series, daily devotional volumes, audio tapes, videos, CD-ROMs, calendars, greeting cards, desktop wallpapers and three motion pictures, with the video game, Left Behind: Eternal Forces, though not created by LaHaye and Jenkins, is owned by Left Behind Games by license of Tyndale.

New titles by La Haye and whoever is co-author is,and which do not specifically relate to Left Behind, and published in 2009 and 2010 will be referred to in Chapter 7.

In a rather unique marketing ploy, Tyndale House Publishers published the so-called military novels, the first in a series of four being Mel Odom's *Apocalypse Dawn*.[70] First Sergeant Samuel Adams, "Goose Gander," appears in the opening act of the Apocalypse. He and the men of the 75th Rangers fight to survive a large-scale attack on the Syrian border. The storyline converges with the sudden disappearance of a third of the earth's population thus plunging those left behind with grief as they frantically search for their loved ones. Nicolae Carpathia, who is a lead figure in the Left Behind series, assumes the role as world leader; the Tribulation has begun. Neesa Hart's

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(Tyndale, 2000); *Earthquake – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 12), (Tyndale, 2000); *The Showdown – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 13), (Tyndale, 2001); *Judgment Day – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 14), (Tyndale, 2001); *Battling the Commander – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 15), (Tyndale, 2001); *Fire from Heaven – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 16 (Tyndale, 2001; *Terror in the Stadium – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 17), (Tyndale, 2001); *Darkening Skies – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 18), (Tyndale, 2001); *The Attack of Apollyon – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 19), (Tyndale, 2002);*A Dangerous Plan – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 20 (Tyndale, 2002); *Secrets of New Babylon – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 21), Tyndale, 2002); *Escape from New Babylon – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 22), Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye (Tyndale, 2002); *Horsemen of Terror – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 23), (Tyndale, 2002); *Uplink from the Underground – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 24), (Tyndale, 2002); *Death at the Gala – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 25), (Tyndale, 2003); *The Beast Arises – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 26), (Tyndale, 2003); *Wildfire! – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 27), (Tyndale, 2003); *The Mark of the Beast – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 28), (Tyndale, 2003); *Breakout! – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 29), (Tyndale, 2003); *Murder in the Holy Place – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 30), (Tyndale, 2003); *Escape to Masada – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 31), (Tyndale, 2003);*War of the Dragon – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 32), (Tyndale, 2003); *Attack on Petra – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 33), (Tyndale, 2004); *Hunters – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 34), (Tyndale, 2004); *The Rise of False Messiahs – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 35), Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye (Tyndale, 2004); *Ominous Choices – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 36), (Tyndale, 2004); *Heat Wave – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 37), (Tyndale, 2004);*The Perils of Love – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 38), (Tyndale, 2004); *The Road to War – Left Behind: The Kids* (No. 39), (Tyndale, 2004); *Triumphant Return - Left Behind Kids* (No.40), (Tyndale, 2004).

[69] These books were published from 1998 to 2004 and are still in print today with over 11,000 000 sold in series. Unlike the adult series, Left Behind, they have no prequels or sequels, but are a set of forty books focused on the Tribulation. *The Left Behind: The Kids* series was originally written for teen and young adult readers, but as the audience grew it came to include adults who read The Kids series between the release of new books in the Left Behind series. See David T. Morgan, *The New Brothers Grimm and Their Left Behind Fairy Tales* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 195-217, for a discussion on this series.

[70] Mel Odom, *Apocalypse Dawn* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003); Mel Odom, *Apocalypse Burning* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004); *Apocalypse Crucible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004); Mel Odom, *Apocalypse Unleashed* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008); *Apocalypse Burning* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004); Mel Odom, *Apocalypse Crucible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004); *Apocalypse Unleashed* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008).

political novels,[71] *Impeachable Offense, Necessary Evils*, and *End of State*, all revolve around events in the White House after the so-called rapture. Again, Nicolae Carpathia plays a major role in world affairs.

This overview of Left Behind and its corollary literature is indicative, hardly of a trend, but as will become clear, an industry that has birthed a new culture with theological, social and political ramifications for not only Christian communities but the world at large. The very titles of many of the works portend a creeping militarism, indeed a crusade, into the fibre of right-wing American Evangelicalism; an assertion that will culminate in some preliminary comments on the video game LB: EF in the next section and a fuller analysis in Chapter 4.

3.   THE POSITION OF LEFT BEHIND IN THE CHRISTIAN MEDIA

3.1 A Review of the Christian Novel

In a delineation of the LB Corpus I wish to reflect on the nature of Christian media, specifically the novel, film and video game, for it is in the interface between the consistent literalism of dispensational dogma and imaginative fiction that it has imprinted itself on the Christian media market. The Christian novel,[72] once frowned

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[71] Neesa Hart, *Impeachable Offense* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004); Neesa Hart, *End of State* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004); Neesa Hart, *Necessary Evils* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).

[72] Recalling Herbert Ross Brown's *The Sentimental Novel in America,* Paul Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 211, cites Timothy Dwight – poet, theologian, and president of Yale as saying, "Between the Bible and novels there is a gulph (sic) fixed which few readers are willing to pass." Gutjahr states that Dwight was not alone in his condemnation of novel reading; a host of religious and nonreligious commentators condemned the form as "hopelessly corrupting." Such censures would apparently find a wide circulation in the United States as the American Tract Society issued tracts on the subject; gift books and advice manuals included articles on the dangers of novel reading; and a host of other printed material would "warn readers away from the insidious novel form." Then derivative of Samuel F. Jarvis's quote in Martin, *The Instructed Vision*, Gutjahr writes that religious and nonreligious antinovel writers most often grounded their arguments in two lines of deeply intertwined reasoning, the preeminent among these was a Scottish Common Sense philosophical notion of the importance of basing one's life on the truth. He gives the example of the critic who preached in 1807, that "novels removed one from the truth through their tendency to 'give false notions of things, to pervert the consequences of human actions, and to misrepresent the ways of divine providence.'" Virtuous action, and thus the ability to lead a worthwhile life, therefore depended on "embracing what was true and avoiding even the slightest hint of dissimulation or falseness." A second line of reasoning argued that "novels with their romantic and adventurous tales inflamed the imagination, and thus the passions. Awakening uncontrollable animal instincts once again worked at cross purposes with ideals of virtue, which were heavily dependent on notions of hard work, discipline, and perseverance."

upon in evangelical circles, has together with the Bible, become the mainstay of the Protestant book trade, which although it has its own focus, is no different from the wider book trade in its need for marketing strategy and knack. Paul Gutjahr has prefaced his reader-response survey of Left Behind (referred to in the Survey of Literature, 1.3), with a history of resistance to, and acceptance of, the Christian novel:

> By examining the history of twentieth-century Protestant book publishing in the United States in general, and the reasons behind the astounding success of the Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in particular, I will argue in this essay that the last significant vestiges of opposition to the Christian novel receded from American Protestantism because the fictional form of the novel became an important, and largely untapped, resource for explicating the non-fictional content of the Bible. Further, the ability of fiction to explain scripture has not only helped pave the way for American Evangelicals more readily embracing the Christian novel, but has also led to blurring the line between the categories of sacred and fictional literature.[73]

Romantic novels, which gained in popularity towards the end of the nineteenth century, had an important place in the market. However, the Left Behind series of novels on the end times emerged from two popular series: The first was Frank Peretti's spiritual warfare novels in which the small town of Ashton, the target of a New Age plot, is invaded by hordes of vile demons who contaminate their victims with all kinds of vices. Their leader Rafar, Prince of Babylon, is opposed by the angel, Tal, the Captain of the Host.[74] The demons come in all sizes but are characterised by scaly skins, bulging yellow eyeballs and wide nostrils puffing out sulphurous fumes.[75] Never before had a Christian novel been so graphic in its portrayal of demonic forces; not even rivalled by similar demons, more goat-like, but equally repulsive and aggressive that would feature in the Left Behind: Eternal Forces video game released in 2005.

The second are the non-fictional prophecy works of Hal Lindsey[76] that vividly express his singular familiarity with the United States army logistics and inventories of

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[73] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 210.

[74] Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1986).

[75] These descriptions which vary in intensity and detail, one to the other, occur so frequently that they cannot be cited or be referred to page numbers.

[76] Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970). Lindsey's work, presenting his view of the end of the world, became the bestselling non-fiction title of the entire decade. By 1999 it had sold thirty-five million copies with only the Bible outselling Lindsey's book

weaponry.[77] One may add that these books foreshadowed the militaristic nature of the Left Behind novels. *Left Behind* was, however, not the first rapture novel; Crawford Gribben traces the genre back to Sydney Watson's *In the Twinkling of an Eye*,[78] published in 1905. Short of accusing LaHaye and Jenkins of plagiarism, Gribben notes that the Left Behind series is bound to have some similarities, but the borrowing of several tropes and stock characters by LaHaye and Jenkins is detectable.[79] In spite of its forerunners, however, the Left Behind novels made a fresh impact on a wide readership, even beyond evangelical confines. A first step would be to examine more closely how research accounts for the popularity of the series, whether readers consider the Left Behind series to be on a par with the Bible and what their perception is of violence in the novels.

3.2 Responses to the Left Behind Novels

3.2.1 Research Findings of Paul Gutjahr and Amy Frykholm

As referred to in the Survey of Literature (Section 1:3) Gutjahr and Frykholm have respectively pioneered research into reader-responses to the Left Behind novels. I will first refer to Gutjahr, then to Frykholm in 3.2.1, and then to both, with Gold on the question of whether readers regard the Left Behind novels as a sacred text in 3.2.2, then in 3.2.3, where I refer Gutjahr, Frykholm and Johns on perceptions of violence by Left Behind readers. The findings of the research are quite voluminous, and I therefore cite only the most representative.

Gutjahr, who shows an innate sensitivity to, and understanding of why the novels attract readers,[80] used the facility of Amazon.com whereby customers are offered the

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[77] These feature prominently in Hal Lindsey, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981); Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers: 1973).

[78] Sydney Watson, *In the Twinkling of an Eye* (London: Fleming and Revell, 1905).

[79] Crawford Gribben, "Before Left Behind," *Books & Culture*, (July/August 2003), n.p.[Cited 18 Jul 2008] Online: www. Christianity today.com/bc/2003julaug/14.9html

[80] See Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 216. "The appeal of these books is that they comfort Christians with a view of the end times that allows them to forego the torturous pain of the Tribulation." Gutjahr states that LaHaye and Jenkins, in saying that the books meet Americans' immense spiritual hunger go beyond this conclusion, and give wider berth to their explanation of why the series has been so successful. Approach of the of the end of a millennium and fears of the fears over Y2K computer problems, and their place in biblical prophecy into biblical prophecy helped boost sales of the series. Gutjahr adds that "the Left Behind series came

opportunity of writing reviews of various books. Of the seventeen hundred readers who had chosen to post reviews, he found that the series clearly served as "a kind of modern-day midrash on the Bible."[81] As one reader responded: "I'm pleased the writers led me through a Bible study course in this exciting novel."[82] Gutjahr found that those who had claimed that the series had influenced the way in which they interpreted scripture pointed largely to "the clarifying nature of the novels when it came to the more obscure parts of the Bible."[83] Gutjahr states that while 20 percent of those answering the follow-up call survey pointed to the series as an influence on their general interpretation of the Bible, well more than half of those surveyed pointed to the series as an aid in reading the Book of Revelation.[84] "Left Behind tells a narrative closely bound to a certain premillennial textual interpretation of the book of Revelation, but rather than telling it in a dry-as-dust exegetical commentary, it gives biblical interpretation to its readers in the midst of a plot full of romance, violence, revenge and intrigue. These elements certainly are not lacking from the Bible itself, but they are used by LaHaye and Jenkins in a forceful way."[85]

Whereas Gutjahr's research focuses on how the Left Behind series helped readers to understand the book of Revelation, Frykholm's study deals with reading habits[86] and social networks[87] of consumers of the novels. However, in the final chapters devoted to

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as a natural outgrowth of a biblical-prophecy genre that had already gone a considerable distance in fusing non-fictional biblical commentary with fictional representations of what certain biblical prophecies might look like in the near future. Thus, the Left Behind series came to be the most popular manifestation of an already established and immensely popular Protestant genre."

[81] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 223.
[82] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind, " 223.
[83] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind, " 224.
[84] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind, " 224.
[85] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind, " 224.
[86] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 23. In interviewing readers and visiting readers' churches, homes, Bible Study Studies and Sunday school classes Frykholm found that "readers come to *Left Behind* from various social and religious positions. How they respond to the texts, what they make of them, and how they integrate them into their own lives is no more contained by the terms *evangelicalism* or *fundamentalism* than the narrative itself." Frykholm adds: "Readers participate in an often fluid relationship between 'Christian fiction,' which they acknowledge Left Behind to be, and American popular culture more generally, they make might make a moral distinction (*Left Behind* is better for them, more enriching, more spiritually beneficial, etc.), in practice rarely separate themselves from books, movies, radio or TV produced by mainstream culture." Frykholm suggests that "a reader could likely read *Left Behind* for a few minutes before bed after having spent an evening watching the latest Bruce Willis movie or intersperse the reading of *Left Behind* with John Grisham's thrillers or Peggy Clark's mysteries." Frykholm adds that anxiety about the influence of secular culture may be condemned but would not prevent the buying, renting and consuming of popular culture generally.
[87] See Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 38.

the content of biblical contents in the Left Behind series, she states that many readers credit the series for making the Book of Revelation come alive as it had never previously done. Readers admit that they struggle with Revelation because of its strange visions and bizarre images, but they feel they cannot read it literally nor cannot make sense of it symbolically.[88] "They attribute to *Left Behind* the bringing of these obscure images 'to life,' which often means bringing them into a scheme of logic assimilating them into a cosmic story they can understand."[89] One reader "expresses with particular precision" that the books bring the end times into "visual consciousness."[90] "He suddenly sees in his mind's eye the 'reality' of the rapture and tribulation and they seem compellingly real to him. The ability to envision the mysterious prophecies of Revelation is one of the most powerful effects that reading the books has."[91]

3.2.2 Left Behind a Sacred Text?

With this new-found understanding of Revelation and other prophetic texts can one conclude that the Bible and the novels have equal value for readers? Earlier on in his study Gutjahr noted that while fictional reading influenced bible reading in previous centuries "American comments on how fiction reading has touched upon Bible reading are virtually invisible where reader responses is found."[92] It was almost as if "mentioning fictions with the Bible was too inappropriate to contemplate."[93] Yet the findings of the amazon.com survey that indicated a significant influence of the Left Behind series on new found enthusiasm for the Bible changed this perception:

> With the added knowledge given to them by these books, readers found themselves moved to embrace doctrinal positions and religious allegiances in ways once only attributed the influence exercised by the Holy Scriptures and the most venerated religious works. In the Left Behind series, we have an example of just how important fictional works can be when connected to sacred texts. By virtue of readers mentioning time and again that these novels had contained a divinely

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[88] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 134.
[89] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 134.
[90] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 134.
[91] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 134.
[92] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 223.
[93] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 223.

inspired truth that redirected or reaffirmed their theological stances and religious allegiances, these books move from the realm of the simple fiction to sacred texts.[94]

Malcolm Gold, holds a similar view, but affords the Left Behind series an even greater status:"[95]

> For the power of the series does not rely solely on its ability to entertain and satisfy the consumers of mass popular culture. It carries with it a storyline that is simply not a product of the writers' imaginations. Although penned by Lahaye (sic) and Jenkins, the true authorship is attributed to God; the articulators of the Tribulation events are regarded simply as vessels through which the message flows. The predominantly Christian consumers of the materials may debate various details, but the basic truth of the interpretation remains. In this sense, as with the Bible, the LBS may be regarded as sacred text.[96]

Gold admits that to suggest such a thing to the majority of "LBS readers" would no doubt "sound sacrilegious, as only the Bible itself would be considered 'truly a sacred text.'" [97]He notes, however, "continual citing of biblical texts within the series and this is used with striking effect in the twelfth book *Glorious Appearing* where it is Jesus himself who provides an extensive scriptural and quasi-monologue as the action unfolds."[98]

Amy Frykholm found that many of the readers she interviewed reminded her that "Left Behind is not the Word of God," but they believed it is based on scripture and inspired by scripture.[99] "Its particular connection to the Bible is significant because it helps to give Left Behind an authority that in turn provides a script for the direction of the world."[100] But there is another aspect: "Left Behind's connection to the Bible provides evidence for the Gnostic view towards which readers already tend, namely that there is indeed an alternative plot behind the seeming chaos of the world that is driving it towards a particular end."[101] Furthermore, "Linking Left Behind to the prophetic texts is not the same thing as saying that Left Behind becomes scripture for readers or takes

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[94] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 226-7.
[95] Gold, "The Left Behind Series," 40-41.
[96] Gold, "The Left Behind Series," 40-41.
[97] Gold, "The Left Behind Series," 41.
[98] Gold, "The Left Behind Series," 44.
[99] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,*110.
[100] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,*110.
[101] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,*110.

the place of scripture. Most readers, even those invested in Left Behind's 'truth,' reserve a line drawn not only by rhetoric, but also by reading practices."[102]

This close interface between the scriptural text and the Left Behind text, as reflected on by Gutjahr, Gold and Frykholm, indicates that the Left Behind novels have considerable weighting for readers, if not equal to the sacred text itself, sufficiently close for them to be a guiding force in their discipleship and spirituality. Uncritical acceptance of the novels therefore may explain why readers may be impervious to the militaristic overtones in the storyline.

3.2.3 Perceptions of Violence

Gutjahr's analysis of reader-responses clearly leads him to the pragmatic conclusion that the positive claims readers made via Amazon.com endorse the value of the series. Since he does not include any critical responses in his survey,[103] there is no way of knowing how readers responded to violent undertones of the Left Behind storyline. Frykholm's survey, focusing as it does on reader-responses within a reader network, brings very little to light about readers' perceptions of the same.[104] There are readers, Frykholm found, "for whom the Tribulation has a certain attraction and who are not concerned whether the Rapture will occur before, midway or after the Tribulation."[105]

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[102]Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 110-111. According to Frykholm, Left Behind readers read the Bible in a significantly different way: "Short passages of the Bible are read daily while Left Behind is read intensively at sporadic periods; Bible passages are read in small sections, with careful attention to words while Left Behind readers read for plotlines and character development; they read to find out what will happen next. They are unconcerned with individual words used to express the dynamics of the narrative. The text becomes alive though the process of interpretation." Readers of both the Bible and constantly ask, "How does this apply in my life?" Left Behind apparently succeeds in helping readers understand the application of obscure prophecies.

[103] The closest being, "The degree to which fast-paced action makes these books appealing is captured in how one male reader stated he had a hard time picking a favorite character because 'my favorites tend to be the ones that get killed off! (no. 15). Relational issues are downplayed as world events, harrowing escapes, rescue missions, and various murder plots are foregrounded. See Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 221.

[104] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 174. Although Frykholm does not refer to readers that object to violence and militarism portrayed in Left Behind, she recalls that on Jerry Falwell's talk show *Listen America*, Tim LaHaye used stark language to describe the state of the nation: "We're in a religious war and we need to aggressively oppose secular humanism; these people are as religiously motivated as we are and they are filled with the devil." His religious war, adds Frykholm includes antigay (sic), antiabortion (sic) and antipornography (sic) campaigns as well as campaigns for prayer and creationism in schools. He believes that secularists are in a quest for "world domination and that Christians have no way but than to fight back." She recognises that this kind of aggressive political speech has fueled the public image of Left Behind as reactionary and even dangerous.

[105] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 128.

Of one reader, she writes: "Jason's smile signals a recognition that this desire is part of a fantasy. He expresses his identification not with an individual, but of being part of a secretive and special organization."[106] Holding privileged knowledge about the world, he is "already in a sense, part of an organisation that sees itself on the front lines, as it were, battling against those forces that undermine religious faith."[107] "Desiring to stay around during the Tribulation and fight it out with the Antichrist at the call to arms Left Behind attempts and some readers accept. There is still a battle to be fought and won, a battle for power in both the church and the world."[108]

Turning from a reader-response survey to a more content-analytic reading of Left Behind novels, we find Loren L. Johns commenting: "So far we have noted how *God* and *Jesus* act in the Left Behind series. When we turn to how *believers* act, we see many examples of violence meted out by them. That there are believers in a post-Rapture world derives from LaHaye's 'second chance' theology: those who are left behind in the rapture have a second chance – as much as seven years – to repent and to become Christians."[109] Johns goes on to say that "although there is an occasional pang of conscience on the part of believers who engage in violence, these pangs are quickly and regularly dispatched with the recognition that 'this is war'."[110] Johns describes the series as being full of "hair-raising chase scenes, Christian triumphalism, poor exegesis of biblical texts, and violence."[111]

Johns concludes: "War is not just *a feature* – not even a *central* feature – in the period of the Tribulation; war *defines* the period."[112] From another angle, Neuchterlein, influenced by René Girard, writes, "From the perspective of mimetic theory, the most serious problem with the *Left Behind* series of novels, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, is their re-sacralisation of violence. Their version of Jesus is no longer the

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[106] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 128.

[107] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 128.

[108] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture,* 129.

[109] Johns, "Conceiving Violence," n.p.

[110] Johns, "Conceiving Violence," n.p.

[111] Johns, "Conceiving Violence," n.p. lists twenty violence-related instances, ranging from "Buck driving his fist square into the young guard's nose with all he could muster, feeling the crush of cartilage, the cracking of teeth and the ripping of flesh" (4:347) to Rayford Steele who expresses the wish to be "God's hitman" (5:100). Johns goes on to add: "On the rhetorical level, the violence is fun because the reader is on the winning side for once. The implied reader is expected to enjoy the violence because he or she is an Evangelical Christian who is tired of a Lamb-like Jesus and cannot wait for Jesus to kick some butt − and even more, to help him do it. And what could be better than a war."

[112] Johns, "Conceiving Violence," n.p.

Lamb slain, but the same beastly violence of the Roman empire that John of Patmos is trying to portray. Jesus, when he comes again, will simply wield a vastly superior firepower, the epitome of righteous, sacred violence."[113]

The Left Behind series suffers the same fate as any other literary work – it is both lauded and denounced, and in a Christian series, as Left Behind professes to be, the denunciation is all the more stringent. Expressions of violence, that would regarded as commonplace in secular literature, when found in Christian literature are not tolerated by critics of any persuasion justification of the authors notwithstanding.[114]

3.3 Responses to the Left Behind Films

Positive viewer-response to the three films[115] is substantially the same as that found by Gutjahr and Frykholm in their respective surveys – finding salvation, understanding prophecy and being motivated to evangelise. There is also considerable negative response, mostly about character portrayal, dialogue and other technical aspects, as well as objections to the theology of Left Behind, with a few instances of allegations of satanic conspiracy.[116] The magnitude of responses, found in many review websites[117] does not facilitate the singling out of responses. What is more significant is to note that there is no comment on what is the first occurrence of violent action, namely the scene

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[113] J. Neuchterlein, "Re-sacralizing Violence in Left Behind," n.p. [Cited 10 October, 2008] Online: girardianlectionary.net./res/left-behind-resacralizing violence.htm

[114] LaHaye and Jenkins are adamant in their defence of divinely sanctioned violence against his enemies as is evident in this interview by correspondent Morley Safer of 60 Minutes Classic: "Unfortunately, we've gone through a time when liberalism has so twisted the real meaning of Scripture that we've manufactured a loving, wimpy Jesus that he wouldn't even do anything in judgment. And that's not the God of the Bible. That's not the way Jesus reads in the Scripture. The Biblical stuff is as close to the Bible interpretation as we can get. But if they are not people who read the Bible, they don't know which is which. And so they say we sort of invented this violent Jesus. That stuff is straight from the Bible. The idea of him slaying the enemy with the sword that comes from his mouth, which is The Word, and the fact that the enemies eyes melt in their heads, their tongues disintegrates, their flesh drops off, I didn't make that up. That's out of the prophecy." [Cited: 8 October 2009] Online:http//www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/13/60II/main611661.s. html)

[115] Left Behind: The Movie. Directed by Vic Sarin. Cloud Ten Pictures; Left Behind II: Tribulation Force. Directed by Bill Corcoran. Cloud Ten Pictures; Left Behind: World at War, Directed by Craig Baxley. Cloud Ten Pictures.

[116] James Whistler, The Truth Please, (Sun, 26 November 2000) n.p. [Cited: 4 November, 2008]. Online: http://www.cuttingedge.org/n1040.html, This blogger claims that Luciferians seek satanic blessings by not only performing their jobs in their sacred locations where they believe is occultic power (this is why LaHaye, it is believed, was set up in Washington D.C. and the Dallas area while co-writing the Left Behind series) but also by initiating their projects on their satanic holy days. The blogger then mentions the correlation between the production dates and releases to the titles of the films.

[117] To mention two: christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2000/leftbehind/html; metacritic.com/video/titles/leftbehind;rottentomatoes.com/m/leftbehind.

in *Left Behind Tribulation Force II,* where "Moishe and Eli," spew a column of fire on an approaching gunman at the Wailing Wall, leaving a charred skeleton smoking on the ground.[118]

The first two Left Behind films cover the first two books of the series and the third the last fifty pages of the second book. From the first film, where the Tribulation Force coalesces shortly after the rapture to the third film, where the evil Carpathia launches germ warfare by spraying Bibles with deadly material, claiming the life of their spiritual leader, Pastor Bruce Barnes, violence is rife. However, it is a violence that comes from the hostile forces. The Christians are portrayed as martyrs against the supernatural prowess of Carpathia, who is bulletproof when the disillusioned U.S. President, Gerald Fitzhugh, fires shots into his chest. The three films evoke more a sense of solidarity with the Tribulation Force who faces stark realities in the bunkers and overcrowded churches that serve as hospices. The poignant scene where the dying Pastor Barnes and desperately ill Chloe receive communion from Rayford Steele and his new wife Amanda dispel any thought of violent resistance from Tribulation Force. However, Barbara Rossing observes: "Left Behind's fascination with violence also escalates in the later novels. Just about every Tribulation Force member carries a Uzi or a Directed Energy weapon (DEW), although Chloe's gun is just an 'ancient Luger'. . . "[119]

As the series progresses, Tribulation Force will become more assertive, and in the event of more films being made, we would find in *Glorious Appearing: The Final Triumph* a scene that ultimately confirms Left Behind's penchant for violence: No longer does the Tribulation Force have to wield Uzis, DEWS and Lugers, because "Jesus the Warrior who has swooped down on Mount Olivet on a white horse, slays thousands by the sword of his mouth."[120] It is made clear by the authors that the "sword coming out of Jesus' mouth" must not be taken literally but symbolically ─ Jesus will not "literally slice bodies with his sword-like tongue," but instead when Jesus *speaks*, unbelievers will perish everywhere as illustrated by these samplings: "Tens of thousands fell dead, simply dropping where they stood, their bodies ripped open, blood

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[118] *Left Behind:Tribulation Force II.*

[119] Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed.* See also Rossing's observations on violence in Left Behind on pages 18, 40,46, 73, 77, 99, 111, 116, 120-122, 127, 132,135-138,139-140, 142, 147, 151, 153, 170.

[120] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 205.

pooling in great masses,"[121] "For miles lay the carcasses,"[122] "Splayed and filleted bodies of men and women and horses" lay everywhere in front of Jesus, who "appeared − shining, magnificent, powerful, victorious."[123] "Tens of thousands grabbed their heads or their chests, fell to their knees and writhed as they were invisibly sliced asunder. Their innards and entrails gushed to the desert floor, their blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ."[124]

Walliss sees the three Left Behind films as "standing in a tradition of rapture films which as cultural documents reflect the particular religio-political worldviews of their producers, and more broadly of the evangelical Christian/premillennialist milieu in which they are produced and consumed."[125] In particular, he argues that the films may be seen to operate on several levels simultaneously: "On one level they seek to educate their viewers in the specifics of premillennial understandings of prophecy in an entertaining manner and encourage those who have not yet done so to undergo a born-again experience. However, on another, equally important level, they also serve to articulate and possibly even redefine a sense of evangelical identity within the context of a late modern, increasingly globalised world through the language and imagery of the apocalypse."[126]

3.4 Responses to Left Behind: Eternal Forces

There are less theoretical responses to the video game than there are of the novels and the films. However, Rachel Wagner[127] and other theorists she refers to have published enlightening works, and these will be referred to more fully in the context of the analysis of LB: EF in Chapter 4. Preliminary to the analysis the following thumbnail serves to capture the essence of the game.

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[121] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 205.
[122] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 205.
[123] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 208.
[124] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 226.
[125] John Walliss, "Celling the End Times: The Contours of Contemporary Rapture." *JRPC* XIX, (2008) n.p.
[126] Walliss, "Celling the End Times," n.p.
[127] Rachel Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse: Video Games and Revelatory Literature." SBL Forum. [cited 20 October 2009] sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=848 offers a Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)

An eerie silence and air of desolation hangs over the once vibrant and bustling downtown New York. All adult born-again Christians, infants and children have been taken to heaven at Jesus' invisible coming, the Rapture. Those left behind are a motley crowd consisting of criminal gangs, those who refused the offer of salvation and the troops of the Global Peace Community. Those Christians lamenting the fact that they missed the rapture are given a second chance, as well as those infidels whom they succeed in enlisting into the Tribulation Force.[128] There is no neutrality and they have to choose one way or the other. Those who still refuse by default to join the forces of the forces of Antichrist must face the consequences.

Hutson, who authored the Talk to Action series of critiques of the video game, asks:

> Is this paramilitary mission simulator for children anything other than prejudice and bigotry using religion as an organizing tool to get people in a violent frame of mind? The dialogue includes people saying, "Praise the Lord," as they blow infidels away. The designers intend this game to become the first dominionist[129] warrior game to break through in the popular culture due to its violent scenarios and realistic graphics, lighting, and sound effects. Its creators expect it to earn a rating of T for Teen. How violent is that? That's the rating [130] shared by *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell – Chaos Theory*, a top selling game in which high-tech gadgets and high-powered weapons – frag grenades, shotguns, assault rifles, and submachine guns – are used to terminate enemies with extreme prejudice. Could such a violent, dominionist Christian video game really break through to the popular culture?[131]

What shocked early viewers the most was the perception that players are commanded to go out and kill Jews, Catholics, Muslims, gays and liberal Christians (a point I will enlarge on in Chapter 4). I would liken much of the reaction to the moral panic[132]

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[128] However, the script of the first four Left Behind novels is not replicated and some key characters of the novels figure in the game as well. The storyline of LB: EF takes place shortly after the rapture but projects into any time beyond the seven year tribulation.

[129] The meaning of the term Dominionist will become clearer as the thesis progresses. Having come into prominence in connection with LB: EF, it would be generally understood as a variation of Reconstructionism which as a postmillennial approach is working towards a perfectly Christian society before the second coming of Christ. As such it would be set against PMD which expects the millennium after the Second Coming of Christ. In fact Dominionist authors have been among Left Behind's severest critics. So it is paradoxical that LaHaye is not only an avowed premillennial dispensationalist but also a Dominionist. LaHaye appears not to share a long term vision of dominionists who strive to create a perfect Christian society. Yet, LaHaye was the founding president of the Council for Christian Policy and other dominionist organisations.

[130] John Hutson, "The Purpose Driven Life Takers (Part 1)," n.p Talk to Action [cited 10 February 2009]. Online: http//www.talk2action.

[131] John Hutson, "The Purpose Driven Life Takers. (Part 1)" n.p.

[132] O'Sullivan Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts in Communication* (London: Methuen, 1983), 140, see moral panic as an important concept which "highlights the processes of interplay between forces of social reaction and control, the mass media and certain forms of deviant activity." The term has been

Waldron describes as having occurred with the video game Dungeons and Dragons in the 1980s when the newly established industry and youth subculture associated with role-playing games came under sustained attack from schools, churches, parents and governments, instigated by the Christian Right via organisations such as B.A.D.D. (Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons). "While both the organisation B.A.D.D. and its claims linking Role-playing games to youth suicide, drug use and Satanism eventually were discredited, the impact of these accusations lingers on to the present."[133]

LB: EF, the Left Behind novels and Left Behind films are more than mere consumer products intended for enjoyment and relaxation; they are embroiled in cultural production, culture industries and culture wars.

4. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE CHRISTIAN MEDIA

4.1 Cultural Production, Culture Industries and Culture Wars

Gutjahr's approach to the Left Behind novels is by and large very positive; it rests on the assumption that reader-response has validated the motivation of author and publisher. His interest is entirely on what the novel means to readers in terms of enjoyment and spiritual edification, rather than considering the Christian novel as a form of social discourse, one with potential to construct society. Cordero contends that "interpretive analyses of Christian fiction tend to examine the content of fiction and often neglect to account for the social factors that influence its production. Since Christian fiction is the product of the collective activity of a culture industry, its content

introduced into the analysis of the mass media and their capacity to generate social concern. They cite Cohen who describes the process as one where "a condition, episode, person, or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. Moral panics are those processes whereby members of a society and culture become 'morally sensitized' to the challenges and menace posed to 'their' accepted values and ways of life, by the activities of groups defined as deviant. The process underscores the importance of the mass media in providing, maintaining and 'policing' the available frameworks and definitions of deviance, which structure both public awareness *of*, and attitudes towards, social problems."

[133] David Waldron, "Role-Playing Games and the Christian Right: Community Formation in Response to a Moral Panic," in *JRPC* IX, (2005): n.p.

must be understood as more than simply the product of an author's idiosyncratic intention." [134]

While Cordero sees Christian fiction as the product of the culture industry, Van den Heever goes further to see fiction, and that would include Christian fiction, as "a productive force in cultural and societal formation."[135] Referring to the past he argues that ancient Greek and Roman novels "forced a consideration of ancient fiction as communicative texts, as rhetorical and discursive artifacts, which by *heuresis* and *taxis,* (re)presentation and arrangement/configuration, a world is projected by configuring references as well as cultural and social codes"[136] Further, "a text as cultural artifact is embedded in the network of human relationships, social political and economic interactions, communication games and conventions of linguistic significations that surround it."[137] All these facets are not a step away from what Pierre Bourdieu called the "field of cultural production."[138]

This term introduces us to a cluster of related terms descriptive of, and explanatory of, the most common of human activities – manufacturing, selling and buying conceive cultural production as a process "of differentiation generated by the diversity of the publics at which the different categories of producers aim their products, "[139] that is, the creation of a variety of market segments consisting of buyers of these products.[140] But these products are also differentiated; Bourdieu designates them as Symbolic Goods[141] and describes them as "a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object whose

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[134] Jonathan Cordero, "The Production of Christian Fiction," in *JRPC* VI, (2004), n.p.

[135] Van den Heever, "Loose Fictions," 66-68.

[136] Van den Heever, "Loose Fictions," 66-68.

[137] Van den Heever, "Loose Fictions," 76.

[138] See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (trans. and ed. by Randall Johnson; New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1993); and for a discussion of the term in Bourdieu, Lois McNay, "Gender, Habitus and the Field. Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity," *Theory, Culture & Society*16, no. 1 (1999): 95–117.

[139] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 113.

[140] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 113.

[141]Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 113. In the introduction to Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,*75, editor, Randall Johnson outlines Bourdieu's four types of capital (goods): 1) *Economic*: money, property, etc. (Marx's "productive capital"); 2) *Cultural* (cultural goods, including artistic knowledge and educational credentials); 3) *Social* (networks of family, friends, acquaintances, and contacts) 4). *Symbolic* (socially recognized legitimisation, closely related to cultural and symbolic forms). For an interpretative study on Bourdieu's concepts of capital see Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); Economic culture: 5, 9, 20, 26, 31,37-8, 81,100, 108,176; Cultural capital 9, 31, 3753,81,176,178; Social capital: 26,31,78,108, 176; symbolic capital: 14, 20, 31, 38,79, 96. For an integrative treatment of the four types of capital in relation to class tastes and life-styles see Pierre

cultural value and commercial value remain relatively independent although the economic sanction may come to reinforce their cultural consecration" [142]

Contrary to movements in the field of restricted production, which are aimed at the elite and connoisseurs,[143] Bourdieu describes cultural production which as result of competitive forces dominating the market exemplifies what he sees as "middle-brow art" (*l'artmoyen*) which "in its ideal-typical form may none-the-less eventually reach a socially acceptable form is aimed at a public frequently referred to as 'average' (*moyen*)."[144] "Even when it is more specifically aimed at a determinate category of non-producers it may eventually heterogeneous public."[145]

Bourdieu defines middle-brow culture as "the product of the system of large-scale production, because these works are entirely defined by the reaction of the mass public," television being one example he mentions.[146] Bourdieu sees middle-brow art as the product of a productive system dominated by the quest for investment profitability; thus creating the need for the widest possible public.[147] However, it cannot focus on one social class alone in order to increase consumption; it needs necessarily to pitch itself to a social and cultural admixture of publics. The type of middle-brow art and the creation of optimal demand described by Bourdieu is true also of the rapidly expanding Christian media market, which targeted mainly to the popular culture — books, films, games and accessories, however so branded, packaged and marketed so as to appeal to a wider clientele.

Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgment of Taste* (trans. Richard Nice. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

[142] See Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 51. By "consecration" Bourdieu means the legitimacy bestowed on the choices of "ordinary consumers," therefore a "mass audience."

[143] See Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 120: "Works produced by the field of restricted production are 'pure', 'abstract' and 'esoteric.' They are 'pure' because they demand of the receiver a specifically aesthetic disposition in accordance with the principles of their production. They are 'abstract' because they call for a multiplicity of specific approaches, in contrast with the undifferentiated art of primitive societies, which is unified within an immediately accessible spectacle involving music, dance, theatre and song. They are 'esoteric' for all the above reasons and because their complex structure continually implies tacit reference to the entire history of previous structures, and is accessible only to those who possess practical or theoretical mastery of a refined code, of successive codes, and of the code of these codes."

[144] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,*125.

[145] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,*125.

[146] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,*125.

[147] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,*125.

Significant studies in this field have been produced by Colleen McDannell,[148] Vincent Miller,[149] Daniel Radosh[150] and Heather Hendershot.[151]

Van den Heever shifts cultural production specifically to media: "It is here, in the 'field of cultural production,' that an ideological contestation is raging with regard to the definition of society and for which film, alongside other products of the mass culture industry, serves as vehicle."[152] Lincoln who would relate this contestation to mercenary concerns, accedes that "romantic" or "materialist" views fulfill their function for "providing solace for the suffering and stability of society,"[153] but following Karl Marx and Max Gluckman, he says, "society should be seen as field of tension in which a variety of fractions compete for limited resources of wealth, power, and prestige."[154] He writes that "the chief divisions within the social fields of tension is that of the dominant class or fraction and all others, the dominant being that which controls the bulk of the wealth and prestige, along with means of production; occupies most positions of institutional authority or effectively controls those who do not hold such positions; and holds monopoly on the legitimate use of coercive force."[155]

The theories of Van den Heever, Bourdieu and Lincoln emphasise aspects of cultural production in general, but its applicability to the Christian publishing and media industries is obtrusive in so far it brings into relief the possibility of power-wielding and

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[148]Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven/London:Yale University Press, 1995).

[149] Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith in a Consumer Culture.* New York: Continuum, 2005

[150] Daniel, Radosh, *Rapture Ready! Adventures in the Parallel Universe of Christian Pop Culture* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2008).

[151] Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[152]Gerhard van den Heever, "Two Marys and the Emperor: The Da Vinci Code and a Culture of Alternative Gospeling Jesus' Mother and 'Wife:' Dealing with Female Deity in the Early Church (unpublished article), n.p. focuses on film and its function in shaping religious identity, film itself represents only a section of what goes under the rubric of "media." "Arguably, by far the greater influence is wielded by the 'newer' media of television, and most notably, the Internet. But of course, there is a high degree of overlap between the three with products migrating freely between them, from film to television broadcasts of the same, to video streaming of films. The discourse regarding the image industry is conducted simultaneously in all three."

[153] Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors, Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 77.

[154] Lincoln, *Holy Terrors,*79.

[155] Lincoln, *Holy Terrors,* 78-9. See also Bruce Lincoln, "Conflict," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. Mark C. Taylor; Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 55–69; Bruce Lincoln, "Culture," in *Guide to the Study of Religion* (ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon; London/New York, N.Y.: Cassell, 2000), 409–22; and Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). 3, "No consideration of discourse is complete that does take account of force. Together, discourse

social formation. Torin Monahan, drawing a circle around the Left Behind novels in context of the "apocalyptic industries," writes:

> In some respects concerns over the impending destruction of the world are ancient obsessions and well worn mythological motifs, which wax and wane according to technological changes, historical contingencies or significant turning points on arbitrary calendars. On the other hand, contemporary apocalypse prophecies fuse in interesting – and perhaps indelible – ways with capitalist economies. Whether the looming disasters are technological, environmental or biblical, they tend to afford amazingly lucrative opportunities for some while fueling the increasing vulnerability of others.[156]

Taking an opposite view to Gutjahr who commended Tyndale Publishing House for "doing a magnificent job"[157] in marketing Left Behind, Monahan speaks of the industry as promoting to an "ideology of damnation" − he points to an entire industry that has developed to "feed the fears of Christians and presumably others about the imminent coming of the Antichrist and the end of the world."[158]

> As part of the $7 billion market for Christian (*Business Week*, 2005) religious fiction now occupies aisles upon aisles in some large chain bookstores. Much of this material demonstrates a significant degree of gloating by Christian authors over the presumably condemned lapsed Christians who will remain on earth to suffer after the rapture occurs. Apart from religious fiction, products in this genre include video games, board games, websites, DVDs, televised sermons and a host of "non-fiction books, which delineate in great detail the many forms that current and future threats upon souls can take, along with identifying the complicit parties involved in propagating the secular mechanism and ideologies of damnation.[159]

Not speaking specifically of Left Behind, but quite relevant to the subject, Hesmondhalgh questions how texts take on the form they do, and how these have come to play such a central role in contemporary societies.[160] "Importantly, most texts that we

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and force are the chief means whereby social borders, hierarchies, institutional formations, and the habituated patterns of behavior are both maintained and modified."

[156] Torin Monahan, "Marketing the Beast: *Left Behind* and the Apocalypse Industry," *Media, Culture and Society* 30, no. 6 (2008): 813. Monahan is drawing from Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on the Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000): 47-67.

[157] Gutjahr, No Longer Left Behind, 218.

[158] Monahan, "Marketing the Beast," 813.

[159] Monahan, "Marketing the Beast," 814.

[160] See David Hesmondhalgh, *Cultural Industries* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 3. "Texts" is the collective name Hesmondhalgh uses for cultural "works" of all kinds: "programmes, films, records, books, comics, magazines, newspapers, and so on produced by the cultural industries."

consume are circulated by powerful corporations. These corporations, like all businesses, have an interest in making profits. They want to support conditions in which businesses in general – especially their own – can make big profits."[161] "Cultural companies have to compete with each other, as well as maintain general conditions in which to do business and so they try to outstrip each other to satisfy audience desires for the shocking, the profane and rebellious."[162]

Medved's observation is that the major production houses connected to mass entertainment are conglomerates that "own everything from television networks to theme parks, from book publishers to gigantic record companies."[163] Taking a position that media corporations are not engaged merely in accumulating profits but also in social formation, Medved cites Michael Hudson as declaring, "We are in the midst of a culture war. The extremist right-wing political movement no longer has the evil of communism to fight. So they look to other fields, including putting on economic pressure to boycott television programming;"[164] he then cites congressman Henry Hyde, "America is already involved in a *Kulturkampf* . . . a war between cultures and a war about the meaning of culture."[165]

Cultural production and cultural industries are concomitant with "culture wars" a concept used to refer to the debate raging over morality in the U.S.A. but which may well be extended to the purveyors of cultural productions, that is, the culture industries jousting for their share and more in the market, and in the shaping of society.[166] This trend is not confined to the public sector corporate but also Christian media industries – Purpose Driven Ministries and Left Behind Games being a case in point.

4.2 A Case in Point: Purpose Driven Ministries and Left Behind Games

The name of Rick Warren, who as pastor of the for 15,000 member strong Saddleback

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[161] Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, 3-5.

[162] Hesmondhalgh, *Cultural Industries*, 2.

[163] Medved, *Hollywood vs. America,* 15.

[164] Medved, *Hollywood vs. America*, 22.

[165] Medved, *Hollywood vs. America*, 22.

[166] For Van den Heever, "Two Marys and an Emperor," n.p., the relationship between film and culture is in reality much more complex than debates on whether films actually influence society or reflect society. "Thus, apart from reflecting social reality (which it also does), the mass communication industry also purveys

Church and author of *The Purpose Driven Life*[167] and *The Purpose Driven Church*[168] has become synonymous with concepts such as "Megachurch merchandizing,"[169] "pyromarketing[170] and "Intel operating chip"[171] The altercation in this situation to be outlined is typical of the kind of culture wars raging in evangelical circles. Warren has been criticised by Hutson for his association, albeit short-lived, with Left Behind Games.

Rick Warren came into the spotlight when his top aide, Mark Carver, resigned as an adviser to Left Behind Games on June 5, 2006, and asked that the game developer remove the Purpose Driven Ministries name brand from its website. Carver's abrupt resignation, announced in a statement e-mailed to Talk to Action[172] by Warren's Purpose Driven Ministries on June 6, came in response to the first two essays in this series, which revealed, (1) that Mr. Carver was giving business advice to Left Behind Games; (2) that Left Behind Games was invoking the name brand of Warren's Purpose Driven Church in its web-based marketing materials; and (3) that Left Behind Games was emulating Warren's network marketing techniques, and planning to distribute its

an alternative social vision, and one that, at worst, undermines, or at best, is different from the Culture Christianity that was the founding vision of America."

[167] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

[168] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Cape Town: Struik Christian Books, 2007). In the Preface to the book, W. A. Criswell writes, "some would call Saddleback a 'megachurch,' but this church has grown *without compromising the mission or the doctrine* of a New Testament church." xi. Warren, himself, admits to disliking the term "megachurches," holding that few outside know what is actually happening inside them. "inaccurate assumptions are made, sometimes out of envy, sometimes out of fear, and sometimes due to ignorance." 23. Warren's terminology in *The Purpose Driven Church* is not derived from business management principles, but commentators base their assessments on public statements by Warren, alliances he has made and observations of how his church-growth principles work in practice.

[169] Megachurches is a term describing congregations ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 like Saddleback pastored by Rick Warren and Willowcreek, by Bill Hybels. Warren's church growth principles are inspired by his mentor of twenty years, Peter Drucker, who said, "What is our business? " "Who is our customer?" "What does the customer consider value?" Seeker-sensitive ministry results in church growth which means these churches are involved in marketing products outside the usual channels.

[170] *PyroMarketing: The Four Step Strategy To Ignite Customer Evangelists and Keep Them for Life* reveals the network marketing strategy that made *The Purpose Driven Life* one of the best selling hardcover books in American history by using a fire metaphor that involves four steps: (1) Gather the driest tinder; (2) Touch it with a match; (3) Fan the flames; (4) List your customers. For a fuller description on the above, see John Hutson "Violent Video Game Marketed through Megachurches," Talk to Action (Part 2)" [cited 10 February 2009]. Online: http//www.talk2action

[171] See "Jesus CEO," *The Economist* (December 2005), n.p. [cited 20 November 2008] Online: www.teachingamericanhistory/library/ince.asp?document=1443 "Warren likens his 'purpose-driven formula' to an Intel operating chip that can be inserted into the motherboard of any church – and points out that there are more than 30,000 purpose-driven churches. Warren has also set up a website, pastors.com that gives 30,000 pastors access to e-mail forums, prayer sites and sermons, including over 20 years- worth of Mr Warren's own."

[172] John Hutson, "Revelation and Resignation, (Part 3)," n.p. Talk to Action [cited 10 February 2009]. Online: http//www.talk2action

game through pastoral networks and megachurches. Hutson views this is as an "old fashioned business idea of endorsement by association, in which a corporation gains the implied endorsement of a product by being able to invoke the name brand of a prominent person or celebrity," Then adding a familiar refrain: "What we are looking at here is a business/marketing alliance between several evangelical and ministerial entrepreneurs for whom the Great Commission also means great profits."[173]

Hutson sees Warren's global plan, a $40 million campaign to expand missionary training facilities at Saddleback's 120-acre campus in Lake Forest, California, for a purpose-driven ministry overseas as "a strategy to realise a dominionist vision of churches, states, and corporations forming partnerships to bring about a new world order to make way for Christ's return by establishing a literal, physical kingdom of God on earth." [174]

This sketch of the activities of Purpose Driven Ministries and its leader, Rick Warren, illustrates, firstly, the extent of networks, conglomerates and modus operandi that account for the phenomenal sales[175] of both Left Behind and Purpose Driven Life as well as interest in Left Behind Games, Purpose Driven Ministries, Tyndale and Double Fusion,[176] a seemingly unrelated company that has a particular interest in

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[173] John Hutson "The Purpose Driven Life Takers, (Part 1)," n.p.

[174] As cited in John Hutson, "The Purpose Driven Life Takers (Part 1)" n.p Talk to Action. According to Hutson, Warren's vision is the establishment of this earthly kingdom requires "foot soldiers." As part of his plan, Warren said he would encourage laypeople to "adopt" needy villages overseas in order to plant churches, expand business opportunities, educate children, influence governments, and overthrow corrupt political leaders, whom he described as "little Saddams." Warren is cited as saying that his purpose is to enlist "one billion foot soldiers for the Kingdom of God" in the developing world. Celebrants included Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, a tiny east African country that lost hundreds of thousands of people when it suffered genocide in 1994. Catholic and Protestant clergy have been convicted in connection with that genocide. Yet Mr. Kagame announced that he would allow "Mr. Warren to turn his country into the first purpose driven nation. The following month, 16 Rwandan religious leaders arrived in Orange County to begin religious training at Saddleback Church. Mr. Warren has said that his global initiative was developed 'underground and in stealth.'"

[175] According to research (2005) by the Barna Group, the three bestselling books of the past few years have been books in the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, *The Da Vinci Code* by Daniel Brown and *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. "Not surprisingly most of the adults who have read a religious-themed book in the past two years were aware of those books. *The Da Vinci Code* was the best known, familiar to four out of five adults (78%). Warren's book was known to almost two-thirds of religious leaders (63%) while three out of five were aware of the *Left Behind* novels (58%)," n.p.[cited:5 March 2009]. Online: www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/176-religious-books-attract-a-diverse-audience-dominated-by-women-and-boomers

[176] On the same date, as Carver's resignation Left Behind Games announced its partnership with Double Fusion to place in-game ads in their sole product, *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*. Double Fusion was founded in Jerusalem in 2004, and with millions of dollars backing from venture capital firms, relocated its headquarters to San Francisco. In 2006 Double Fusion claims to have "offices and affiliates" in Jerusalem, London, New York, and Shanghai; the corporation's research and development is still done in Jerusalem's Malcha Technology Park. Advertisers specifically seek out young males, ages 13-34, because they are likely to spend more time playing

LB:EF. Secondly, it illustrates the extent of ideological variance in media enterprises in the evangelical milieu. Warren's Druckerian marketing strategies, coupled with Dominionist-orientated outreaches, have stirred up controversy and opposition yet established him in a dominant position in society. "Purpose Driven" has become a strong marketing brand[177] and equally if not more so Left Behind. Since publishers are showing more interest in authors with a potential for branding than the fledgling author with a single title, LaHaye is able to enter into contracts with any number of publishers simultaneously.[178] From 1990 to 1999 he (sometimes with co-authors) had books published by Harvest House, Tyndale, AMG, New Leaf, and from 2000 to 2010, Word Publishing, Tyndale, Bantam Dell, Berkly and Zondervan. The cumulative effects of sales establish LaHaye, in what Bourdieu refers to as "the position of the literary or artistic field within the 'field of power,'" i.e. "a set of dominant power relations in society, or in other words, the ruling classes."[179] Within this structure of agents who "compete for legitimacy in the field" Bourdieu has drawn a profile of the producer's "habitus."[180] He formally defines habitus as the "system of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them."[181] Bourdieu uses the phrase "feel for the game" (*sens pratique*) to describe the facile and effortless

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video games than watching television. In-game ad sales teams like to say that their surveys indicate that teenaged and young adult male gamers don't mind ads that look slick and work within the context of the game, and that ads can contribute to a game's realism. But in their surveys, they do not make clear to gamers exactly how closely they are being tracked, and what date data is being gathered and analysed. The connection between Double Fusion and Left Behind Games appears to be no more than an astute business transaction. I have not found any documentation to suggest any sinister dimension in the partnership except concerns expressed by analysts about what use the data collected is put to. See John Hutson, "Who is Watching the Boys? (Part 6)," n.p. [cited 10 February 2009]. Talk to Action Online: http//www.talk2action.

[177] Steve Rabey, "No Longer Left Behind: 'An Insider's look at How Christian Books are Agented, Acquired, Packaged, Branded, and Sold in Today's Marketplace,'" *Christianity Today,* (22 April, 2002): 26-33. According to Rabey, Hyatt and other publishers are increasingly applying the principle of branding to Christian publishing. "If there are people who can write, and who have something important to say, we're going to invest in them. But we're not just selling a book, we're building a brand."

[178] According to Rabey, "No Longer Left Behind," n.p. "Mark Sweeney, the new publisher of W Publishing Group, recently told CBA's *Marketplace* that "the stand-alone book will become very rare for us. Our focus is on investing more in building communicators and taking them to the next level."

[179] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 14.

[180] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 4.

[181] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 5.

mastery in which agents follow through their ventures, not as acquired by concerted effort but inculcated from early childhood and that "continues throughout a life time."[182]

Jen Webb, Tony Schirato and Geoff Danaher define habitus as a "concept that expresses, on the one hand, the way in which individuals 'become themselves' – develop attitudes and dispositions – and, on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices."[183] They see artistic habitus, for example, as "disposing the individual artist to certain activities and perspectives that express the culturally and historically constituted values of the artistic field." [184]

This description could be applied in any context and to any individual or group in the context of Purpose Driven Ministries, the LB Corpus, or any other enterprise with their nexus of authors, literary agents, producers, publishers, distributors, affiliates and franchisees. Their habitus is entrepreneurial, opportunistic, and pragmatic, in a positive sense very much part of the American pioneering spirit and work ethic. These would not have negative connotations in the field in which these agents are operating, the field being that of Christian evangelism and church growth.[185] Bourdieu asks, "What do I mean by field?"[186] There are, however, determining factors as Bourdieu shows.

As he uses the term, he defines a field as "a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of politics and economy."[187] Making the definition more precise, he writes, "The literary field (one may also speak of the artistic field, the philosophical field, etc). It has its own laws of functioning, its specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated, and so forth."[188] It is in this social universe, that a particular form of capital accumulates and where relations of force of a particular type

[182] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production,* 5.
[183] Jen Webb, Tony Schirato and Geoff Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu* (London/Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), xii.
[184] Webb, Schirato and Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu*, xii.
[185] For comments on further aspects of Bourdieu's concept of habitus see Webb, Schirato and Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu*, 21-44; also David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 95-116, and especially 105: "Habitus transforms social and economic 'necessity' into 'virtue' by leading individuals to a 'kind of immediate submission to order. (Bourdieu 1990). It legitimates economic and social inequality by providing a practical and taken for granted acceptance of the fundamental conditions of existence."
[186] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 162.
[187] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 163.
[188] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 163.

are exerted.[189] The inference of power suggests negative connotations in the field of evangelism and church growth − its dispositions have merged with those of economic and political fields, the result being an escalation of culturally-rooted conflict in American Evangelicalism.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The diverse information in this chapter has placed the LB Corpus in the context of the contemporary Christian market. What has become pronounced in this overview is the pervasiveness of the LB Corpus: not only has it positioned itself as a bestseller on the charts but its producers have become contenders in the echelons of the Christian publishing industry. From these heights it is empowered not only to negotiate contracts with multiple publishers but also to enter into relationships with a broad stratum of readers, whose affirmations of loyalty reinforce mass consumption of texts and artefacts.

Bourdieu's concepts of restricted production contra large-scale production, symbolic goods and habitus provide a useful frame of reference for understanding the social universe of corporate companies. With reference to the nexus of players in this universe a recurring word in this chapter has been "profits" – and in the case of Left Behind, mentioning the word as if the fortunes that LB Corpus have amassed over the past fifteen years belie an intrinsic greed on the part of the companies involved. The most indicting comment comes from Monahan who sees the authors of Left Behind, along with Tyndale House and other publishers as readily "exploiting the mass marketplace to spread their words and increase their profits."[190] He notes that the apocalypse market "advances by fusing with current market logics and systems, norms and forms have led to a dissonance between messages of consumer critique and practices of millennial consumerism is left unresolved: it is one of the few ambiguities within the genre, whereby riches on Earth are both a serendipitous byproduct of the larger evangelical enterprise and a validation.[191]

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[189] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 6.
[190] Monahan, "Marketing the Beast," 817-18.
[191] Monahan, "Marketing the Beast," 820.

Of course, the authors and publishers would see profits in terms of divine approval and blessing. Greater profits translate into greater production of media products, and therefore greater evangelism. Since Left Behind is not unique in its accruement of profits the perspectives by Monahan[192] at this point cannot be used to incriminate its phenomenal sales. More thought is required into what constitutes an ethic of profit-making and how exploitation in the Christian media industry actually takes place. Exploitation, it might be found, exists in creation of new markets with the recycling of existing material into new packaging.

Assuming that in individual cases, media producers and authors allot percentages of their of profits to social responsibility,Einstein's observation would be more generally applicable: "The *Left Behind* discourse is incapable of critiquing capitalist society, because the authors contrast individual religion with the social cohesion by secular humanism. American capitalism is the economic paradigm which supports individualism."[193]

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[192] See Monahan, "Marketing the Beast," 817-18, for an overview of, and comment on, Left Behind's sales statistics, market positioning and marketing strategies.
[193] Einstein, *Mass Market Mayhem*, 51.

CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETATION: WHAT STANDS WRITTEN HERE?

1. INTRODUCTION

With apologies to Bruce Lincoln who asks the precocious questions,[194] "Who wins what and how much?*"* and "Who speaks here?" I have entitled this chapter "What stands written here?" Indeed, what the text conveys to the reader, and what the effects are of this reading of the biblical text and the fictional text of Left Behind are the main considerations in this chapter. The descriptor "fictional," however, needs qualification; could the Left Behind novels be described as a "historical novel," "narrative exegesis," or even science fiction? Much ground, however, will be covered before reaching this consideration further on.

Suspending the thread of violent inclinations briefly, I focus in Section 2 on the nature of consistent literalism, its being embedded in the grammatical-historical system of interpretation, and how this has been appropriated, by LaHaye and Jenkins within the PMD guild. I demonstrate in Section 3 how LaHaye and Jenkins interpret Revelation 7 according to the principle of consistent literalism, and in configuring it with figurative language and artistic license, its propensity towards discriminatory and violent behaviors will become evident.

In Section 4 I situate LaHaye and Jenkins's interpretative methodology within an epistemological framework which entails forays into Rabbinic exegesis, Aristotelian metaphysics, Baconian Inductivism, Scottish Common Sense Realism and American pragmatism. Establishing the world view of LaHaye is an essential preparatory step before analysing discourse and ideology dealt with in later chapters.

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[194] Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method," in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (ed. Russell McCutcheon. London/New York: Cassell, 1999), 396.

2. CONSISTENT LITERALISM

2.1 Definitions and Applications

While LaHaye's works have become almost exclusively associated with apocalyptic and prophetic texts with an emphasis on consistent literalism, his *How to Study the Bible for Yourself* covers guidelines for reading the entire Bible on a daily basis. It recommends all the disciplines and the dispositions required for such study, and when it comes to "what God said," he hardly differs from those espousing a grammatical-historical approach without the PMD overlay. Because of human limitations and need for an own language, "words, idioms and customs have changed over the 3,500 years since God first began revealing his mind and will to man in a written record."[195] LaHaye states that "the only accurate system devised to guarantee what present translations say and mean to modern man is known as Hermeneutics, which he describes as a "logical, scholarly and trustworthy attempt to accurately assure that modern man understands the message that God originally set out to communicate to him."[196]

The first rule is, "Take the Bible Literally." LaHaye uses the analogy that "when a person writes you a letter you do not normally 'spiritualize' its meaning but take it to heart literally."[197] He refers to David L. Cooper's oft-cited Golden Rule of Interpretation as a means of knowing the difference between passages that can be taken literally and those that can be taken figuratively:

> When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise. [198]

Elsewhere LaHaye uses the above definition, but prefixes it with:

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[195] LaHaye, *How to Study,* 132.
[196] LaHaye, *How to Study,* 132.
[197] LaHaye, *How to Study,* 133.
[198] LaHaye, *How to Study*, 133.

You must take the Bible literally, including prophecy. That does not mean that we are wooden literalists as some detractors accuse. Every language has its metaphors and other figures of speech usually revealed by context. We follow the time-honored principle used by many scholars.[199]

LaHaye gives as an example that when the Bible says, "Fire and brimstone fell out of heaven it literally means just that. But when the Bible says that the moon turned to blood, as it did in the days of Moses, it does not mean that it literally turned to blood, but that it turned a bloodlike color. However, even in the case of the Nile River, this resulted in the death of fish. A good rule to follow is to try and interpret each passage literally. If this is obviously not the case, then as a last resort try to find the spiritual or symbolical truth it is conveying."[200] LaHaye cautions that context must always be kept in mind and verses must not be lifted out of context becoming a "pretext rather than a proof text."[201] He continues to remind his readers to watch out for idioms, figurative language, metaphor, simile, analogy, hyperbole, personification and parable, the latter to be understood as an illustration of one central truth. [202] However, he never mentions genre as an aspect to be taken into consideration.

Clearly LaHaye is grounded in grammatical-historical interpretation,[203] and would be in accordance with Bernard Ramm, who pulls together a number of strands illustrating the relation of figurative to literal speech:

This is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called normal interpretation since the literal meaning of the words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated plain interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and they are in

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[199] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 284.

[200] LaHaye, *How to Study*, 133.

[201] LaHaye, *How to Study*, 134.

[202] LaHaye, *How to Study*, 134-137.

[203] The grammatical-historical system was adopted by the Reformers as a reaction to the fourfold-method that was common in Roman Catholic hermeneutics in the medieval to pre-reformation period. It would remain the bedrock of Protestantism until challenged by one of its warring offspring the historical-critical method at the time of the Enlightenment. The sibling historical-literal method, still based on grammatical-historical system continued to be upheld by conservative Protestants who became variously identified as Fundamentalists, Evangelicals and with the intervention of Darby, Dispensationalists. One may conclude from this that not all Protestants who espouse the grammatical-historical system are pre-millennial dispensationalists.

no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures can often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.[204]

However much LaHaye is in accord with Ramm's description he is of Darbyian[205] and Scofieldian[206] mould and therefore espouses a view that departs from the essentially covenantal and supercessionist positions of the Reformed tradition that interpreters like Ramm would represent.

The finer points of consistent literalism constitute an ongoing debate within different schools of thought in the broader milieu of both the grammatical-historical method and dispensationalism. The nature of this debate may be exemplified on the one hand by Thomas Ice,[207] who as a portal to literature by the PMD guild articulates what

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[204] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956), 89-92.

[205] With regard to the crucial doctrine of the so-called Rapture, the general belief is that John Darby, a former Anglican minister and father to the Plymouth Brethren, was influenced by former Presbyterian minister Edward Irving (1772-1834) who in turn was influenced by a Chilean Jesuit, Manuel Lacunza, author of the *Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty,* and a Scottish adolescent mystic, Margaret McDonald (1815-1840). Crawford Gribben, *Rapture Fiction*, 35-36, supports Timothy Stunt's suggestion that the Parisian Jansenists provided a model for Darby's end-time thinking, and that the writings the Dominican Bernard Lambert (1738-1813) and a lawyer Pierre-Jean Agier (1748-1823) were read parallel to Lacunza's *The Coming of the Messiah in Power and Glory*. A significant difference, however, that Gribben points out is that Lacunza argued that Christ would return once at the beginning of the millennium while Lambert argued that Christ would return twice, once to gather his saints, and then again at the millennium to reign. LaHaye, *The Rapture: Who will Miss the Tribulation?* 154- 157 respects Lacunza's position but does not regard it as having influenced Darby; he is more concerned to locate the rapture teaching in earlier centuries. He refers to Joseph Mede, "a great seventeenth-century literalist" as understanding 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as using the word rapture to designate the "catching of the saints." LaHaye then refers St Victorinus Bishop of Petau who in 270 C.E. wrote in a commentary on the book of Revelation that God always strikes obstinate people with seven plagues, that is perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; "and these shall be in the last *time when the church shall have gone out of the midst*" (emphasis added by Tim LaHaye) and Pseudo-Ephrem in 372 C.E., in support of the post-apostolic manifestation of rapture teaching, a claim that have been dismissed by scholars as insubstantial in evidence. See John Nelson Darby, *The Collected Writings of J.N.Darby* (Edited by William Kelly; Kingston on Thames: Stow Hill Bible Trust, 1962). For a critical comment on Darby and his roots and influence, as well as an extensive bibliography on the background of Christian Zionism see Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2004).

[206] During his many visits to North America Darby came to have increasing influence over evangelical leaders such as James A. Brookes, Dwight. L. Moody, William Blackstone and Cyrus Ingersol Scofield. It was Scofield who is credited with codifying and systematising Darby's works, though Clarence Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 18, alleges that Scofield copiously borrowed ideas, words and phrases without acknowledging his sources or indebtedness to Darby. Scofield's first work, entitled *Rightly Dividing the Truth* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1888) formed the basis of the notes contained in his *Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917) which was a King James Version.

[207] Thomas Ice, "Dispensational Hermeneutics," n.p. [cited 8 August 2008]. Online: www.pre-trib.org. Ice, who with LaHaye heads up the Pre-Tribulation Research Center, makes a distinction between what he calls "macroliteralism" and "microliteralism." Within the former, he explains, the consistent use of the grammatical-historical system "yields the interpretative conclusion, e.g. that *Israel* always and only refers to national Israel and that Church will not be substituted for Israel if the grammatical-historical system is consistently used because there are no indicators in the text that such is the case." This replacement approach, he writes, "is a

PMDs would regard as a true perspective on literal interpretation and Vern Poythress,[208] what non-dispensationalists perceive to be inconsistent application of this view.

2.2   Prophecy as Consistent Literalism in LaHaye's Interpretation

The term "inconsistent," is thus a misnomer for PMDs themselves; it has been coined by those who do not understand that for LaHaye figurative language is included in what is normally understood as consistent literalism, a principle he expounded of his non-fiction works such as *How to Study the Bible for Yourself.*[209] This misunderstanding occurs when figurative language which according to PMD rubrics is supposed to metaphoric but is taken literally. Inconsistent use could also refer to instances where what is supposed to be literal is taken figuratively or twisted to achieve a certain effect.

However, in *Charting the Times: A Visual Guide to understanding Bible Prophecy*[210] and *The Popular Bible Prophecy Workbook: An Interactive Guide to Understanding the End Time* the accent is so completely on the literal interpretation of prophecy that figurative language is referred to only once. The example of figurative language given is Jesus, called the Lamb of God 28 times in the book of Revelation. "This does not mean that He is a literal lamb. The term *lamb,* in reference to Christ, is

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mild form of spiritualized, or allegorical, interpretation." Within the latter, he explains that "microliteralism, interpreters, within the framework the grammatical-historical system discuss whether or not a word, a phrase, or the literary genre of a biblical book is a figure of speech (connotative use of language) or is to be taken literally/plainly (denotative use of language)." Ice articulates his own understanding of sense and referent by illustrating how "white house" can relate to many different referents – it could be the "house across the street," "a house painted white in contrast to another, the home and workplace of the president or it could be used as a figurative synonym for the "office of the president of the United States." Further on in his article Ice defends dispensational sensitivity to figures of speech by mentioning Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) in which no less than two-hundred-and-fifty figures of speech are categorised and explained.

[208] Vern Poythress, "What is Literal Interpretation?" [Cited 8 August 2008]. Online: www.the-highway.com/literal1_Poythress.html n.p. In this article, excerpted from Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) the author contends that the dispensationalist use of literal interpretation is "a confusing term, capable of being used to beg many of the questions at stake in the interpretation of the Bible." He proposes that literal interpretation can be used in four ways: The first is "first thought meaning," which is said to describe the meaning of words in isolation. The second kind he calls "flat interpretation" by which he means "an *a priori* commitment to an idea of literal if *possible.*" Third, the one who uses grammatical-historical interpretation "reads passages as organic wholes and tries to understand what each passage expresses against the background of the original human author and the original situation." The fourth type is "plain interpretation" where one "reads everything as if it were written directly to oneself, in one's own time and culture."

[209] Tim LaHaye, *How to Study the Bible.*

[210] Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House Publishers, 2001).

intended to give us a symbolic picture of Christ as our atoning sacrifice. But the symbolic use of lamb does not eliminate the literal truth of Christ as our atoning sacrifice."[211] As will become evident it is in LaHaye and Jenkins's fictional works that consistent literalism cannot be sustained on its own and figurative language becomes overridden with artistic license.

LaHaye's qualification that metaphors and other figures of speech and the facts of the immediate context clearly may indicate otherwise potentially opens up a curious amalgam of consistent literalism, imagination and artistic license, and this will be illustrated in the next section. It would, however, be relevant to first take a brief excursion into the works of Hal Lindsey, who though not in fictional form, explains how figurative speech and facts not consonant with a literal reading of the text elucidate prophetic events.

2.3 *Excursus: Hal Lindsey's Decoding Practice*

Lindsey is fully aware of the problems students encounter with the book of Revelation, and therefore offers reasons for the heavy use of this symbolic language. "The important reason for the symbolism is that the predictions of the book were so far removed from the language of John's day that ordinary Greek words (the *lingua franca* of New Testament times) couldn't adequately convey the message. After all how could God transmit the thought of a catastrophe to someone living in the teat A.D 90!"[212]

His solution? "You might say that John was put into a 'divine time machine' and transported nineteen centuries into the future."[213] Lindsey then imagines "how one would return to 90 A.D. and be forced describe the things which have no existing terminology, even in our modern era."[214] Accordingly you would have to describe what you saw in symbols familiar to your contemporaries, and if someone were to read your account nineteen hundred years after it was written, they would be forced to search for clues to unlock the meaning of your symbols.[215] To mention two examples:

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[211] LaHaye and Hindson, *Prophecy Workbook,* 19-20.
[212] Lindsey, *There's a New World,* 4-5.
[213] Lindsey, *There's a New World,* 5.
[214] Lindsey, *There's a New World,* 5.
[215] Lindsey, *There's a New World,* 5.

- The locusts in Revelation 9:3 could be "supernatural mutant creatures created for this particular judgment or they could symbolise some modern device of warfare."[216] In support of the latter Lindsey recalls, "I have a Christian friend who was a Green Beret in Viet Nam. When he first read this chapter he said: 'I know what those are. I have seen hundreds of them in Viet Nam. They are Cobra helicopters!'"[217] In *Apocalypse Code*, published in 1997, Lindsey goes further to identify the "crowns of gold" as elaborate helmets worn by pilots and the "woman's hair" as the "whirling propeller," and the "sound of their wings," the "thunderous sound of many attack helicopters flying overhead."[218]

- Of the "horrible war in Revelation 9: 17-19" portraying "horses with heads like lions and fire and brimstone proceeding from their mouths," Lindsey asks, "Now are these real creatures in nature? No, John was trying to illustrate with century phenomena weapons of a very advanced age. I believe they are firing missiles. Clearly we are reading about some kind of destructive vehicles. When he talks about fire, smoke and brimstone, I think he is talking about nuclear war."[219] It would appear that since the colour of fire and hyacinth mentioned on the breastplates of the riders of the horses are also colours on the Chinese national flag, Lindsey is led to see this "Hi-tech war" as an "Asian march to Armageddon."[220]

Examples like these can be multiplied several times throughout Lindsey's books. It must be noted that even interpreters not of PMD persuasion would recognise coded language and visual imagery in Revelation, but with this difference: contrary to Lindsey these codes are not the result of John's travel to a distant future but to events that happened in John's time, "or to happen soon."[221] Another aspect pertaining to the above

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[216] Lindsey, *There's a New World,* 123.

[217] Lindsey, *There's a New World,* 124.

[218] Hal Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, 1997), 41-42.

[219] Hal Lindsey, *Planet Earth −2000 AD: Will Mankind Survive?* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, 1994), 213-14.

[220] Lindsey, *Planet Earth,* 214.

[221] See Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code: Find Out What the Bible Really says About the End Times and Why it Matters Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), xvii: for a rebuttal of Lindsey's code-breaking method.

uses of figurative language, suggested by Sizer, is that as a matter of "changing literalism,"[222] The example he gives is where Lindsey writes in *There's a New World Coming* that the locusts "might symbolize an advanced kind of helicopter," but in *Apocalypse Code*, twenty-four years later, he writes, "John actually saw." [223] Sizer has also subjected some of Lindsey's interpretations to other variants of literalism, namely, "Symbolic Literalism," "Contradictory Literalism," "Enhanced Literalism" and "Arbitrary Literalism."[224]

Hal Lindsey's method is a prime example of a practice that Kovacs and Rowland[225] have identified as "decoding." [226] "Seeking precise equivalence between every image in the book and figures and events in history has resulted in a long tradition of 'decoding' interpretation,[227] and if the image is seen to have one particular meaning and the interpreter assumes that if the code is understood in its entirety, the whole apocalypse can be rendered in another form and its inner meaning laid bare."[228] Examples Rowland gives of fixing on some historical personage or event are the Spiritual Franciscans who saw St Francis as the angel with the living seal of Revelation 7:2 and Hal Lindsey who sees in Revelation 9 a description of "an all out attack of ballistic missiles on the cities of the world."[229]

Examples of how Lindsey decodes images abound of how, by eisegetical dint and unbridled imagination, an existing eschatological scheme is validated.[230] It was this scheme that was in currency when the Left Behind series broke into the market. However, we should not expect a replication of Lindsey's decoding approach in

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[222] Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 124.

[223] Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 124.

[224] Sizer, *Christian Zionism,* 129-134.

[225] Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 7-10.

[226] Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 8.

[227] Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 8.

[228] Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 8.

[229] Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 8.

[230] Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 9, describe a peculiar form of "decoding" in which individuals "act out" details of the text, in effect decoding the text once and for all in that person. For example, Joanna Southcott's understanding of her prophetic vocation was determined by the narrative of Rev 12, as she regarded herself as the incarnation of the Woman Clothed with the Sun. Similarly, the leaders of the Münster Commonwealth in 1534 saw themselves as the two witnesses in Rev 11. Such decoding has not become evident in the writings of Lindsey or LaHaye, but has been associated with cult leaders such as David Koresh.

LaHaye's interpretation, not because LaHaye lacks imagination, but simply because LaHaye has subjugated his narratives, including some text which one would expect him to interpret as consistent literalism to artistic license, thus dispensing himself from having to make hard and fast decisions about the literalness or figurativeness of any phrase or passage.

3. LAHAYE AND JENKINS'S INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 7

3.1 On the "144, 000 sealed" and the "Multitude too Great to Count" in Revelation 7

The second half of the title of this thesis refers to "Society and Rhetoric in the Light of Revelation 7." One may ask why this chapter in particular is significant. My reason for focusing on Revelation 7 is that the "144, 000 sealed" and "the multitude too great to count" is to bring out in sharp relief the pivotal doctrines of Dispensationalism, namely distinction between Jews and the Church, rapture, and tribulation with the focus on the latter. In the heavenly tableau are seen a literal 144,000 Jews and a "multitude to great to count," being Christians. This overturns the traditional view that these two groups tiered in the cosmic bowl are all the saints from every age gathered in heaven. In the Dispensational scheme while they by forecast appear to be heaven, they are actually on earth, engaged in a last bid to preach the Gospel to unbelieving Jews and Christians and to fight the onslaught of the Antichrist. Those Christians caught up in the rapture in Revelation 3:10 and whose presence in heaven is affirmed in Chapter 4, remain hidden throughout the six seals in Chapter 6, only to return with Christ 7 years afterwards in Revelation 19 to usher in the Millennium.

Before proceeding with an analysis of LaHaye and Jenkins's interpretation of Revelation 7 it is important to note, firstly, that in the premillennial dispensational scheme the underlying theology of Revelation is based on a number of grounding texts,[231] to mention a few listed by LaHaye and Jenkins: [232] Daniel 2: 44-4, 7: 9-14, 12;

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[231] I use this term at this point though it will take on more meaning in Chapter 4. Barry Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric* (New York: London/Westport CA: Praeger, 1991), 99, defines grounding texts as those texts − either scriptural or secular – "that apocalyptic rhetoric urges political and social actions upon its audience, in the guise of preparing for expected developments in a determined history." LaHaye and Jenkins in *Are We Living in the End Times?* do not refer to the passages mentioned as grounding texts, but they

1-3; Zechariah 12:10, 14; 1-5; Matthew 13: 41, 24: 15-31, 26: 64; Mark 13; 14-27, Luke 21: 25-28; Acts 1: 9-11, 3: 19-21; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, 1 Peter 4: 12-13, Jude 1: 14-15; and various texts running through Revelation. I will not analyse these passages in any depth, except where these overtly relate to Revelation 7.

The sequence of the analysis commences from the point of three critical events in the Left Behind storyline: The first is when journalist Buck Cameron asks Rabbi Tsion Ben David, an expert in ancient OT and NT manuscripts, and a recent convert, to accompany him to the Wailing Wall where he wishes to interview "two strange preachers" who had been habituating the Temple Mount precincts. Working their way through a tight barricade of Israeli militia, Buck and Rabbi Tsion get close to the preachers, Moishe and Eli, whose loud wails, admonitions and prayers are heard by people beyond the barricades. A gunman advancing on Buck and Rabbi Tsion is consumed by a column of fire spewed from the mouth of the preachers, a fire that "incinerated the man's clothes, consumed his flesh, and organs, and in seconds left a charred skeleton smoking on the ground. The weapon he held "melts and fuses into the ground" and "the molten necklace drops through the cavity in his chest."[233] At yet another visit to the Temple Mount the witnesses start expounding John 3:16 to the rabbi, a recent convert to Christianity, who deeply regrets that he made his commitment just short of the rapture, still has some questions to ask about conversion and being born-again.[234] The second event is the signing of a seven-year peace treaty between the Global Potentate, Nicolae Carpathia and Israel, and the third, hours afterwards, a CCN relayed address by the Rabbi on prophecies that prove that Jesus is the Messiah.[235]

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do refer to five "primary texts" referring to the Rapture and the Glorious Appearing, namely John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; and Corinthians 15:50-58; Matthew 24: 27-31 and Revelation 19: 11-20: 6.

[232] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 320-22.
[233] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 323.
[234] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 339-347.
[235] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 394-395.

TABLE 1: A DEPICTION OF LAHAYE AND JENKINS'S INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 7

Revelation7[236]	LaHaye and Jenkins's Comment[237]	The Left Behind depiction
[1]After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. [2]Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, [3]saying, "Do not harm the earth or sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our lord God upon their foreheads.' [4] And I heard the number of the sealed: a hundred and forty four thousand sealed out of all the tribes of Israel. [5] twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of [6]Gad, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of tribe of Asher, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Manasseh, [7]twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Levi, twelve	Citing Revelation 7: 4-La Haye notes that this passage suggests that before the world is plunged into plagues and disasters ushered in by the sixth seal judgment at the end of the first quarter of the tribulation, God will raise up 144,000 Jewish evangelists to spread across the globe and bring in a harvest of unimaginable proportions. Each of these "servants" of God will receive a "seal" on his forehead (*Are We Living in the End Times?* 275).	Aware of Rabbi Tsion's mission, Rayford Steele, the pilot whose wife and son were raptured, and now part of the Tribulation Force, reflects on "the converts that would come from every part of the globe and reap an incredible harvest – per-haps a billion souls." The 144,000 will be Jews, 12, 000 from each of the original twelve tribes, but they would be gathered from the all over the world, a restoration of the dispersion of Jews throughout history (*Tribulation Force* 251-252). In a later recollection by Buck Williams, the event at Teddy Kollek stadium which was broadcast all over the world, showed these two strange men (Moses and Elijah)

[236] *RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited), 977-78.
[237] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 1999.

thousand sealed from the tribe of Issachar, [8]twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed from the tribe of Benjamin,

[9]After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues; standing before the throne and before the lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice shouted in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!" [11]And all the angels stood round the throne, and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, [12]saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."
[13]Then one of the elders addressed me, saying "who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" [14]I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come through the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15]Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits; on the throne

While LaHaye admits that we will not know what this seal will be, the text suggests that it will be visible. Certainly the "mark of the beast" that unbelievers will receive will be visible and both are irreversible.

LaHaye remarks that whatever the seal is it affords these 144,000 Jewish witnesses of all the tribes of Israel some kind of supernatural protection at least until the great soul harvest of Revelation 7:9 (See *Are We Living in the End Times?* 276).

LaHaye writes that some interpreters have a hard time believing that the Tribulation could usher in such an enormous soul harvest, and says he is convinced that this text shows that that more men and women will be won to Christ in this period than at any time in history. He compares it with a flood of conversions, which in Old Testament setting was proved in Jonah's day

speaking in out loud in unison without microphones "Come nigh and listen, to the chosen servant of the most high God! He is among the first of the 144,000 who shall go forth from this and many nations to proclaim the gospel of Christ throughout the world! Those who come against him, just as those who have come against us will surely die." (See *Tribulation Force,* 251-252*).*

While driving Buck is stopped by a traffic officer and rests his head on the back of his seat. Tsion looks at him and says that he never noticed before that Buck has an injury on his forehead. Buck looks in the rearview mirror but can't see anything. Buck sees a mark on Tsion's forehead which he says looks like a "3D thing." Tsion replies that its looks like a "shadow, a bruise, or what do you call it, a relief?" Buck says, "Hey, This is like one of those puzzles that looks like a bunch of sticks until you sort of reverse it in your mind and see the background as the fore-ground and vice versa. That's a cross on your forehead." (See *Soul Harvest*, 136).

"Thousands upon thousands" had responded to Rabbi Tsion's Bulletin Board by identifying themselves as members of the 144,000. Hundreds testified that they had

shelter them with his presence. [16]They shall hunger no more, nether thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat [17]For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."	when the Lord spared the city of Nineveh after the prophet Jonah preached to its people. (Jonah 3,4) (See *Are we Living in the End Times?* 275)	received Christ after reading Tsion's message and the verses from Romans that had shown them their need for God." (See *Soul Harvest,* 166). The focus turns from the 144,000 to the great multitude when Rabbi Tsion in a televised talk cites Revelation 7: "After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues standing before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands." (See *Soul Harvest,* 167). Tsion wishes to return to his homeland. Rayford says, "Don't forget what Tsion wants to do in Israel. He is not going to chat with the two witnesses or look up old friends. He'll be training as many of the 144,000 evangelists as can get there. He'll be Nicolae's worst nightmare." (*Soul Harvest,* 200).

3.2 LaHaye and Jenkins's Methodological Approach

What do the two columns to the right of text of Revelation indicate about LaHaye's application of consistent literalism? A first impression is that LaHaye and Jenkins, when expounding texts, do not follow the verse-by-verse, or even pericope-by-pericope approach as in conventional commentaries; instead they take a thematic approach, explaining concepts like tribulation, rapture, millennium within the overriding

dispensational eschatological scheme. If this is true of their non-fictional works, even more so of their novels, which by the very nature of the genre defies such a format, though the narrative is interspersed with expositions delivered by characters that draw together some key tenets of dispensationalism. We can, therefore, not expect a detailed exegesis of Revelation 7; in fact LaHaye and Jenkins do not focus on the text as a whole at all. The text in Revelation 7 refers to 144,000 Jews who have been sealed and a multitude too great to count, but LaHaye and Jenkins do not be deal with these in a single volume in the series. Running through the first novels in the series: *Left Behind*, *Tribulation Force*, *Nicolae* and *Soul Harvest*, and as far as *The Remnant*, the third last volume in the series, they form a backdrop only to reappear from time to time along the storyline.[238]

Actually Revelation 7 is not mentioned in *Left Behind*, nor in the prequel *The Rapture*, though the idea that numbers of people are removed from earth is incipient; that some are taken implies that some stay behind, and in Left Behind these being Jews and "unsaved Christians" who are now in the foreground. It is a prominent feature of dispensational teaching that the Church is mentioned seventeen times when it is removed by the rapture in Chapter 4, when John, as member of the church, is called up to heaven and looks down on the events of the Tribulation. Only in Chapter 19 is the Church mentioned again when "she returns to earth with her bridegroom at his glorious appearing"[239]

3.3 The 144,000 sealed and the Great Multitude: Consistencies and Inconsistencies

As a matter of consistent literalism the 144,000 sealed are literal Jews drawn from Israel but also in lands where Jews are dispersed. This is in line with the *sine qua non* premillennial dispensational doctrine that God has different agendas for both Israel and the Church.[240] This doctrine is upheld throughout the four novels under scrutiny

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[238] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant,* 335.

[239] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 109.

[240] LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times*, 81: "Dispensationalism is immensely important when it comes to Bible prophecy. The dispensational view of literal interpretation supports a futurist view, that is, that many biblical passages have yet a future fulfillment. The distinction between Israel and the church is important because the church's present distinctiveness in the plan of God provides the theological basis for the

throughout the series. On a first reading the precise interaction between them is not obvious and needs to be surmised, a task which LaHaye and Jenkins continually have to carry out in order to succeed in creating a storyline that underpins the end-time scheme they wish to convey.

The role of the 144,000 as the series progresses is that of being witnesses, evangelists who bring in a great harvest of souls, and these evangelised are the multitude too great to count, converted Jews and previously unsaved Jews. The vision of the two groups in Revelation 7 is quite static itself, and would require considerable embellishment for a fictional account. The growth of the 144,000 Jews starts with one person Rabbi Tsion Ben David and swells over the entire series. It never becomes clear how the exact numbers from each tribe and the full number are arrived at.

An inconsistency, in terms of LaHaye and Jenkins professed interpretative principles is that the seal, exclusively given to 144,000 Jews, is also given to the Tribulation Force, initially made up of Buck Williams, Rayford Steele, Chloe Steele and Pastor Buck Barnes. As the series progresses, this group merges with the 144,000 Jews and born again Christians are identified by one another by the mark on the forehead. The physical nature of the seal given by the angel to the Jews in Revelation 7 is not described and would be too non-descript for the purposes of the storyline and therefore LaHaye and Jenkins have taken great liberty in describing what it looks like (see Table 1).

3.4 The Two Witnesses

Behind the 144,000 sealed Jews are the figures of the Two Witnesses, Moses and Elijah who spur Rabbi Tsion on in his mission to gather in the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and the Tribulation Force. That these two witnesses are already active, just after the rapture and before the signing of the peace treaty between the Global Potentate, Nicolae Carpathia, may be regarded as consistent literalism, according to the PMD scheme. LaHaye and Jenkins base the two witnesses' presence in Jerusalem on Revelation 11:3:

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pretribulational Rapture while Israel's Old Testament promises will be literally fulfilled in the future, which requires a detailed and sophisticated understanding of scriptural prophecy."

"I will commission my two witnesses to prophesy for those twelve hundred and sixty days, wearing sackcloth." The next verse (4) identifies the two witnesses as the two olive trees and the lamp stands that stand before the Lord of the earth. The cross reference here would be to Zerubbabel and Joshua in Zechariah 4. Nevertheless, LaHaye and Jenkins, in the persons of "some" think of them as Moses and Elijah reincarnate. The reason for this is that Moses and Elijah are the two most influential men in the history of the Jews. They accompanied Jesus to the mountain where he was transfigured before them (Matthew 17), and it would be fitting for them to return to Jerusalem to commence these last seven years of the Tribulation to "witness, testify and prophesy."[241]

An even greater motivation for identifying the two witnesses as Moses and Elijah is that they are said to reproduce the very miracles that Moses and Elijah performed while on earth. LaHaye and Jenkins point to John, who says of them: "And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies . . . These have the power to shut heaven, so that rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have the power over waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues, as often as they desire" (Revelation 11: 5-60).

It is the association of Elijah and fire that accounts for the dramatic scene at the Temple Mount, namely, the annihilation of the gunman by spewing of fire from the two witnesses' mouths, If the account in Tribulation Force is graphic, it is even more so in the film *Left Behind II: Tribulation Force* where billows of fire are seen to engulf the approaching gunman.[242] Elsewhere Rayford Steele's belief in the witnesses's miraculous powers is confirmed as he watches huge hailstones "plop into the river, float downstream, accumulate on the sand, turned white as snow, and as they melt become red with blood."[243]

Recalling LaHaye and Jenkins's definition of consistent literalism and his recognition that every language has metaphors and other figures of speech usually revealed by context, one would expect that they would attempt to indicate the referents in the figure of fire and blood. But they obviously do not see any context other than that

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[241] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 265.
[242] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 233-43.
[243] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Soul Harvest,* 276.

the literal implied in the Old Testament passages about Moses and Elijah, and on the other hand, they are compelled to maximise the artistic license which is the prerogative of the novelist. LaHaye and Jenkins do concede the role of imagination: "The two witnesses have this kind of power, and then some. In Tribulation Force we *imagined* that one of these hostile encounters *might happen like this …*"[244] (Italics added by MM.) They then relate the fatal incident that occurred on the Temple Mount. In this regard Jenkins and LaHaye are no different to countless authors who depict "what it could have been like" in novels woven around a core of historical verifiable facts, for example the White House, the French Revolution, the Anglo-Boer War, not to speak of many fictional works situated in the context of Judaism and Early Christianity. In the interests of understanding the exegetical underpinnings of the biblical historical novel *The Shadow of the Galilean* by Gerd Theissen and *The Last Sacrifice* and *The Last Disciple* by Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer are pertinent.

3.5 Narrative Exegesis or Historical Novel?

Theissen,[245] in the first of a number of letters interspersed between chapters explains to one Dr Kratzinger why he is writing a "narrative about Jesus."[246] In view of Dr Kratzinger's concerns that he, Theissen, might harm his scholarly reputation and the good name of New Testament scholarship he gives this assurance: "I am most averse to writing anything about Jesus that is not based on sources. There is nothing about Jesus in my book which I have not also taught at the university."[247]

He admits that he invented "the narrative framework" – the main figure in the book, Andreas, never lived, but "he could have lived in the time of Jesus."[248] He neither has qualms about why Pilate never had the conversations he attributes to him in the novel, nor moving back by about twenty-five years the wilderness ascetic "Bannus" who was active in the wilderness of Jordan in the fifties.[249] He justifies his approach by saying

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[244] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 266.
[245] Gerd Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean* (London: SCM Press, 1987).
[246] Theissen, *The Shadow,* 1.
[247] Theissen, *The Shadow,* 1. In order that the reader will be able to distinguish between what has been made up and what is the truth he has added notes to the text in which he cites the sources he has used.
[248] Theissen,*The Shadow,* 1.
[249] Theissen, *The Shadow,* 19.

that in "narrative exegesis one can sometimes neglect chronology in the use of source material."[250] The subject matter of history is not only individual events but also typical conflicts and structures: "They are the 'rules of the game,' which my fictitious narrative follows." As Theissen defines it, "The basic structure of narrative exegesis consists of historical reconstructions of patterns of behaviour, conflicts and tensions, and its superstructure consists of fictitious events in which historical source material is worked over in a poetic way."[251]

Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer's in *The Last Disciple*[252] and *The Last Sacrifice*,[253] claim an alternative exegetical approach to Revelation, that being a preterist-based methodology as explained by Hanegraaff: "I coined the phrase *Exegetical Eschatology* to underscore the fact that above all else I am deeply committed to a proper *method* of biblical interpretation rather than any particularly *model* of eschatology," adding, "Put another way, the plain and proper reading of a biblical passage must always take precedence over a particular eschatological presupposition or paradigm."[254] In saying this Hanegraaff is confirming that one characteristic so obvious to analysts of Left Behind, namely that the overarching premillennial dispensational scheme determines the literal consistency of the interpretation.

Hanegraaff and Brouwer make a point of sporadically interspersing an otherwise highly imaginative storyline with brief expositions in the mouths of informed Christians (even John the Evangelist himself) of how people in the first century would have understood figures of speech. For example, to the question of what "waters of the sea" means, Darda, a Jewish teacher, asks a counter question, "What does "water of the sea mean to you?" "A place for ships to sail is predictably the non-Jewish enquirers answer." Darda replies, "There's my proof. The sea to the Jew, understood in a symbolic sense, means chaos and confusion. In this letter of Revelation, when the Beast rises from the sea, it says much more to a Jewish reader than to you."[255]

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[250] Theissen, *The Shadow,* 19.

[251] Theissen, *The Shadow,* 19.

[252] Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Disciple* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2004).

[253] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2004).

[254] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, 393. See also Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, which counters Lindsey's *Apocalyptic Code* in its explication of "Exegetical Eschatology."

[255] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, 309.

Where Preterism wreaks havoc with the eschatological timetable of Left Behind is that of situating the Great Tribulation between the time when Nero accused the Christians of burning down Rome and the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. by Flavius Titus. In a storyline crossing two volumes and a third to come, Christians in Rome and Jerusalem suffer imprisonment, torture and brutal death at the hands of Caesar Nero's commanders. Experiencing nightmares about predictions emanating from a script circulating among the Christians that civil war will ensue when the Beast comes to a downfall, Nero commissions his commanders to track down the Apostle John's letter (the Book of Revelation), of which a few copies were circulating among Christians and destroy it. As a matter of survival, the early Christians must decipher a mysterious code alluding to the name of the Beast which they alone identify as Nero. One password which allows them to safely enter one another's homes is, "The lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world shall destroy the beast,"[256] or "These who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."[257] They are also distinguished by a mark. "All of us are marked by the lamb and hated by those marked by the beast."[258]

Vitas, a Roman fleeing from Nero and one who is "open to learning more about the *Christos*," asks John whether he is marked by the lamb because he "sees nothing."[259] John replies, "You're a Roman. Of course you would look for a physical mark. But one's beliefs and behavior mark whether one serves the lamb or the Beast. The forehead symbolizes what you believe, and the hand what you do. Yes I have been marked and my beliefs and actions are plain enough to the guild for them to bar me."[260]

What is striking about the comparison of the Left Behind novels with historical novels is that those of Theissen, and Hanegraaff and Brouwer are precisely situated in the past, while the Left Behind novels are squarely in the present while projecting into a future time, albeit a relatively near future. It is not so much a question of what could have happened than what is going to happen. If not qualifying as historical novels, therefore, might the Left Behind novels be science fiction? This question must be seen

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[256] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, 41.
[257] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice*, 263.
[258] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice,* 285.
[259] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice,* 285.
[260] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice*, 285.

against the background of the epistemological background of Left Behind. It will therefore be addressed in section on the Evangelical Imagination that follows Section 4.

4. LAHAYE IN HERMENEUTICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Epistemological Framework

Unconsciously every person reading a text from the Bible is engaged in an epistemological act, that is, constructing knowledge by perception of external objects. The nature of epistemology is captured in this definition: "Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is driven by two main questions: 'What is knowledge?' and "What can we know?" If we think we know something, as everyone does, then a third main question arises: 'How do we know what we do know?'"[261] Barnhart sheds some light on this triptych of questions regarding the basic nature of a text:

> I define Epistemological Primitivism as the view that a given text exists in a state of nature or a condition of primordial meaning. It is the literary equivalent to the version of empiricism which stresses the passivity of the mind and the purity of the data in the knowing process. The impossibility of holding consistently to epistemological primitivism is seen when (1) the interpreter recognises that a text gains cognitive meaning only if it is interwoven with other texts and (2) the interpreter actively brings to the text a selective factor by designating which texts will interlace more predominantly and directly with one another.[262]

Simply put this means that a reader naively receives a text with full trust that its facts are unquestionably true, Moreover, that this inerrant text stands alone in relation to other texts, and as Barnhart proposes, becomes an "interpretative key," "the touchstone passage" supplying cognitive meaning to other passages.[263] To the question of why select passages are invested with "interpretative primacy" he finds "biographical context," the tendency to select one text above another as the key to interpretation as significant.[264] "In speaking of the *bias* of any interpreter of biblical texts, I imply that

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[261] John Greco, and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Malden: Mass/Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. See also David E. Cooper, ed., *Epistemology: The Classic Readings* (Advisory Editors: J.N. Mohanty and Ernest Sosa. Malden: Mass/Oxford Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 1-4, and Nicholas Everitt and Alec Fisher, *Modern Epistemology: A New Introduction* (New York/London, 1995), 1-8.
[262] J.E. Barnhart, "Every Context has a Context," *SJ T* 33, (1980): 501.
[263] Barnhart, "Every Context has a Context," 501.
[264] Barnhart, "Every Context has a Context," 502-3.

every interpreter comes with his biases." Then he rephrases his prior definition somewhat by saying, "Epistemological primitivism is the assumption not only that there exists a self-contained and pure text, but that the interpreter comes cognitively uncontaminated, free of biases and preconceived interpretations."[265]

As Barnhart sees it, "the 'hypothesis of inerrancy' is an attempt to freeze certain contexts," and "in order to protect the ultimate context a hierarchy of secondary authoritative contexts developed into a kind of orthodoxy."[266] Not mentioning Left Behind, but drawing close enough to it he writes, "The proliferation of such fixed contexts (whose meanings are settled absolutely) results in fundamentalism, with Dispensationalism and rampant typologies."[267]

With this rather abbreviated explanation of epistemology in mind I will now draw a line of the philosophical framework(s) from the onset of literalism to the present, and in particular LaHaye, and whoever his co-author is in a given work. But where does such a tradition start? In terms of a Judeo-Christian perspective I place the onset of the Protestant tradition in this case with Rabbinic Exegesis.

4.2. Rabbinic Exegesis

While the profusion of Law Codes in the Torah and as Oral Law contained in the Talmud[268] creates the impression that the texts encountered by readers are frozen contexts, similar to those referred to by Barnhart, a marked resilience, creativity in dealing with texts becomes apparent on closer examination. Surprisingly, even the

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[265] Barnhart, "Every Context has a Context," 503.
[266] Barnhart, "Every Context has a Context," 507.
[267] Barnhart, "Every Context has a Context," 507.
[268] As a collection of legal material the Talmud is rigid and structured, yet not beyond revisioning. See Jacob Neusner, *Judaism as Philosophy: the Method and Message of the Mishnah* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University,1991), 1-2, for the postulation that the Mishnah, the first canonical writing after the Hebrew Bible, and which forms a foundation document of the Talmud, exhibits a "generative method that is Aristotelian and a message that is Neo-Platonic." "Although the process of enquiry was alien to the Mishnah the intellectual manner in which Aristotle uncovered the laws that describe and govern, through patient classification of things by appeal to the traits they share, with comparison and contrast among points of difference then yielding the governing rule for a given classification." In a much later work *The Vitality of the Rabbinic Imagination*: *the Mishnah against the Bible and Qumran. Studies in Judaism.* (New York/Toronto London: University of America Press, 2005), viii, Neusner, having put the Mishnah into dialogue with the Hebrew Bible and Qumran Library, finds that "the capacity to think in fresh ways about Scripture's own imperatives and the implications attests to the validity of Rabbinic imagination that reaches concrete expression in the Mishnah, a triumph of reconstruction and creative recapitulation."

conventional concept of interpretation is overturned, as suggested by Dauber: "The Bible is not a text to be interpreted; rather, as the rabbis understood it, interpretation is the text itself. No subject reader engages no object to be read. "Relational-ity," prior to both, defines subject and object according to itself."[269] In terms of this epistemological-ontological basis, "the Jewish Bible is properly literature insofar as it resists traditional philosophy's grand project of knowing Being. There is no concept of being in the Bible. From God's command to Abraham to journey to Canaan, through Israel's acceptance of the Torah, to the dialogue between God and Job, what it renders in not the revelation of an existence but the establishment of a certain relation."[270]

Conceivably, relationality as expressed in the above definition, can only be entered to in a playful, uninhibited and ingenuous interaction with the text. Noting gaps, contradictions and repetitions in the text, the reader takes a speculative and even argumentative stance in order to arrive at meaning. Ultimately the exercise has to be a-historical so that no external data arising from epoch, locality and society can impede this relational encounter. Gruenwald notes that "in the minds of users of Scripture a complementary activity to that of mere acceptance of revelation took place:"[271]

> That an activity goes by the name of Midrash, whether included in the literary corpus or revelation (=Scripture) itself or added to it at a later stage. In any event, the chief characteristic of midrashic activity is its almost exclusive concern with matters relating to meaning and less so with regard to the literal or lexicological interpretation of the scriptural text. Epistemologically speaking this fact has far-reaching consequences for our assessment.[272]

According to Gruenwald, "midrash does not contain verifiable information," but as he stresses, "*Midrash is chiefly concerned with creation of meaning* − not exegesis."[273] He points out that very commonly meaning is not discovered in the text but attributed to it,[274] which implies an eisegetical approach to the text, one that deviates somewhat from

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[269] Kenneth Dauber, "The Bible as Literature," *Semeia*, 31 (1985): 27.
[270] Dauber, "The Bible as Literature," 7.
[271] Ithamar Gruenwald, "Midrash and the 'Midrashic Condition,'" in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought and History* (ed. Michael A. Fishbane. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993. 8. See also Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to Midrash:The Workings of Rabbinic Bible Interpretation* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).
[272] Gruenwald, "Midrash and the 'Midrashic Condition,'" 8-9.
[273] Gruenwald, "Midrash and the 'Midrashic Condition,'" 9.
[274] Gruenwald, "Midrash and the 'Midrashic Condition,'" 9.

the basic principle that there is a primary meaning to the text and that this is its plain meaning; all other interpretations are secondary, and can be advanced to teach additional lessons so long as these do not contradict the plain meaning.[275]

The legacy of midrash would be preserved and built upon by the eleventh-century Jewish sage, Rashi.[276] Well acquainted with midrash – he would enhance a passage with a rabbinic legend or homily wherever the plain text was inadequate – however, he preferred to explain not concepts, but the meaning of words and phrases, as well as other difficulties that may be found. Relevant to the topic of this chapter is that a Franciscan friar, Nicholas of Lyra, presumably a Jewish convert because of his mastery of the Hebrew language, relied heavily on Rashi's commentaries. He wrote: "Proposing therefore to avoid these and similar practices (i.e. the folkloristic and mystical expositions) I intend to insist on the literal meaning, and to insert occasionally a very few brief mystical interpretations."[277]

More than two centuries later, Martin Luther in turn would rely heavily on Lyra's expository work in his translation of the Bible into German and writing of commentaries on biblical books. For him it was a much needed antidote to the allegorical interpretation which had dominated the Church for over a millennium and which was in all respects as non-literal as midrash but instead of proceeding from, it would bypass the plain meaning (*peshat)* with esoteric and arbitrary meanings. Also the highly imaginative strain in the apocryphal writings of the Gnostics and fictional renderings[278] on the lives of heroic and saintly Christians was repudiated. The plain meaning, but not the levels beyond it, would take root as a grammatical-historical system of interpretation in Protestant Christianity, and with it, the imaginative elements of midrash had been snuffed out. At this stage of the overview it is too early to think of the Left Behind series as a resurgence of these elements – many other factors will come into play before any replication can be established.

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[275] Beyond *Peshat* are *Remez,* the allusion, *Derush,* the homily, and *Sod,* the mystical meaning in which the actual words of the text become an external cover for an inner and deeper meaning.

[276] Chaim Pearl, *Rashi*, gen ed., Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Grove Press, 1988).

[277] Pearl, *Rashi*, 99-100.

[278] See Averil Cameron*, Christianity and the Rhetoric of the Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

4.3 Aristotelian Metaphysics

While Luther pursued the grammatical-historical method he remained relatively flexible in its application; he was vexed with canonical issues and had no fixed views on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. This would be absolutised by a new generation of theologians whose postulates would be known as "Protestant Orthodoxy." Challenged by rationalist philosophers like Spinoza, Hobbes and Descartes, Protestant theologians were persuaded by Zanchi (1516-1590) that philosophy should be invoked when examining doctrine and divine matters. Thus Zanchi wrote of Aristotle: "Mortals owe much to (Aristotle), the best of all the authors after God and the scriptures . . . he was the outstanding, best and most perfect philosopher."[279]

Henceforth the orthodox Protestant theologians viewed the Bible according to Aristotelian logic,[280] which enabled them to "construct a coherent, integrated dogmatic system. Theological concepts were placed in relation to one another, propositions were compiled and placed in yet further interrelationships, resulting in arguments which not only culminated in the orthodox doctrinal system, but also served to refute any opposing viewpoint."[281]

For the purposes of this section, however, the focus must turn to Aristotle's articulation of sense perception in which he refers to "sense" as "the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter."[282] This takes place, he proposes, "in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring of bronze or gold, but its particular metallic constitution makes no difference" − all the matters is its quality. [283] Further to this Aristotle posits the following in De Anima (The Soul):

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[279] J. B. Rogers and D. K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1979), 159.

[280] Ferdinand Deist, "The Times in Which Orthodoxy and Pietism Flourished." *Biblical Studies: Study Guide for BSA302-3*. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1985), 58.

[281] Deist, "The Times in Which Orthodoxy and Pietism Flourished," 58.

[282] W.D Ross, ed., "De Anima," *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (trans. Richard McKeon, New York Random House, 1941), 580.

[283] Ross, ed., "De Anima," 580.

That perceiving and practical thinking are not identical is therefore obvious; for the former is universal in the animal world, the latter is found in only a small division of it. Further speculative thinking is also distinct from perceiving.[284]

For imagination is different from either perceiving or discursive thinking though it is found not without sensation, or judgment without it . . . For imagining lies within our own power whenever we wish (e.g we can call up a picture, as in in the practice of mnemonics by the use of mental images) but on forming opinions we are not free: we cannot escape the alternative of falsehood or truth.[285]

Again sense is always present, imagination not . . . Again sensations are always true, imaginations are for the most part false.[286]

In adding the last characteristic that "perception of the special objects of sense is never in error or admits the least possible amount of falsehood,"[287]Aristotle laid the groundwork for an exegetical approach in which knowledge – as perceived by the senses would be superior to judgment and imagination. The outflow of this can be summarised in these four points:[288]

- The Bible was the sole authority in matters of faith; it did not attest to revelation but became that revelation therefore materially identical to the word of God
- If the Bible is authoritative it must be inspired by God
- If the Bible is inspired it must be inerrant
- If the Bible is inerrant is must be perfectly clear to understand (perspicuity)

These doctrines further implied that Scripture being self-evident could interpret itself, that scriptural exposition should correspond with the analogy of religious doctrine, and that Aristotelian metaphysics and logic should provide a practical instrument for exegesis. In effect this would mean that according to Aristotelian epistemology, outward form, in this case, grammar and syntax would determine

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[284] Ross, ed., "De Anima," *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (trans. Richard McKeon, New York Random House, 1941), 586.

[285] Ross, ed., "De Anima," *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* 587.

[286] Ross, ed., "De Anima," *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* 587.

[287] Ross, ed., "De Anima," *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* 589.

[288] See Deist, "The Times in Which Orthodoxy and Pietism Flourished," 63-85 for a full explication of these points.

interpretation − the driving force of the grammatical-historical system would persist in Protestant thinking, but expressed in the idiom of Scottish Common Sense Realism.

4.4. *Scottish Common Sense Realism*

Premillennial dispensationalism, within its evangelical/fundamentalist matrix,[289] is often described by scholars as being the product of Scottish Common Sense Realism.[290] I will be drawing from a variety of resources on Common Sense Realism in testing whether or not LaHaye's hermeneutical approach reflects elements of Common Sense Realism. As is the case in any philosophical school attended to, the field is so voluminous, the personalities so numerous, that no more than the essential lines can be drawn and the most relevant works referred to. Scottish Common Sense Realism is represented mainly by Thomas Reid (1710-1796), Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), James Beattie (1753-1803), James Oswald (1715-1769), Thomas Brown (1778-1820) and

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[289] For want of a better term I use the word matrix to describe the interrelationship between the terms, fundamentalist, evangelical, and PMD. While all three share a common identity each is qualified by a distinct accent. One might say that not all fundamentalists are premillennial, but all pre-millennialists are fundamentalists and both fundamentalists and pre-millennialists are also evangelicals, though not all evangelicals will call themselves fundamentalists or pre-millennialists. For authoritative analyses of fundamentalism with in Protestant context the following may also be consulted: James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press, 1977); J.N. Vorster, "The Use of Scripture in Fundamentalism," in *Paradigms and Progress in Theology* (eds., J Mouton, A.G. van Aarde and W.S. Vorster, Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1988), 155-175; J.M. Vorster, *The Challenge of Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism* (Studia Historica Ecclesiasticae. series ed: Christina Landman. Pretoria: Church History Society of Southern Africa, 2008); Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press,1970); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Nancy Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," *Fundamentalisms Observed* (eds., Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1-65, also Nancy Ammerman, "The Dynamics of Christian Fundamentalism: An Introduction," in *Accounting for Christian Fundamentalisms* (eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby Chicago; University of Chicago Press), 1994, 1-12; Robert Wuthnow and Matthew P. Lawson, "Sources of Christian Fundamentalism in the United States," in *Accounting for Christian Fundamentalisms* (eds., Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 18-56.

[290] Adam van Wart, "The Relationship of Common Sense Realism to Dispensationalism's Hermeneutics and *A Priori* Faith Commitments." (Paper presented at South West Meeting ETS 2005). Online: bible.org/article/relationship-common-sense-realism-dispensationalism%E2%80%99s-hermeneutics-and-ia-priori-faith-commitment. "I, however, encountered the view that this connection was inferential and offers little direct evidence in favour of their argument." His own research convinced him that there is indeed a latent dependence on Common Sense Realism by dispensationalist theologians. In his paper, referred to above, he demonstrates that although early and middle dispensationalists were either unaware of their philosophical presuppositions, or simply took them for granted and as self-evident, their lack of discussion upon first-principles by no means weakens the case for the alleged philosophical connection. His own belief is that a very strong circumstantial case for such a connection can be made on the basis of the similarity of their writings to that of admitted common sense realists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

William Hamilton (1788-1856). I will, however focus on Thomas Reid[291] as his writings are generally regarded as seminal to the movement.

Reid opposed the view held by eighteenth-century philosophers Berkeley and Hume on questions like, "What is knowledge?" and "how does one perceive objects in the real world?" These "philosophers of ideas" claimed that human beings have preexisting mental concepts or ideas of things and that sense perceptions are slotted into this conceptual frame. Reid maintained that reality is primary, ideas secondary. Reality is factual – objects are objects – and not dependent on what we think of them.

> If we attend to the fact of our mind which we call the perception of an external object we shall find in it three things: First, some conception or notion of the object perceived; secondly, a strong and irresistible conviction and belief of its present existence; and thirdly, that this conviction and belief are immediate and not the effect of reasoning . . . . [292]

The crux of Reid's philosophy can be found in one of Twelve Principles of Common Sense: "That those things do really exist which one distinctly perceives by one's senses, and what one perceives them to be."[293] Although Reid had not set out to provide an exegetical method for reading the Bible his theories were appropriated by Protestant scholars already familiar with Aristotelian approaches. The application of this principle to the reading of scriptural consists therein that there is a direct correlation between what lies externally – as event, text, and speech – and the mind. Being self-evident these perceptions, made up of consciousness, experience and memory do not need to be justified or explained; they only have to be accepted. In effect this means that what the biblical writers described were like photographic renderings of what they saw and experience, and that the readers of writings read these texts by the same process. This lies at the heart of a fundamentalist reading of the Bible, as a grammato-historical

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[291] Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (edited with an introduction by Timothy Duggan; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Cambridge: At the Publishers, 1850); For recent secondary sources on Reid and extensive bibliographies, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Terence Cuneo and René van Woudenberg, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[292] Thomas Reid, *Essays on Intellectual Powers*, 54.

[293] Wolterstorff, "Thomas Reid," denotes this principle as Principle Five as cited in a chapter on "The First principals of Contingent Truths in Essay VI, Chapter 5 in the 1785 edition of Thomas Reid's *Essays on the*

or historical-literal methodology, and as ostensibly present in the fiction and non-fiction works of dispensationalists.[294]

Reid had a greater affinity for Francis Bacon's (d.1626) inductive method, which as a scientific task was the discovery of the laws of nature. The world was understood to be organised by rational principles established by an all-knowing God and "truth" as objective and available to the "commonsense (sic) reason" of the sincere seeker.[295] George Marsden refers to A.T. Pierson, who speaking at a conference in 1895 put it this way: "I like Biblical theology that . . . does not begin with an hypothesis, and then warp the facts and the philosophy to fit the crook of our dogma, but a Baconian system, which first gathers the teachings of the Word of God, and then seeks to deduce some general law upon which the facts can be arranged."[296]

As will be presently illustrated, LaHaye follows a Baconian method of systematic classification with salient mnemonic taxonomies. For Bacon, there are three "distempers – or diseases – of learning," "eleven errors or peccant humours," "four "Idols," "three primary mental faculties and categories of knowledge, etc.[297] LaHaye's *Charting the End Times: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy* the following are laid out in lavishly colourful and detailed charts: four pivotal events of history,[298] "Three appearances on the Mountain Peaks of Prophecy,"[299] "Eight Stages of Armageddon,"[300] "75-day Preparation for the Millennium,"[301] "15 differences between the Rapture and the Glorious Appearing,"[302] LaHaye and Ice's production serves a modern version, though not plagiarised, that fulfills the same purpose as Clarence Larkin's[303] engraved plates of charts, maps and diagrammes, symbols, and beasts did in the 1920s.

Intellectual Powers of Man. In the 1850 edition to which I have access it does not appear as Principle Five, in fact it is not listed or worded as such. Nevertheless it is implicit in the material of both editions.

[294] I say ostensibly because in spite of the belief in inerrancy, inspiration and authority (to be addressed further on) dispensationalists, on the basis of the distinctions between Israel and the Church may de-correlate perceptions when the system requires it.

[295] See Nancy Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," 9.

[296] Cited in George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 55.

[297] "Francis Bacon, (1561-1626)" Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy [cited 4 December 2008] Online: utm.edu/research/upbacon.htm

[298] LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times,* 23.

[299] LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times,* 27.

[300] LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times,* 64.

[301] LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times*, 66.

[302] LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times*, 112.

[303] Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: The Clarence Larkin Estate, 1919).

The relevance of these two influences, Baconian classification, as just applied to LaHaye and Ice, as well as Clarence Larkin, and a Newtonian worldview,[304] is that they together with Scottish Common Sense Realism, in which they were firmly embedded, were imported by Rev John Witherspoon (1722-1794), into the theology of Princeton Theological Seminary where he was to become the first president.[305] A distinct Princeton theology emerged, one built on Aristotelian driven grammatical-historical-cum-Scottish Common Sense Realism[306] with particular defence of the doctrines of inerrancy, inspiration and authority of the Bible by Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield and Gresham Machen. For a more comprehensive understanding of these theologians and their defences, a number of works, seminal, documentary and critical, may be consulted.[307]

Stressing that the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible was a distinctive characteristic of Fundamentalism, the emphasis on the one hand subscribed to the influence of Common Sense Realism which emphasised the factuality of the Bible, and

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[304] The affinity between Baconian Inductivism and a Newtonian worldview as an epistemology is evident in Isaac Newton (1642-1727) who through his work *The Mechanical Philosophy* established the scientific conceptual model which was to be used in every field of investigation. See Jan T. de Jongh Arkel, "Theology Beyond Newton: a Quantum Leap," in *Paradigms and Progress in Theology* (Pretoria: Human Sciences research Council, 1988), 224, especially his citation of T.A. Lines, *Systemic Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1978), 97. "The classical science worldview was mechanistic in analogy, reductionistic in method, disciplinary in research, deterministic in outlook, static in perception, entropic in direction, dualistic in practice and positivistic in indetermination of truth."

[305] Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 114-115, acknowledges Archibald Alexander as the father of Princeton theology and first professor of Princeton. Alexander who built on the model of scholastic Calvinism was influenced by Scottish common sense philosophers (sic). This is Sandeen's only reference to the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism on Princeton Theology. For a fuller treatment on this subject on this subject see George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* also Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: the Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[306] See also Tim McConnel, "Old Princeton Apologetics: Common Sense or Reformed," *JETS,* (2003): 649-50. for the view that while Princeton accepted Scottish Common Sense Realism as the philosophical basis on which to develop epistemology and apologetics, its influence has been overemphasised: "Common Sense Realism did provide a framework for the old Princetonians , but was more readily apparent in the theology of antebellum Unitarianism and the New Haven Theology, and especially in the anthropology of Charles Finney at Oberlin who taught the human ability to respond to the gospel apart from any special work of the Holy Spirit."

[307] Most succinct overviews of the works of Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield and Gresham Machen are given by J.N. Vorster, "The Use of Scripture in Fundamentalism*,"* in *Paradigms and Progress in Theology* 155-175, and Ammerman, "North American Fundamentalism," For seminal works see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1874); A.A. Hodge and Benjamin Warfield, *Inspiration*, (ed . R Nicole. Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1881), Gresham Machen*, Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923); Benjamin Warfield, "Christianity the Truth" in Selected Shorter Writings of B.B. Warfield, Vol 2 1973, (ed. J. E Meeter New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1901), 213-218; Benjamin Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, (ed., S.G. Craig; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1893).

on the other hand, the subsequent defence against the onslaught of modernism on this factuality distinguished Fundamentalists' use of the Bible, Vorster writes: "In nearly all their sermons the writings and sermons and associations inerrancy was in one way or other emphasized and it usually happened to defend the Bible against the possibility of any error."[308] Contrary to popular opinion, inspiration was not fundamental to inerrancy; rather it was the other way round. Inspiration was only further proof of the inerrancy of the Bible."[309]

The pre-eminence of inerrancy is borne out in LaHaye's works but not in the detailed way articulated by Hodge, Warfield or Machen. In fact, LaHaye never explains the relationship between inerrancy to inspiration, and repeatedly throughout all his works affirms the fulfillment of prophecy as evidence of the inerrancy of scripture and therefore of divine authorship.

> These 120 prophecies of Christ's first coming are overwhelming evidence of the divine origin of Scripture, the messiahship of Jesus, and the truth of Christianity. When viewed as a whole, the collective impact of these prophecies cannot easily be dismissed by unbelievers. Again the mathematical possibility of all these predictions being fulfilled in one person is absolutely astounding.[310]

Scottish Common Sense Realism, though an operating principle in a literal interpretation of the Bible, and servant of conservative Protestant institutions,[311] proved to be more adaptable and wide-ranging than generally observed[312] and as interest in Philosophy increasingly gained prestige in the halls of American academia and more

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[308] Vorster, "The Use of Scripture in Fundamentalism," 163.

[309] Vorster, "The Use of Scripture in Fundamentalism," cites Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible,* 210, in this regard: "Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teaching of our Lord and his authoritative agents in founding the Church, preserved in the writings of the apostles and their first followers, and in the historical witness of the living Church. Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, not even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures."

[310] LaHaye and Hindson, *The Popular Bible Prophecy Workbook,* 12.

[311] These issues touched on by LaHaye and Ice, as well as Cooper, are consonant with the Common Sense Realism that flourished at the Princeton Seminary in the late nineteenth-century, but waned by 1920 when the seminary, as many other institutions, came under secular control. With this the departure of Machen to found Westminster Seminary in 1929 the last bulwark of conservatism fell. Denominational seminaries had been influenced by historical-criticism and liberal theology. Among nation-wide epicentres for unadulterated dispensational teaching were Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, the Dallas Theological Seminary, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and Wheaton College in Illinois.

[312] See Benjamin Redekop, "Reid's Influence in Britain, Germany, France and America, in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (eds. Terence Cuneo and René van Woudenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 313-36.

liberal denominations, it was assimilated into the Pragmatism of C. S. Peirce by the end of the nineteenth century.

4.5 *American Pragmatism*

C. S. Peirce (1839-1914) is regarded as a founding figure of the philosophical school of Pragmaticism commonly referred to as "American pragmatism," its progression from Common Sense Realism to be seen in its quest for realism rather than abstraction, clarity rather than complexity. Peirce's principal thesis is: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."[313] An example given is when Peirce, examining the meaning of "This diamond is hard,"[314] says that means it "will not be scratched by other substances." [315] But how will we know this if it is never scratched? Adopting a "Scholastic realism, about dispositions and subjunctive conditionals," Peirce would conclude that a disposition is more than the total of its realizations and a "subjunctive conditional can be correct or incorrect whether or not the antecedent is fulfilled."[316] The gist of statement is that "the practical effects that concern pragmatism are those which occur under certain conditions, not those which actually occur."[317] Of Peirce, Misak writes: "Pierce's "considered view about the unscratched diamond is that 'it is a real fact that it *would* resist pressure."[318]

I take this to mean that latent talent/capability/progress is best assured in circumstances that are conducive thereto. However, Peirce's work is not a motivational programme. Rather it lays claim to being an "architectonic construction,"[319] in which each doctrine was purposefully constructed and classified, study of which we may conclude would be as exacting as that in any other philosophical system. Nevertheless, in the course of time, as William James and John Dewey expanded Peirce's work,

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[313] Cited in H.S. Thayer. *Pragmatism: The Classic Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1982), 45.
[314] Cheryl Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)," *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce* (ed. Cheryl Misak. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.
[315] Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce," 3.
[316] Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce," 3.
[317] Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce," 3.
[318] Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce," 3.
[319] Thayer, *Pragmatism*, 50-53.

Pragmatism filtered down to the wider populace, thus impacting commerce, advertising media, the arts, and religion. Those, not academically inclined, of any religious persuasion, even not familiar with its precepts, could be guided and benefited by pragmatic ideas in everyday life, simply because of such practicality and simplicity. New adages, "Of what practical value is this," or "If it works it must be right" would become the lodestars of the individuals and groups in every walk of life.

Pragmatism would not have provided a ready-made method of exegesis of biblical texts; the intersection of pragmatism with the burgeoning Christian novel and cinematic industries would, however, account for a climate in which the Left Behind series – a major attempt at popularisation of PMD theology – would flourish, as it could not have done in earlier centuries when Scottish Common Sense Realism would oppose the novel because of its tendency to "give false notions of things, to pervert the consequences of human actions, and to misrepresent the ways of divine providence."[320] In a less condemnatory tone, Grant Wacker comments, on the "pragmatic impulse" of the early Pentecostal constituency of fundamentalism, an impulse I suggest would in many respects also characterise the wider fundamentalist groupings:

> If an initial reading of the letters, diaries, and testimonial columns of early pentecostalism leaves an image of pilgrims, singlemindedly trekking to Heaven's gate, a second reading creates a strikingly different image. The latter suggests that the first generation converts are better interpreted as eminently practical minded folk who used the limited resources at their disposal to gain their purposes, sacred or otherwise. According to this second perspective, when all was said and done, pentecostals proved themselves a persistently ambitious lot, considerably less interested in what was said than what was done. A scenario of mundane sagacity and this-wordly hardheadedness dominates this picture. [321]

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[320] Gutjahr, "No Longer Left Behind," 211.

[321] For Wacker, "Searching for Eden," 418, Campbellites, Mormons, Landmark Baptists and other so-called restoration sects of the nineteenth century readily come to mind. "Pentecostal primitivism certainly included all of that, but it was more. It was the dark subsoil in which the restorationist and, for that matter, millenarian visions germinated. It was the urge to destroy all recently made traditions in order to return to the ancient tradition of the New Testament where the Holy Ghost, and only the Holy Ghost ruled the hearts and minds of the faithful. The long-lost world, was in a sense, an Edenic realm pulsating with supernatural signs and wonders, yet it was also an apocalyptic realm regimented by the timeless truths and universal values of Scripture. First generation stalwarts sought to reenter that world as literally as possible by breathing its holy air, smelling its sacred fragrances, luxuriating in its spiritual delights. In the process, they fashioned their own social networks, cultural symbols, and religious rituals. To a remarkable extent they succeeded in creating a primitive garden in a modern wilderness."

How, and when, did LaHaye, never directly associated with Pentecostalism or Primitivism, but certainly not untouched by Common Sense Realism, reach the point of compromising his insistence on consistent literalism for an ambitious practice of artistic license of fiction? According to his own account,[322] relayed to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* LaHaye got the idea for the first book in the Left Behind series during an airplane flight, as he observed a male pilot flirt with a female flight attendant. He noticed that the pilot was wearing a wedding ring and wondered what would happen if the biblical "Rapture" were to occur and the pilot's wife went to Heaven while the pilot was left behind. The marketability of such a concept would not have seemed to LaHaye to be a compromise of his Common Sense Realism principles, nor would yielding to this inspiration mean that LaHaye consciously decided to embrace a pragmatic philosophical outlook, particularly if such an outlook acknowledged the role of the pragmatist, John Dewey, whom he regarded as playing a key role in Secular Humanism.
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The resourcefulness, creativity and tendency towards individual expression inherent in pragmatism is not a contrived asset, but from all accounts, a capacity of imagination typical of Protestantism and particularly Evangelicalism.

5. THE EVANGELICAL IMAGINATION

5.1 Imagination and the Media

Not only LaHaye, but all Christian fiction writers, would have yielded to pragmatism-orientated fiction and cinematic industries already mentioned, if not for mercenary motivation, then as result of an irrepressible imagination which George Orwell would see as practically "a Protestant form of art, a product of the free mind, the autonomous individual."[324] Janine Langan sees imagining as "an act of hope, a challenge to fate, an

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[322] Reported in Rob Boston, "Left Behind," in *Church & State*, February (2002) n.p.

[323] Sharlet, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008) 376, recalls how Matt, a friend, related that the ideas of LaHaye, who wrote that Dewey was part of a prideful conspiracy to undermine truth, had infused his lessons at Multnomah College.

[324] George Orwell, *Inside the Whale: The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* Vol I (A. M. Heath, 1979), 568.

effort to take matters in hand and to accept our unique role as human beings, in the world, but not of it. It is the weaver of culture. Artists create the language we use to intuit each other's thoughts, the very forms through which we transmit our insights, worship together, galvanize each other to common action. As the destruction of images in the Reformation demonstrated, loss of community follows upon the loss of common images."[325]

Gold, affirms Schultze's remark that "in the evangelical imagination, the media have represented both a marvelous technology of hope and apostate culture of despair," a view that "charges that the radical drama/urgency of the Christian evangelical message become absorbed into the popular genres of the day."[326] Certainly, for Gold, the "LBS" draws heavily on the genres of thriller, action/adventure, romance, sci-fi and horror.[327]

5.2 Left Behind as Science Fiction?

One may agree with Gold, as cited above, that "LBS" draws heavily on the genres of thriller, action/adventure, romance, but can it be said to be sci-fi and horror? Could it sensitise readers to the distinctions between the now becoming proverbial "us" and "them," thus breeding discriminatory and even an exterminatory mentality?

Annette Kuhn describes the key features of the genre as being its "construction of particular types of fictional worlds and narrative themes, and its enactment of certain narrative themes, and viewpoints, but also – and maybe more significantly – of the cinematic image; at the levels of iconography and *mise-en-scène*, certainly, but also, and especially – in terms of film's own language, its own cinematic codes."[328] Kuhn describes the operation of these codes as creating "fictional worlds, worlds which present themselves as other, or outside of reality – deep space, the inner geography of spacecraft,

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[325] Janine Langan, "The Christian Imagination," in *The Christian Imagination* (ed. Leland Ryken, Colorado Springs; Waterbrook, 2002), 65. This observation concurs with Frykholm's finding that in evangelicalism readers form groups to discuss the Left Behind novels.
[326] Gold, "The Left Behind Series," 34.
[327] Gold, "The Left Behind Series," 34.
[328] Annette Kuhn, ed., *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema* (London: Verso, 1999), 6-7.

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the contours of alien planets."[329] These worlds, in her understanding, are not foreign to the spectator for the unfamiliar is signified through familiar sets of codes. "The story is understandable, and pleasurable, and its fictional world plausible on its own terms.[330]

Could it also be said that the Left Behind films are understandable, and pleasurable, and its fictional world plausible on its own terms? Its world, although set in the near future, is strikingly mundane – quiet domestic scenes in suburban homes alternate with chases, sniping, and cars exploding; there is no geography of spacecraft – planes fly on routine routes between cities; humans have normally shaped heads and facial features, and dress normally. However, supernatural phenomena, the one centering around the rapture, and the other around the antichrist occur in flashes during the storylines of the films.

The rapture that occurs in the airplane is not seen taking place; what is visible are the heaps of clothes in the seats vacated by those who were raptured. On ground level, as drivers are lifted from their seats cars collide and pile up in streets and on sidewalks. In the prequel, *The Rapture: Countdown to the Last Days*, which has not been produced as a film, Rayford's wife sits up in bed as she hears a loud voice scream "IRENE STEELE!"[331] "For an instant Irene Steele had been terrified, but before she could move an inch she heard a loud trumpet blast and felt transported out of her bed, passing through the ceiling, the attic, the roof, and into the dark night sky." [332] Strangely, it is told, she did not feel naked nor was she cold although she had left her nightgown and jewelry behind.[333] Soon she hears the call of her son Raymie, soaring up alongside her, now a grown man of over 6 feet tall. They reunite with family and friends and their beloved Pastor Billings … and Jesus, who welcomes the raptured one by one.[334]

What thrilled Irene, according to the narrative, was that the place Jesus had gone to prepare for them was as Scripture described, "four hundred square miles, the length, the breadth and height the same. If superimposed on the earth it would extend from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean, with the rapture saints

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[329] Kuhn, ed., Introduction," 7.
[330] Kuhn, ed., Introduction," 7.
[331] La Haye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 150.
[332] La Haye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 154.
[333] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 154.
[334] La Haye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 157-58.

and resurrected dead, perhaps two billion people would be there, with enough room for each to inhabit a cubed space of seventy five acres."[335] Amidst the grandeur – gold, silver, brass and platinum laden walls and gates – was a "cornucopia of delights," "sizzling meats, fruit, vegetables, crystal glasses full of nectar."[336]

For, believers, in the rapture, or "translation of the Church,"[337] the ascension of physical bodies to an extra-terrestrial plane, and the suspension of a 400 mile square cube in a celestial realm are not science-fiction creations, but rather fulfillments of biblical prophecy. For them the event of the physical bodies being taken up into the sky is nothing but a literal fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 15-17; the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, and the voice of the archangel catches up the Church in the clouds.

During the seven year tribulation, which follows in the wake of the rapture, the antichrist, Nicolae Carpathia emerges and in a few instances the supernatural powers of the antichrist could be perceived as expressions of science-fiction, as in a scene where Rayford is caught off guard by Carpathia while attempting to access information at Carpathia's computer. Momentarily Rayford sees Carpathia's face transfigure – his ashen skin pulls tautly over his skull and his eye sockets are devoid of eyeballs.[338] The most vivid supernatural feats occur when U.S. president John Fitzhugh, having futilely fired shots into Carpathia's chest, only minutes later is catapulted through a window by a power emanating from Carpathia. Surviving the fall, Fitzhugh attempts to shoot Carpathia soon afterwards – this time Carpathia using his supernatural power directs a satellite passing overhead to crash into the upper floor his headquarters. Presumably Fitzhugh dies in the raging flames. Carpathia casually walks through the flames as the film draws to a close.[339] Traditionally antichrist is not only opposed to Jesus Christ, but possesses the supernatural powers that enable him to mimic Christ − performing miracles, and even rising from the dead within three days.[340]

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[335] La Haye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 159.
[336] La Haye and Jenkins, *The Rapture*, 159.
[337] E. Schuyler English, ed, *The New Scofield Study Bible*. *The New International Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1254.
[338] *Tribulation Force II*, Cloud Ten, 2006.
[339] *Left Behind World at War:* Cloud Ten, 2006.
[340] La Haye and Jenkins, *The Indwelling*, 286-89.

While the above references suggest a modicum of science-fiction features in the Left Behind novels and films, similarities to the apocalyptic novel, what one might term as a religious rendering of science-fiction, have been observed and commented upon by several researchers. John Walliss, presenting "an analysis both of the use and abuse of the notion of the apocalypse within contemporary cinema"[341] refers to the Left Behind films in context of the work of Mervyn Bendle,[342] and particularly Conrad Ostwald[343] and Francis Flannery-Dailey,[344] who claim that contemporary apocalyptic films are characterised by what the former refers to as "the desacralisation of the apocalypse, wherein the traditional notion of the apocalypse is secularized and placed within the sphere of human agency."[345] Other researchers, even if they do not specifically refer to the LB Corpus are Weaver,[346] who draws on Kermode, Derrida and O'Leary in assessing negative and positive aspects of the term the utopic and dystopic, that appear to various extents in literary science-fiction texts; Ruppersberg's view is that a number of films produced in the during the last twenty years look beyond the human for salvation. "They invoke a messiah figure, an overtly or covertly religious personage, whose numinous, supra-human qualities offer solace and inspiration to a humanity threatened by technology." [347]

In terms of "*What is written here*?" the Left Behind films, and their scripts derived from those of the novels should be seen as interpretations; but borrowing from Kuhn, these are representations of a special kind – "they have their own semiotic processes, their own ways of making meaning. Cinema's part in the production and circulation of ideologies thus involving its own signifying practices, central among which must be the

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[341] John Walliss, "Apocalypse at the Millennium," in *The End All Around Us: Apocalyptic Texts and Popular Culture*. (eds. John Wallis and Kenneth G.C. Newport. London/Oakville: Equinox, 2009), 72.

[342] Mervyn Bendle, "The Apocalyptic Imagination and Popular Culture" *JRPC* XI, (2005) http://usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art11-apocalypticimagination.html

[343] Conrad Ostwald, "Visions of the End: Secular Apocalyptic in Recent Hollywood Film" *2.1* (1998), http://avalon.umomaha.edu/jrf/OstwaldC.htm, Also Conrad Ostwald, "Armageddon at the Millennial Dawn" *JRF* 4, no. 1 (2000) http://unomaha.edu/jrf/armagedd.htm and *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination* (London: Trinity Press International, 2003).

[344] Frances Flannery-Dailey, "Bruce Willis as the Messiah" Human Effort, Salvation and Apocalypticism in Twelve Monkeys," in *JRF* 5, no.2 (2001) Online:http://unomaha.edu/jrf/gnostic.htm

[345] Walliss, "Apocalypse at the Millennium." 72-3.

[346] Roslyn. Weaver, "The Shadow of the End": The Appeal of Apocalypse in Literary Science Fiction," in *The End All Around Us.* (ed. John Walliss, and Kenneth G.C. Newport/London: Equinox, 2009), 173-197.

[347] Hugh Ruppersberg, "The Alien Messiah," in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory, and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema* (ed. Annette Kuhn. London: Verso, 1990), 32-3.

capacity of the film image to present itself as uncoded, a direct record of the real. Ideology, in this view, is grounded in signification."[348] But ideologies, "given their self-concealment cannot be as a rule be uncovered by means of an empiricist approach …one which attends to the immediately observable; it will usually be necessary to dig deeper, to seek out subtexts and underlying meanings . . . . The underlying ideological operations of a film text or group of texts are exposed by means of symptomatic readings, which attend to what is not there – the gaps, the silences, the 'structuring absences' – as much as to what is."[349]

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have seen how the authors of Left Behind maintain consistent literalism, inherent in the grammatical-historical method, and its less intellectual offspring, the historical-literal method, within the framework of a distinct Common Sense Realism philosophy. The section on the philosophical framework appears to be remote from the research question but since it is intrinsic to interpretation, it is relevant to the question of the crusader nature of Left Behind. The imaginative bent that has reshaped literal interpretation of the Bible in the Left Behind series is redolent of seemingly capricious rabbinic interpretations. It is as if consistent literalism cannot sustain itself without breaking into the imaginative and fantastical.

While Gutjahr's inference the Left Behind series is "a kind of modern-day midrash on the Bible" his use of the word needs qualification lest it be concluded that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the LB novels and the ancient form of midrash. At first glance Left Behind falls into midrash type of narrative, it frequently invokes scripture, in fact its sole purpose is the application of scripture texts. Obviously Left Behind has inherited the impulse of rabbinic imagination but it does not employ the same frames of reference or differentiations in narrative.

Any hermeneutical tradition that has sprung up over the centuries cannot solely be identified with any of the readings which shaped it, and that includes the schools of

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[348] Kuhn, *Alien Zone*, 54.
[349] Kuhn, *Alien Zone*, 54.

philosophy which frame it. Consequently a reading of a text in the twenty first century may exhibit, for example, characteristics of the philosophy of Aristotle or Reid without being a prime example of any one of these in its original phase. Many permutations occur along the route of an interpretative tradition, the causes being societal and theological fluxes and most significantly by ruling philosophies of the period in time.

As narratives, the Left Behind series defies categorisation either as the historical novel or science-fiction. While it may contain odd elements of these it is quintessentially fictionalised propaganda. To describe a genre thus requires that the novel in question exhibits a rhetorical discourse that appeals to a response and furthers stratification along ethnic, religious, gender lines. This may not be obvious in a naïve reading though a discerned reading and viewing may detect such an orientation in the sub-text and other visual and literary codes. These become more cogent, not only in dispensationalism, but also contemporary apocalypticism which reaching back to its ancient roots is inherently separatist and discriminatory, drawing clear lines between good and evil, the saved and unsaved, the righteous and the unrighteous.

CHAPTER 4

DISCOURSE: WHO SPEAKS HERE?

1. INTRODUCTION

Having considered the LB Corpus as *dispensationalism* in terms of its exegetical approach, as *fundamentalism* in its defence against modernism, as a manifestation of *Common Sense Realism* in its epistemological dimension, we now look at it as *apocalypticism*[350] in its understanding of, and pursuit of the fulfillment of history. From this point, in this chapter, I replace the term dispensationalism with apocalypticism, unless appearing in a citation, as the focus now shifts to an overriding worldview, of which dispensationalism is but one variant.[351]

While modern end-times literature, such as the LB Corpus, focuses entirely on prophecy as a prediction of future events without any recognition of apocalypses as genre, it fails to recognise that in itself it exhibits characteristics of ancient Jewish apocalypticism in which apocalypses were written. While comparisons between the nature of the LB Corpus and ancient apocalypses can be excessively formalised, both are essentially dualistic, thus a combat between evil and good with an expectation that personal and collective destiny is determined by choice. Hellholm has done an

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[350] The relation of apocalypticism to prophecy and eschatology constitutes a scholarly debate. The following works can be consulted for a fuller treatment of the subject: Bernard McGinn, in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature; Patterns, Precedents, Antecedents and Repercussions* (eds. C. A. Patrides, & J. A. Wittreich. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); D. P. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Social Roots of Jewish Apocalypticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 5; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 67, argues for a *proto-apocalyptic* in the form of Berossa's *Babylonika* 290-280 B.C.E dedicated to Antiochus I Soter. Egyptian documents by the hand of Manetho's *Aegyptiaka*.

[351] See Catherine Wessinger, "Millennialism With or Without the Mayhem," in *Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (eds., Thomas Robbins and Susan J Palmer, New York: Routledge, 1997), 48-51. Wessinger suggests that the terms premillennialism and postmillennialism be dropped because they are no longer adequate to communicate about millennialism. Premillennialism should be replaced by the term "catastrophic millennialism" and postmillennialism by "progressive millennialism." She recommends that this new terminology should enhance clarity of communication between scholars, and between scholars and the general public, but does not claim that these are the correct terms for these phenomena. Also see Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 14, who identifies with Sandeen's frustration over the inability of historians and critics to move beyond the generic labels of "premillennialism" and "postmillennialism" instead of utilising more dynamic categories. In this thesis I use whatever terms are appropriate in LB context.

extensive study[352] on the similarities and dissimilarities between ancient apocalypticism and modern apocalypticism, of which Left Behind is one manifestation. The LB Corpus, in the form of novels, charts, videos, films and games evokes the same response from its readers, in the process generating a discourse peculiar itself, and as we will see, this is more than displaying vivid slogans on bumper stickers and T-shirts, as much as these are intrinsic to what has become to be popularly referred to as the "rapture culture."

The task of this chapter is to examine this discourse so distinctive of apocalypticism, and in particular the LB Corpus. I will be doing this by a short reflection on the nature of discourse, followed by three sections, the first apocalyptic frameworks, the second on

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[352] Scholars are not equally conclusive about what would constitute a typical apocalypse, e.g. Smith, *Map is not Territory*, 66, writes: "I agree with Betz and Von Rad that apocalypticism cannot be reduced to a mere catalogue of elements such as secret books, journeys to heaven by a sage etc as these motifs can be found in the archaic religions of the near east and are typical of all modes of Hellenistic religiosity." Wesley J Bergen, "The New Apocalyptic: Modern American Apocalyptic Fiction and its Ancient and Modern Cousins," in *JRPC* XX, no.8 (2008), n.p. compares and contrasts modern American Christian apocalyptic fiction with two related genres, early Christian and modern secular apocalyptic literature. Starting with a description of early Christian apocalyptic literature, he compares these to the content, form, and function of the *Left Behind* series. While *the Left Behind* series may not typify modern Christian apocalyptic fiction, its popularity places it firmly in the realm of pop culture. "While neither early Christian/Jewish nor modern Christian apocalyptic writings are monolithic in form or content, they do contain sufficient generic similarities to allow for some general statements to be made about differences in content, form, and function. He notes that "these differences will be studied for their ability to tell us something about modern Christians who produce and consume these writings, as well as the way modern American Christian apocalyptic fiction interacts with ancient Christian and modern secular apocalyptic thought." In 1979, the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature produced the following description of the genre of apocalypse, relating specifically to ancient apocalyptic writings: "Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by another worldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world," cited in John Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre." *Semeia*, 14 (1979):1-20. Bergen cites David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John." *Semeia*, 36 (2005):13-64, who lists thirty-three characteristics of apocalyptic writing that he calls semes, a seme being the "minimal distinctive unit (of the content substance)" of a particular genre. He places these semes into the categories of *content*, *form* and *function* (1986) 22-23. Hellholm recognised that no piece of early Christian/Jewish apocalyptic literature contained all thirty-three semes. "The question is not whether a particular piece of literature is or is not apocalyptic, but rather how many of the semes any particular writing contains. So it should not come as a surprise to us that modern Christian writings usually categorized as apocalyptic do not include some of these characteristics. "Rather, we can learn more about modern Christian thought by studying which semes are present and which are absent. These will say much about how modern apocalypses may function in the production and/or maintenance of a particular worldview within modern American culture. Under the heading of *content*, Hellholm lists a number of semes that also describe the *Left Behind* series. For example, he includes "s1. Eschatology as history in future form;" "s2. Cosmic history divided into periods;" and "s5. Combat between dualistic micro-cosmic powers." He adds that while it is important not to make too much of these parallels, "it is worth thinking about the impulse that may lie within them."

management of meaning and the third on the rhetor's strategies. Integrated into these sections of this chapter I will critically analyse three texts from the LB Corpus: the most recent YouTube videocasts promoting *Left Behind*, a passage from Chapter 23 of *Left Behind*, and its visual portrayal in the movie *Tribulation Force*; and finally an overview of what is regarded as the capstone of extermination theology, the video game *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*. The rationale for this selection is that it illustrates the movement from internalisation to externalisation, in three modalities of discourse, and therefore reinforcing discriminatory and even exterminatory behaviours and attitudes.

2. THE NATURE OF DISCOURSE AND RHETORIC

2.1 *Discourse and its Products*

Attempting a definition, one may say that at its most conventional level, discourse is equated with the way in which humans express themselves in speech and writing. Speech manifesting itself in casual conversation, jovial banter, serious discussion or in imperative commands; writing in prose, formal commentary, exact reports and so forth. As O' Sullivan, Hartley Saunders and Fiske say of discourse: "Most uncontroversially it is used in linguistics to refer to verbal utterances of greater magnitude than the sentence."[353] So we may expect that intended meaning runs along undetectable parallels to words actually spoken: "Discourse analysis is concerned not only with the complex utterances by one speaker, but more frequently with the turn-taking interaction between two or more, and with the linguistic rules and conventions that are taken to be in play and governing such discourses in their given context."[354]

At a point where "an abstract concept of language proved inadequate to account for the historical, political and cultural 'fixing' of certain meanings" the concept of discourse began to supplant the now flabby and imprecise notion of 'language.'" According to O' Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske discourse, unlike the term language is both a noun and a verb, therefore an *act* rather than a thing, "both an

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[353] Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders and John Fiske, *Key Concepts of Communication* (London: Routledge,1983), 72.

[354] O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts*, 72.

interactive process and the end result of thought and communication."[355] Then as a distillation of the above: "Discourse is the social process of making and reproducing sense (s),"[356] but also a "product" as explicitly stated here:

> Discourses are the product of social, historical and institutional formations, and meanings are produced by the institutionalized discourses. It follows that the potentially infinite senses any language system is capable of producing are always limited and fixed by the structure of social relations which prevail in a given time and place, and which is itself represented through various discourses.[357]

While the theories of O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske suggest a circular process in which discourse produces institution and vice-versa, Lincoln gives more weight to the notion that "no consideration of discourse is complete that does not take account of force."[358] "Together, discourse and force are the chief means whereby social borders, hierarchies, institutional formations, and habituated patterns of behavior are both maintained and modified."[359]

Lincoln views discourse as supplementing force in several important ways, ideological persuasion being among the most important.[360]

> In the hands of the elites and of those professionals who serve them (either in mediated fashion or directly), discourse of all forms – not only verbal, but also symbolic the symbolic discourses of spectacle, gesture, costume, edifice, icon, musical performance, and the like – may strategically employed to mystify the inevitable inequities of any social order and to win the consent of those over whom power is exercised, thereby obviating the need for the direct coercive use of force and transforming simple power into "legitimate authority."[361]

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[355] O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts*, 73.

[356] O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts*, 73.

[357] O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts*, 73-4.

[358] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction of Society,* 1.

[359] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction of Society,* 1.

[360] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction of Society,* 4.

[361] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction of Society,* 4-5. Yet, as Lincoln asserts, discourse can also serve members of subordinate classes (as described by Antonio Gramsci) in their own attempts to demystify, delegitimate, and deconstruct the established norms, institutions and discourses that play a role in constructing their subordination.

Lincoln concludes, that "ultimately that which holds society together or takes it apart is sentiment, and the chief instrument with which sentiment may be aroused, manipulated and rendered dormant is discourse." [362]

Of course O' Sullivan, Hartley Saunders and Fiske, and Lincoln are not the only voices in the articulation of the broader sweep and finer details of discourse. Terry Eagleton's work is also essential reading on the subject. Ever pitting himself against generalisations and written-in-stone definitions of discourse and ideology Lincoln moves from a critical stance to Foucault's supposed overplay of power[363] to an agreement with Voloshinov's "discourse analysis" which attends to the play of social power within language itself, and Pechaux's "interdiscourse," which concerns "particular discursive formations."[364]

2.2 Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Putting aside the definitions of discourses I turn to rhetoric, and particularly apocalyptic rhetoric which as a subset of discourse is of immediate relevance in this chapter. Study of apocalyptic rhetoric constitutes a vast field of scholarship with Stephen O' Leary and Barry Brummett taking the lead, though holding diverging emphases. [365] O'Leary defines his own approach as "going beyond these dimensions of previous studies by paying close attention to the specifically argumentative dimension of apocalypticism."[366] "This is to say that when a prophet or prophetic interpreter proposes

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[362] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction of Society,* 11.

[363] See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London/New York: Verso, 2007), 7, 8, 47, 110, 137, 146, 167, 169, 219

[364] See Eagleton, *Ideology,* 194-5.

[365] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 20-60, substantially bases himself on Aristotelian rhetoric, categorising apocalyptic elements such evil, time, and authority as *topoi.* Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions,* xxii, on the other hand, sees the "conduct of rhetoric in ancient Athens" as unable to conceptualise this full range of rhetoric's functions and manifestations (social functions). Instead of "a traditional rhetorical theory as practiced in departments of English or communication, committed to the assumption that rhetoric means mainly or only discursive verbal and reasoned discourse," he favours a "mosaic" communication as suggested by Samuel Becker. Both O'Leary and Brummett draw from Kenneth Burke but, O'Leary, 10, rejects the Burkian concept, supported by Brummett, that apocalyptic believers suffer from conditions of anomie and absence of meaning, rather affirming Bernard McGinn's contention that "apocalypticism cannot be understood only as a series of movements with discrete and identifiable causes in historical events, but also must be seen as a tradition, a textually embodied community of discourse founded in the accepted canon of Western sacred scripture and occasionally augmented by the production of a new revelations and interpretive strategies."

[366] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 4.

that the world is coming to an end, or that a period of millennial peace is about to begin, he or she is making an argumentative claim – a statement that is designed to gain the audience and that must be supported by reasons and proofs. In simple terms, then, I have attempted to provide a framework for comparing and classifying the types of claims most prevalent in the Christian apocalyptic tradition."[367]

Brummett's work considers two rhetorical purposes: first, "how apocalyptic secures the adherence of an audience," and second, "how apocalyptic moves an already secured audience to accept social and political commitments."[368] He operates on the assumption that the management of meaning, and influence over people, is "a dimension of many kinds of texts and experiences, rather than a category of separate or distinct texts and experiences" − by identifying Daniel or Revelation as apocalyptic rhetoric he is not saying that those texts are only about rhetoric. In fact his book claims to make no theological arguments at all although theology is an important dimension of those books.[369] "In referring to certain economics books as apocalyptic, I am not commenting on the validity of their economic arguments; rather I am examining that dimension of them that is both rhetorical and apocalyptic."[370]

A review of how apocalypticists view history, and relate it to the present in terms of social and political identity, without the finer detail, is also called for at this preliminary stage. In the process other voices in the scholarly study of apocalypticism are introduced.

3. APOCALYPTIC MASTER FRAMES

3.1 Theorists on Frames and Social Movements

Not surprisingly theorists[371] find in the frame a useful analogy to describe how social groups make sense of the threats, global calamities and social contradictions they encounter in the unfolding of history. In the Judeo-Christian tradition people have come

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[367] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 4.
[368] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 11.
[369] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 11.
[370] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric,*11.
[371] From the public sector these would include Erwin Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Mass: Harvard University Press,1974); Doug McAdam and David

to grips with this anguish by organising these perceptions into a frame which encloseswhere they have come from, where they are now and where they are moving to in a coherent narrative. These frames energise groups, now becoming social movements, in rising to action against the perceived enemy.

Brenda Brasher and Chip Berlet define a social movement as "a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is part."[372]

> Social movements interact in a strategic way with political movements, which have an electoral and legislative focus. To be effective, a social movement has to construct an internally coherent ideology, identify grievances, set goals, and instill a sense of purpose, optimism, and collective identity among followers. Movement leaders help accomplish this by skillfully framing their ideas and proposed actions. Stories, whether they are narrative of personal experience, or fictional accounts, help build social movements.[373]

Brasher and Berlet's descriptions of social movement resonate with what reviews of the LB Corpus have brought to light up to now, and we may gather that the phenomenon is not a novelty, since at various times in history social movements have employed apocalyptic frames and conspiracist narratives,[374] moving them from the margins of the society into the mainstream where they have affected public policy. Sociological analysis, Brasher and Berlet contend, can help explain the dynamics of these and other

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Snow, *Introduction to Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics,* ed., McAdam and Snow (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 1997).

[372] Brenda Brasher and Chip Berlet, "Modern Christian Right Print Culture." Part Two (Presented at the Conference on Religion and the Culture of Print in America, Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 10-11, 2004).
Online: www.publiceye.org/berlet/berlet_articles.html

[373] Brasher and Berlet, "Modern Christian Right Print Culture*,"* n.p

[374] See Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Regents of the University of California: University of California Press, 2003) for an account and analysis of various conspiracies and mega-conspiracies in apocalyptic writing and wider popular American culture as well as the "lunatic fringes." Barkun illustrates the connection of conspiracy theory with premillennialism by referring to Stan Deyo whose book *The Cosmic Conspiracy* fused Illuminati theory with dispensational premillennialism and UFO speculation, 57, and the end of history, requiring seven years of the Tribulation before Christ's second coming can inaugurate the millennial age. Essential to Tribulation is a New World Order, ruled by the antichrist and his forces, whose control has been made by extra-terrestrial forces. In the Left Behind novels Global Community, headed by the Global Community potentate, Nicolae Carpathia, is a fictionalised version of the Illuminati-inspired New World Order. However, nowhere in the LB Corpus are UFOs and extra-terrestrials and aliens implicated.

social movements based around a religion or theological viewpoint.[375]

Social movements based around a religion or theological viewpoint would be those identified by Susan Harding – "Baptist, Brethren, charismatic, Pentecostal and non-denominational churches in America that profess premillennial dispensationalism."[376] She notes that if you "listen to their sermons and read their publications on unfulfilled Bible prophecies, you will hear them talk about current events. If you ask them about current events you will hear them talk about those in terms framed by Bible prophecy. Dispensationalism is not always political in the sense of advocating specific actions that count as American as political in American culture, but it *is* always political. It is political insofar it constitutes not only the current events for many born-again believers, but also to their understanding of and place in history."[377] Harding sees dispensationalism as a "kind of narrative politics that contests hegemonic secular ('modern') voices of journalists and academics – whose theories are also political – for control over the definition and meaning of current events and of 'history' more broadly."[378]

These power struggles, so rampant in the media and academia, are what Brasher and Berlet see as "the frames that establish culturally appropriate perspectives and viewpoints that resonate with a broad audience and helps implement a movement's ideological goals."[379] But how do they practically succeed in their aims? They cite Klandermans who explains that the "social construction of collective action frames" involves "public discourse" where "media discourse and interpersonal interaction" interface with "persuasive communication during mobilisation campaigns by movement organizations, their opponents and countermovement organizations; and that the process of 'consciousness raising' occurs during 'episodes of collective action.'"[380]

For Stewart and Harding "end times" belief not only informs theology, but interacts with secular political life – they found evidence of a significant amount of apocalyptic

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[375] Brasher and Berlet, Modern Christian Right Print Culture," n.p
[376] Susan Harding, "Imagining the Last Days," *Fundamentalism Observed* (eds., Martin E. Marty and R Scott Appleby, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 60.
[377] Brasher and Berlet, Modern Christian Right Print Culture," n.p
[377] Harding, "Imagining the Last Days," 60.
[378] Brasher and Berlet, Modern Christian Right Print Culture," n.p
[379] Harding, "Imagining the Last Days," 60.
[380] Bert Klandermans, *The Social Psychology of Protest* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 45.

rhetoric across American society.[381] Their key observation was that the term "culture wars" marks these polemic contests that have taken on the apocalyptic discourse of ultimate stakes and final solutions, promoting hyperbole and even panic."[382] In their view, this reached "larger publics" in America that became "swept up in contemporary conflicts over rights, race, gender, and broad questions of politics and the public sphere."[383]

In situating Left Behind in an apocalyptic framework, the question arises as to whether it is a social movement in own right, or one in relation to a wider social movement. In its worldview and understanding of history Left Behind is but one front in the wider dispensational movement. For the purposes of this thesis I will, however, in the next chapter present the LB Corpus, with its authors, supported by phalanxes of editors, producers, promoters, purveyors and readers as a distinct social movement with a definable framework.

3.2   The Left Behind Master Frame

Whereas so many other PMD fiction and non-fiction works depict those left behind after the rapture as having forgone salvation and destined to damnation, those left behind in the Left Behind series, or more precisely those who respond to the calls of the evangelist, will be given a second chance, and indeed become part of this evangelistic force. However, the full implications have to be viewed against the wider apocalyptic frame within which LaHaye and Jenkins function. This frame, as a kind of conventional vision and mission statement, does not necessarily appear *in toto* at the start of every novel, though it is more explicit in the non-fiction works and of course, promotional material for the series. Starting with the official website, I do some preliminary navigating starting with the opening paragraph of the site:

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[381] Kathleen Stewart and Susan Harding, "Bad Endings: American Apocalipsis," in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999), 300.
[382] Stewart and Harding, "Bad Endings: American Apocalipsis," 300.
[383] Stewart and Harding, "Bad Endings: American Apocalipsis," 300.

Are you ready for the moment of truth?

- Political crisis
- Economic crisis
- Worldwide epidemics
- Environmental catastrophe
- Mass disappearances
- Military apocalypse

And that's just the beginning . . .
of the end of the world.
It's happening now.

Tell others about it. Spread the word.
Visit www.foundthisbook.com.

This link appears not only to convey a message but also to introduce readers to the first novel, *Left Behind,* and in particular *Are We Living in the End Times?* as well as linking viewers to a set of videocasts to which I will presently return. The main feature of this website is a message from LaHaye and Jenkins which may regarded as a definitive Left Behind apocalyptic master frame in which two books mentioned are publicised as having the answers to all their questions.

Under the heading "Three Signs of the End" LaHaye and Jenkins refer to Jesus' disciples asking him the classic question 2000 years ago: "What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"[384] "That remains one of the most prominent questions to this day. The fact is that the signs of the time are all around us. Many are asking, 'How long can it be until the end of history, the end of the world as we know it?'" [385]

Under the next heading "You Don't Need to Be Left Behind" LaHaye and Jenkins outline the results of a poll on leftbehind.com where the question "Are you ready for Jesus to return?" is replied to. After conceding that website polls are not statistically

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[384] LaHaye and Jenkins, "Three Signs of the End," n.p [Cited 23 March 2009] www.leftbehind. com/02_end_times/threesigns.asp
[385] LaHaye and Jenkins, "Three Signs of the End," n.p.

valid surveys, yet can be illuminating, they break down the responses[386] to the question: "Are you ready for Jesus to return?" the replies were as follows:

- I'm anxiously expecting his return = 3812
- I hope he comes during my lifetime, but not yet = 2023
- I need to get ready = 565
- I'm afraid I'll be Left Behind = 639
- I know I'll be left behind, but I don't know what to do = 193

LaHaye and Jenkins express the desire to talk to those who do not feel ready or do not know what to do to avoid being left behind. By reading the Left Behind series they will find examples of people who "have decided to put their faith in Christ."[387] They are also told that they will find plenty of teaching from the Bible through characters like Bruce Barnes, Tsion Ben-Judah, and members of the Tribulation Force as they struggle with their own questions, and that it might be helpful to review some material from the 21-page booklet "Will I Be Left Behind?" a booklet, available from Tyndale.[388] Under the heading, "What you need to know" they unfold core beliefs of their master frame, which consist of the inevitable fulfillment of prophecies the rapture, the antichrist, the tribulation, the mark of the beast, and the millennium. These points are followed by a sequence of headings pertaining to conversion. The appeal concludes with: "You will never be alone again! Please tell us about your experience reading the series and becoming a believer. Find out where a Bible-believing church is in your area that you can join. Help others to understand that God loves them too."[389] So far LaHaye and Jenkins's outline would be representative of Christian traditions beyond PMD, however, in the concluding sentence, "Remember, God doesn't want anyone to be left behind!"[390] LaHaye and Jenkins proclaim a two- second-comings scheme which inevitably creates a

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[386] LaHaye and Jenkins (see above) report that more than 50 percent of respondents said that they were anxiously expecting his return; Nearly 3 in 10 either had unfinished business or didn't want to end their earthly good times just yet when they said they hope he comes in comes in their lifetime, "but not yet." Under 2 in 10 said either that they need to get ready or that they are "afraid to be left behind." Another small group, about 3 in 100, said they knew they would be left behind but did not know what to do.

[387] LaHaye and Jenkins, LaHaye and Jenkins, "Three signs of the End," n.p.

[388] LaHaye and Jenkins, LaHaye and Jenkins, "Three signs of the End," n.p.

[389] LaHaye and Jenkins, LaHaye and Jenkins, "Three signs of the End," n.p.

[390] LaHaye and Jenkins, LaHaye and Jenkins, "Three signs of the End," n.p.

completely new configuration of eschatological events, and consequent estrangement from mainline eschatological teaching.

The websites linked to www.foundthisbook.com contain three videocasts from the future, which very succinctly − the duration of the shortest being 1 minute and 80 seconds and the third, 2 minutes and 2 seconds – convey the essence of rhetorical discourse within the apocalyptic master frame of the LB Corpus. Significant, for the analysis to follow, is that the three videocasts are nested in a scroll-down menu, a few being excerpts from the Left Behind movie the others mostly centering on the economic crisis in the U.S. and allegations that Obama is the antichrist. These videocasts investigate Obama's genealogy, his supposed Hitlerian-style oratory, the most provocative one setting out to prove, by means of a photographic overlay of facial features that Obama and Osama Bin Laden is one and the same person.

This nesting of Left Behind with these videocasts is significant in terms of the direction that the discourse of Left Behind may follow, and therefore calls for looking further comment. In an interview, reported by Mark Hulsether, Jenkins and LaHaye distance themselves from the assertion – one that has been floated "as a trial balloon" during the presidential campaign – that Obama is the Antichrist. Rather they think of him as performing something of a "warm-up act."[391] First, because the Antichrist will only appear *after* the rapture – and since Obama "claims to be a Christian" and "might be a closet Christian" – he may not even be on Earth during the crucial stages. (Hulsether notes in parenthesis that liberal Christians in End-Times novels are almost always left behind.) Second, they argue that there must be an overwhelming consensus about the Antichrist's popularity – a state of affairs that does not currently exist. In fact, Jenkins claimed that he had heard "from just about as many Democrats accusing McCain of being the Antichrist as Republicans accusing Obama." (Again, Hulsether doubts this claim, but finds it interesting if true). "In any case, at worst Obama appears not to be the Antichrist, but merely "setting the stage for his later appearance."[392]

Despite these disclaimers, Jenkins concedes that "I can see why people might think that" – i.e., that Obama fits the job description. Hulsether reports that LaHaye

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[391]Mark Hulsether "Is Obama Satan's Warm-up Act?" (March 8 2009) [Cited: 23 March 2009]. Online: archive/religion/andtheology//1197/is_obama_satan/%E2%80%99s_warm-upact
[392] Mark Hulsether "Is Obama Satan's Warm-up Act?"

repeatedly returned to the dual claim that prophetic scenarios foretell a stage of socialism in which "government controls everything" − redistributing wealth from the "haves to the have-nots" – and that Obama is such a socialist working for such a world. His key argument was that Obama's policies suggest that prophecies are falling into place. "In other words, Obama is playing his part as a key leader of the bad guys even if he's not the Antichrist himself."[393]

The point of referring to this interview and consequent article is that even if LaHaye and Jenkins regard Barack Obama as something of a "warm-up act," the economic recession and presidency of Barack Obama signal, like the events of 11 September 2001 when sales of Left Behind novels soared, this signaled a renewed marketing phase of the LB Corpus.

4.   RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

4.1 The Videocasts from the Future

In analysing each of the videocasts I will draw from Aristotle's three proofs, namely, logos, ethos and pathos. "Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience in a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, of the words of the speech itself. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible." [394] The proofs are eminently suitable as a complement to the audio-visual principles of Zettl. These two analytical tools could be also used in conjunction with Jakobson's communication model. [395]

The development of visual media highlights the rhetorical power of colour, objects, and pictorial symbols as reinforcement of the message. Embedded in the linguistic and

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[393] Mark Hulsether "Is Obama Satan's Warm-up Act?"

[394] See Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle* Introduction by Edward P.J. Corbett (New York: The Modern Library), 24 -25.

[395] See J.J. Roelofse, *Signs and Significance: A Different Perspective on Communication* (Johannesburg: McGraw Hill, 1982), 55-58. The model infers six main functions of language each emanating from a particular component. These Jakobson called the expressive, referential, conative, contact/phatic and metalinguistic.

visual image these serve as a meta-narrative that draws the act of persuasion to its intended conclusion. Since the video clips have same characteristics as television discourse, it is appropriate to note "oral logic," a communication principle thatsuggests that television's meanings are arrived at "through the devices of spoken discourse fused with visual images, rather than through the structures of formal logic."[396]

> This means that apparent inconsistencies or lapses of logic are not necessarily faults in television discourse. They must be seen as aspects of a different kind of logic: as part of a process whose aim is to produce fully satisfactory and plausible meaning; a process which offers us myths with which we are already familiar, and seeks to convince us that these myths are appropriate to their context.[397]

The first is *Lighting purpose*: "The basic purpose of lighting is the manipulation and articulation of the perception of our environment. Lighting helps us, or makes us, see and feel in a specific way. Lighting helps us to clarify and intensify our environment; it provides a context for our experiences."[398] The second is *subjective camera* "when the camera no longer looks at an event but seems to participate in the event." "People in the event turn to the camera and engage him in their actions."[399] The third is *expressive color*[400] by which a desired mood is to give the entire scene a single hue tinge and fourth, *literal* and *nonliteral* sound,[401] standing firstly, for a specific referent the former being the spoken word, or familiar sound, for example, sounds whose symbolism has already been used, e.g. traffic, and secondly for sounds that do not refer to the sound-emitting source itself but evoke a certain quality or feeling, most often music being used.[402]

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[396] John Fiske, and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 112.
[397] Fiske and Hartley, *Reading Television* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 112.
[398] Herbert Zettl, *Sight Sound Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics* (Belmont: Wadsworth,1973), 24.
[399] Zettl, *Sight Sound Motion,*230.
[400] Zettl, *Sight Sound Motion,*91.
[401] Zettl, *Sight Sound Motion,*332.
[402] Zettl, *Sight Sound Motion,*332.

TABLE II: A VIDEOCAST FROM THE FUTURE[403]

Text	Comment
The ambience is dank and somber with what looks like an empty shelf, the metal store-room kind, and clapboard door. Flashes of light, either street traffic or a moving torch flicker on the shelf indicating a high window. It appears to be basement occupied by the woman speaking. A disheveled girl with long wisps of hair falling over her eyes addresses viewers, at close eye-contact range, in whispered tones. While nervously looking around to see if anyone is hearing her, she conveys her message.	The chiaroscuro lighting effect draws attention to the theme of the story being told, one of great suffering and anomie. The empty shelf indicates lack of commodities. The dark jacket blending in with the dark background and the dark hair of the woman enhances the mood. The direct engagement of the woman with the camera invites the viewer into the cramped room in which she is positioned. The rise and fall of the woman's voice and absence of music or background noise emphasise her emotions.
"You and the kids come here. Just figured out how to send an-email back into the past. What you are seeing and hearing has not happened yet. At least not to you."	Separation from loved ones not only introduces an element of pathos. Here is someone who is separated from her family and her concern for her family confirms her credibility.
"The future, well . . . The economic meltdown in 2008, in the fall. It spread like wildfire. Banks failed and governments . . . and all the stocks. Given to a few and I watched them all. We would have been … to let Wall Street crash and burn, it ended up burning anyway."	The incomplete sentences strung together and the glances to the side highlight her anxiety that she will be caught. Nevertheless, she is perceptive and this adds to her credibility.
"One man rose to the top and promised to deliver us but I can't even tell you his name because every electronic device … But I can tell you can't buy or sell anything unless you are on the network. (*Voice rises*) Unless you take the imprint. (*Voice drops*) Some of us are holding out. We are living off the land." (*Voice drops even more and is tinged with emotion.*)	Is this "one man" Obama? Pathos peaks as she expresses feelings of extreme economic hardship, already intimated by the empty shelf.
"All the Bibles in the world have been outlawed. Only one can get you killed. But I found this book. It seems to explain a lot." (*Pulls out a tattered, obviously often fingered, copy of Left Behind*)	Outlawing of the Bible reinforces a situation of persecution and impending martyrdom. The condition of the copy of Left Behind heightens the perceived importance of the book.
"Come on! Go!" (*A shrill voice from the background, presumably a military commander*) She darts out of camera view. "Tell Julian and Sandy I love them."	This seems to be a literal sound as it is immediately recognized as the voice of a commander, but could be non-literal if understood as a piercing sound meant to suddenly terminate her speech.

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[403] "Videocast from the Future" [Cited 26 November 2008]. Online: www.youtube. com/watch? v= _TS4uCe01WM

TABLE III: ANOTHER VIDEOCAST FROM THE FUTURE[404]

Text	Comment
The ambience is the same but the girl, now wearing a cap, appears to be more relaxed and composed.	
"Sweetheart, I am praying that you and the kids got my last message."	Pathos and ethos are sustained.
"It's kind of funny me praying."	Because she was not a believer before and not accustomed to praying her being drawn to prayer now adds to her credibility.
"It 's a little tricky sitting miles through time. So much has happened. Russia made a move on Ukraine, Iraq on Iran, everybody on Israel."	She shows knowledge of world events and their meaning, thus adding to her credibility.
"Looking back we should all have seen it coming. It was right there in the Bible. Now I can't even find one to read. But this book seems to explain a lot. Like the day millions of people disappeared; 9/11 didn't hold a candle to it, the huge epidemics the slaughter, and the day the nukes… "	Her credibility is enhanced even more by her familiarity with the prophecies and her continued dependence on *Left Behind* that explains it all to her.
"Listen, I know you. You have got to tell the people what is going to happen. It is happening!"	The concluding phrase "it is happening" is spoken with deliberation and intensity thus indicating that the prophecies are already being fulfilled and people ignoring them do so at their own peril.
"There a resistance movement… But there are things no one anticipated."	In a self-composed moment, almost beaming confidence, she states her wish to join what is known in the novel as the Tribulation Force, but a little uneasiness as detected as she doesn't quite know what to expect. Nevertheless her credibility is not at stake.
"Come on! Go!" "Tell Julian and Sandy I love them."	Again the shrill voice of the commander is heard. She abruptly departs, but not before highlighting the family bond with an affectionate message. More pathos.
"Kiss the kids goodnight and ask them to pray for me."	

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[404] "Another videocast from the Future" [Cited 26 November, 2008]. www.youtube.om/watch?v= 19k_tS61p0feature=related

TABLE IV: A FINAL VIDEOCAST FROM THE FUTURE[405]

Text	Comment
The ambience has radically changed. Against the backdrop of a well appointed lounge with stylish furniture and a fireplace, the girl, now elegantly dressed in a well cut suit, and wearing a flattering hairstyle walks up and addresses viewers in a well-modulated voice.	The sharp contrast of this scene in comparison with the previous ones alerts the viewer to a change.
"Sweetheart, did you and kids like the little play I sent back to you? It seemed so dramatic but it was all in good fun."	A viewer is taken back by this change, fleetingly expecting that she has succumbed to the enemy. The change is explicated by her admission that the previous messages were just a joke.
"The one-world government has everything under perfect control There is plenty of food and fuel, and the temple has even been rebuilt in Jerusalem. Everyone is so happy."	She is after all one of those left behind who have fallen for the charms of the Antichrist. So he made good after all in delivering them.
"This silly series of books are just fiction. Not even worth the paper they printed on." (*Walks to the fireplace and drops the copy of Left Behind into the flames*)	So much for Left Behind. Just as the viewer thinks that the woman is a typical case of the unconverted left behinder, seeing the word "resist" on her wrist comes as a jolt. She is faithful after all, but keeps up the appearance of being on the Antichrist's side.
"So I am asking you, just disregard those messages I sent to you through that anomaly, the internet." (She thrusts her arm forward, the word "resist" written in black ink on her wrist), only to be seen by viewers.	
"Seize her!" (*Cry coming from above*)	The authorities must be aware of this as the order is given to apprehend her. This time the sound is decidedly literal.

Taken as whole units, these three videocasts each exemplify rhetorical situations which Wilson and Arnold, citing Bitzer, define as a "a complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence, that can be modified by 'creation of discourse' which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action."[406] They suggest that as synonyms for exigence one could use *need* or *readiness,* For mediation of thought and action one could substitute *creating social change* or

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[405] "A final Videocast from the Future" [Cited 26 November, 2008] www.youtube.om/watch?v= M23sf8sNcag8faeture=related

[406] John F. Wilson, and Carroll C. Arnold, *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art.* 5th Edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1983), 12-13.

change in perceptions. Another way of putting this might be: a rhetorical situation is made up of people, conditions, physical features and human relations within which there exists some need for practical communication.[407]

The texts of the three videocasts above do not contain direct questions but implicitly feed the viewer with sufficient information inviting a fitting response. In effect they are saying, "This is how bad the world situation is – you can avoid the terrible consequences by paying heed to the prophecies – if you have not and find yourself left behind there can be another chance – those not taking this opportunity will doomed to hell." These implicit questions and a question asked earlier, "Are you ready for moment of truth?" do not necessarily evoke a verbalised answer but achieve reinforcement of its answer. If the listener answers within, that listener's commitment to the answer is strengthened by being produced in personal terms. And, as is observable, this may happen as viewers are moved and touched to the point engaging in endless blogging and participation in Facebook.

If it happens that an audience is turned off, this lack of "fitting response" does not prove that there was no rhetorical situation, but that although possibilities for change exist the communication failed in some way to touch those possibilities. [408] There are not as many responses to the videocasts as there were to the novels and films, which can be accounted for by the fact that the videocasts have been published on the internet as recently as 2008. From the existing responses the majority is affirmative, yet two viewers objected on grounds that LaHaye is exploiting current events to instill fear into his target audience, and another that he is using fear to control people to buy something. In the negative responses it is obvious that the respondents are already familiar with LaHaye, though his name is not once mentioned in the videocasts.

The usually linguistically adept LaHaye and Jenkins recede into the background as these videocasts allow the woman alone to deliver the rhetorical message, and it is precisely in what might be seen as her incompetent language use, that her message succeeds. Reacting to Saussure and Chomsky, Bourdieu understands that "the kind of competence that actual speakers possess is not a capacity to generate an unlimited

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[407] Wilson and Arnold, *The Art of Public Speaking*, 13.

sequence of grammatically well formed sentences, but rather a capacity to produce expressions which are appropriate for particular situations, "that is, a capacity to produce expression *á propos.*"[409] If we look at the woman in the videocast we are struck by the fragmentation of her language: sentences are not completed, for example, "the day the nukes . . ." Neither is there concordance between, "There a resistance movement . . ." and, "But there things no one anticipated."

The *practical competence*, "practical sense," by virtue of which actual speakers are able to produce utterances that are appropriate in the circumstances "cannot be derived from or reduced to the competence of Chomsky's ideal speaker."[410] "Their practical competence involves not only the capacity to produce grammatical utterances, *also* the capacity to make oneself heard, believed, obeyed and so on."[411] Rhetorical discourse as described here is more passive in nature, kindling an inner answer, one that initially, at the most, may result in purchase of Left Behind, yet at this stage, an inclination to violence and militarism is unlikely. This can only occur after sustained reading of scriptural texts and the concomitant Left Behind novels, movies and games.

4.2 *Left Behind Tribulation Force*

4.2.1 *Management of Meaning*

Given the copious rhetorical appeals audiences are targeted with, one may ask, "At what point does a person to the appeal in an active way?" Or otherwise put, "How and when does internalisation of the message lead to externalisation by way of forging a new allegiance?" Calling to mind Brummett's rhetorical purposes the first would be "apocalyptic secures the adherence of an audience," and the second, "how apocalyptic moves an already secured audience to accept social and political commitments."[412] In dealing with the first, Brummett cites eclectic scholar, Kenneth Burke,[413] who holds that

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[409] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press, 1992), 7, as in Editor's Introduction.
[410] Bourdieu, *Language,* 7.
[411] Bourdieu, *Language,* 7.
[412] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 11.
[413] Kenneth Burke, *Counter Statement* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1968); Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1965); Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of*

"people turn to discourse to find the symbolic resources necessary to live through troubling or challenging situations."[414] People are able to draw from these discourses patterns all that allows them to order their lives, address their particular situations − in short being outfitted to cope with life's vissicitudes.[415] Essentially Burke's work is that of motivation: discourse provides people with motives that allow them to size up, understand and react to their situations.[416]

In another work, specifically on popular rhetoric, Brummett, oscillates between Burke's "life equipment" as implied above, and Samuel Becker's "mosaic of meaning" which presumes a person moving "sharklike" through a world of "discontinuous and chaotic signs, a mélange of bits, some of them supplied by human beings, some of them natural, some accidental."[417] "As a person moves through this confusion, some of the bits are at any given time brought out of the chaos and put in coherent order, a mosaic of meaning. As situations and the person's attentions change, those ordered bits fly back into the environment and others take their places, forming new coherences. To form bits into these patterns is to make them meaningful, for meaning is always the relationships and forms that order one thing with another."[418]

In this oscillation of concepts, Brummett arrives at "homology" which he describes as the "formal glue holding the actual, perceived components of a mosaic together."[419] These metaphors are useful in analysing Left Behind scripts, such as the one following in terms of both broad rhetorical purposes. Seeing how the members of the Tribulation Force came to a point externalisation becomes the pattern of how audiences will act in a similar situation. Brummett himself does not relate his theories to Left Behind, so the comments in the second column are a personal endeavour in which I comment on rhetorical discourse in Left Behind scripts. I have selected a passage of dialogue from *Left Behind*, chapter 23, which corresponds with adaptations to a scene early in

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Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press,1969), as cited in Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 19-20.

[414] Cited in Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 19-20.

[415] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 19-20.

[416] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 19-20.

[417] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 19-20.

[418] Barry Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 69.

[419] Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions,* 87, and "provide people with equipment for living" on p.109.

Tribulation Force. As previously mentioned, the entire tribulation scenario as a liberally embellished enactment of Revelation 7 spans several volumes of the Left Behind series

TABLE V: THE RHETORICAL STANCE OF LEFT BEHIND

Context	Comment
Very soon after the Rapture, those left behind are dumbfounded and disorientated. Among these are Rayford Steele and his daughter Chloe, Pastor Bruce Barnes and Buck Cameron, all part of a congregation that meet regularly in the New Hope Village Church in a suburb of Chicago.	Brummett sees apocalyptic as stemming from "a sense of unexplained and inexplicable change or crisis, from a sense that received systems of explanation have failed, and from a resulting sense of anomie, disorientation, lawlessness and impending chaos" (Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 23).
Feeling the need to be part of a group, Chloe and Rayford pay a visit to Bruce Barnes. Chloe expresses her desire to join "that group of yours so that get all the stuff from Bruce first hand" (*Left Behind*, 302).	Also, "Apocalyptic appeals to an audience looking above all for a system or order. to counter that loss apocalyptic depicts history as hyper-ordered, as a unitary and interrelated whole moving toward fulfillment in perfection, irresistibly, determined by a plan or structure underlying history," (Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 37).

Dialogue	Comment
Bruce: "God's people are in for dark days. Everybody is. I have been thinking and praying about what we are supposed to do as a church between now and the Glorious Appearing." He points out to Chloe a passage in the Bible showing that Christ will return at the end of the tribulation. Most Christians will be martyred or die from famine, plagues and earthquakes (*Left Behind*, 302).	One might see this text as a typical "What do we do now? experience." Burke's "The Symbol," refers to a text that formally parallels a common pattern of experience… "At a simple level the homology allows The Symbol to comfort and reassure people about their experiences by just expressing them" . . . "The audience identifies with those texts that parallel their own experiences, they see The Symbol" as *relevant* to their experience," (Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions,* 112).
Chloe (smiling) "This isn't funny, but maybe I should have thought of that before I signed on. You are going to have trouble convincing people to join the cause with that in your sign-up brochure" (*Left Behind*, 302).	Bruce's ability to assume leadership for the group by evaluating the situation, thus becoming a model for audiences, exemplifies what Brummett explains as, "The forms into which The Symbol is casts experience also provide subject positions for the audience, kinds of *personae* to be such that the agent is

Bruce (grimacing): "Yes but the alternative is worse. We all messed up the first time around. We could be in heaven right now if we had listened to our loved ones. Dying a horrible death during this period is not my preference, but I'd sure do it this way than while I was lost. Everyone is in danger too. The only difference is that we have one more way to die than they do. As martyrs." (*Left Behind*, 302-303).	ordered into the mosaic as well, providing answers to questions about one's own role in public affairs," (Brummett, *Rhetorical Dimensions,* 112).
Bruce: "We have our core group and Chloe you are welcome to join us if you are serious about total commitment" (*Left Behind*, 303).	By inviting Chloe to join the core group, Bruce makes it clear that her commitment must be a wholehearted one. But he does not do it forcefully. Brummett considers another important dimension of apocalyptic rhetorical appeal: "With varying degrees to specificity and subtlety, one finds contemporary apocalyptic constantly urging its audience to adopt certain political and social issues. Apocalyptic serves not only to reassure an audience, it also serves the *rhetor*, the apocalyptic writer or speaker, as an instrument of ideology. To understand how apocalyptic does this distinctively requires a sensitivity to apocalyptic as rhetoric. (Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 87).

(I will refer to Brummett's views on the relation between grounding text and the rhetor's strategies in the Section 5.) |
Chloe: "What's the option? What you are saying is that there is no room for dabbling." (*Left Behind*, 303).	
Bruce: "You're right. But I have also been thinking of a smaller group within the core. I'm looking for people of unusual intelligence and courage. I don't mean to disparage the sincerity of others in the Church, especially those in the leadership team. But some of them are timid, some old, many infirm. I have been praying about a sort of inner circle of people who want to do more than just survive" (*Left Behind*, 303).	
Rayford: "What are you getting at? Going on the offensive?" (*Left Behind*, 303).	
Bruce: Something like that. "It's one thing to hide in there, studying, figuring out what's going on so we can keep from being deceived. It's great to pray for witnesses to spring up out of Israel and it's nice to know there are other pockets of believers all over the world." "But doesn't part of you want to jump into the battle?" (In the film *Tribulation Force*, where the equivalent of this scene is enacted, Bruce is referring to the witnesses, Moses and Elijah who throughout most of the series act as mentors to the Tribulation Force) (*Left Behind*, 303).	Bruce is looking beyond passive resignation to actually doing something, although as Brummett, writes, "We must first understand that apocalyptic rhetoric does not call for political and social action without claiming that such action can change history. Instead the actions called for are meant to change people so as to prepare them for what history is about to do (*Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 95).
Chloe: "A cause, something not just to die for but to live for. A group, a team, a force." (*Left Behind*, 304).	From this point the Tribulation Force becomes the hub around which Christian response to the Antichrist's forces revolves. The reference by Chloe to Green Berets connotes particular feature of the Tribulation Force: "The US Army has several specialized units, such as Special forces, commonly known as the Green
Bruce: "You've got it. A force," (*Left Behind*, 304).	

Chloe: "And what is it you call this period?" (*Left Behind*, 304).	Berets because of the hat that is part of their uniform, are to take part in raising operations, antiterrorist actions and information gathering. GBs learn the language and customs and culture of a specific region enabling them to operate behind enemy lines" (*Left Behind Interactive Companion,* n.p).
Bruce: "The Tribulation." (*Left Behind*, 304).	
Chloe: "So your little group, inside the group, a sort of Green Berets, would be your Tribulation Force."	Buck joins the staff of Nicolae Carpathia and Rayford, eventually becoming a pilot of Carpathia's airplane, both Buck and Rayford becoming privy to confidential matter in the Antichrist's headquarters.
Bruce: "Tribulation Force. I like it. Make no mistake it won't be fun. It would be the most dangerous cause a person could ever join." (*Left Behind*, 304).	

Bruce then goes on to outline how they will be targeted, only those hiding in basements with their bibles possibly escaping everything but earthquakes and wars. Then refusing or accepting take the mark either as a tattoo or sign on the forehead . . . Does Chloe still want to be part of the Tribulation Force? She firmly replies; "I wouldn't miss it." (*Left Behind*, 304).

In a later meeting Bruce Barnes expresses his apprehension about the impending treaty Carpathia is going to sign with Israel. Buck, who by now gained a sense of leadership and assertiveness, says he doesn't want service he wants action. Bruce shares his idea of ordering a watering tank that will be positioned in a parking lot. He will get excavators to sink it in the ground. The tribulation force would attach the underground shelter to the Church through a hidden passageway, but they would not use it till they had to (*Tribulation Force,* 41-42).

4.2.2 Internalisation and Externalisation

The foregoing passage indicates a discernible move towards externalisation of the Left Behind master frame, which having secured the adherence of an audience, now moves an already secured audience to accept further social and political commitments. Yet, O'Leary's observation of Hal Lindsey's books holds for those of LaHaye and Jenkins as well. O'Leary contends that while Lindsey's reformulation of the apocalyptic *topoi* certainly achieved a degree of success, any critical evaluation of the significance of his work must depend on how this success is measured and defined. Rhetorical success is clearly best understood as the ability to reach and persuade an audience; however, the meaning of success will differ as we turn from considering the text's implied audience to the actual audience of those who came into contact with its message, and even with this audience. O'Leary does not refer to the possibility of the "answer within" referred

to by Wilson and Arnold.[420] Although Lindsey's achievement in reaching the historical audience can be measured in millions of books sold, it is impossible to determine how many people actually read these books, let alone the number that were persuaded by them.[421] It is quite conceivable that in spite of the staggering sales figures of the Left Behind novels, the implied audience is in fact smaller, and that of those that have internalised the message, even less are motivated towards social and political commitments, let alone a theology of extermination, as intimated by the novels. Such motivation, may, however, be stimulated by further reading and participation in the video game *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*. I suspend the analysis of this game until an examination of the rhetor's strategies has been carried out.

5. THE RHETOR'S STRATEGIES

We have seen how apocalyptic rhetoric as woven into the text of Left Behind produce scripts which in turn are replicated real-life situations of audiences − as it happened in the lives of Pastor Bruce and Chloe so it will in theirs. We turn now to rhetor, who as author and speaker attempts to secure a response to the biblical text with select rhetorical strategies. However, Brummett insists apocalyptic rhetoric must firstly be understood in terms of how it uses its grounding text.[422]

> With the text as ultimate justification, the contemporary apocalyptist claims unique insight into history's plan, but it is always an insight inspired and justified by, and thus grounded, in a text that the audience will revere and accept as indisputable. For religious apocalyptic, as already cited, the grounding text will be one of more of the scriptures of the religion, for secular apocalyptic the grounding text will be the assertion of natural law governing the domain in question, or it will be a widely revered secular text. Ultimately, the political and social claims made by apocalyptic rhetoric are secured in the grounding texts.[423]

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[420] Wilson and Arnold, *The Art of Public Speaking*, 234.

[421] O' Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse,* 169.

[422] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 99. In Chapter 2 of this thesis reference was made to Brummett's identification of grounding texts, those texts – either scriptural or secular – that apocalyptic rhetoric urges political and social actions upon its audience. LaHaye and Jenkins in *Are we living in the End Times?* do not refer to the passages mentioned earlier as grounding texts; but they do refer to five of these as "primary texts" referring to the Rapture and the Glorious Appearing, namely John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; and Corinthians 15:50-58; Matthew 24; 27-31 and Revelation 19: 11-20:6.

[423] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 99-100.

On this point, Brummett would be in agreement with O'Leary who argues that full appreciation of the significance of apocalyptic discourse cannot be reached without attention to specific argumentative and interpretive practices. "For it is through argument and interpretation that the symbolic content of any myth can be appropriated by a given audience."[424] Further to this O'Leary points out that in terms of discourse the claims of most apocalyptic evangelists, "are founded not on charismatic authority of the prophet granted a divine vision, but on the (ostensible) rational authority of the one who interprets canonical scripture."[425] Yet as O'Leary emphasises, analyses fail if they do not distinguish between prophetic and interpretive discourse and therefore miss the principal strategy at work in modern apocalyptic, namely that discourse operates rhetorically by linking the "rational" with the "oracular voice."[426] Such an analysis, in his mind, has the potential of "casting new light on the age-old debate over the relationship of logical to mythical thought."[427]

While Brummett underscores the primary role of the grounding text, he does not discount the charismatic authority of the rhetor; he proposes a number of strategies that the rhetor can employ to "heighten his or her credibility through the grounding text."[428] The rhetor claims a special or hitherto unrecognised knowledge of history's plan, which "once known by the audience becomes clear to any observer, regardless of level of education, intelligence or interpretive acuity."[429] Yet, one must be in possession of the key, one must understand how to link the grounding text with signs and wonders in the present, and the apocalyptic rhetor provides that knowledge.[430] Looking at the sheer volume of the LB Corpus there will be no lack of such evidence. The apocalyptic rhetor comes to the audience with "the disclosure of a secret, attesting to the disclosure of the existence and influence of the unseen."[431] LaHaye differs from some apocalyptic rhetors, particularly those who claim visionary experiences in that he is not disclosing a secret – the rapture is no secret, and as he asserts, taught as far back as Pseudo-Ephrem

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[424] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse,* 12-13.
[425] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse,* 13.
[426] O' Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 13.
[427] O' Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 13.
[428] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 100.
[429] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 100.
[430] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 100.
[431] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 100.

in AD 372 (sic), but obscured and through a succession of dispensationalist teachers, himself being one, have retrieved the rapture teaching from obscurity and distortion thus bringing hope to millions.[432]

Next, the rhetor "borrows the credibility of the grounding text in claiming attention as the one who can tell what Revelation or Daniel has to do with us, not as one to whom God has directly revealed history's plan."[433] The contemporary rhetor must depict himself or herself as learned, scholarly, or expert enough to interpret the grounding text and lay claim to its credibility; apocalyptic rhetoric thus takes pains to establish the credibility and credentials of the author"[434] It has become evident that LaHaye is meticulous in establishing his credibility as a scholar, researcher and teacher. Besides years of authoring many books, he has been a pastor, and with colleague Dr Thomas Ice founded the Pre-Trib Research Centre[435] in response to attack by a growing number of Bible teachers on the Tribunational view of the rapture and literal interpretation of prophecies. The PTRC sponsored the annual study group meetings since that time, and there are over 200 members comprised of top prophecy scholars, authors, Bible teachers and prophecy students. This profile adds to LaHaye's credibility, as does repeated mention of the sales figures, also by critics and commentators.

However, LaHaye asserts his own credibility at the expense of anyone who does not accept PMD. In *How to Study Prophecy by Yourself,* he gives this warning: "The book you are now reading will give you a working knowledge of the basics of Bible prophecy and the study of future things. It will equip you to answer the false teachers that are popping up everywhere. Even more important, it will help you straighten out the thinking of the many people you meet who are being deceived by them."[436]

Next, the "apocalyptist emerges as a leader often a charismatic one, for followers of his or her discourse."[437] Brummett states Harrison's argument that "a prophet or messiah is usually necessary to give the movement coherence" – "He is the bearer of millenarian ideas, his presence gives them a sense of immediacy."[438] LaHaye, on

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[432] LaHaye, *The Rapture, Who will Face the Tribulation?* 43-44.
[433] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 101.
[434] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 101.
[435] LaHaye, *The Rapture: Who will Face the Tribulation?* (frontispiece)
[436] LaHaye, *How to Study Bible Prophecy for Yourself*, 9.
[437] Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Discourse*, 101.
[438] Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 101.

account of his pastoring, authoring and teaching career already referred to, has risen to celebrity status in the oeuvre of PMD. He appears on talk shows, affably grants interviews[439] and signs his books for buyers yet always commanding authority on the basis of the grounding texts he adheres to. However, he has been criticised within, and, to a measure, outside Evangelicalism for his perceived intolerance, duplicity and associations which are never mentioned in the usual biographical sketches in his books, for example, his association with the controversial Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

A characteristic, mentioned by Brummett[440] one that is more complex to identify in LaHaye, is that of the use of typology, a method of interpreting the New Testament from the Old Testament by finding prophetic predictions, foreshadowings, emblems, or types and finding in later scriptures or history the fulfillment of those types, their antitypes.[441] The strategy of typology is thus one of "connecting, of linking events and grounding texts, so as to reveal a determined and telic history."[442] LaHaye idiosyncratically uses typology in his interpretation of passages in the book of Daniel. Historicist antipapal sentiments are alluded to in his works, yet as a futurist, he takes a freer hand in identifying the antichrist, and in believing in the rapture he is distinct from historicism which rejects such a teaching.[443] LaHaye and Ice's, *Charting the End Times,* attests to a curious application of typological interpretation. Whereas historicists interpret the seven churches referred in Revelation 3 as a template for the Church in

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[439] See Nicholas Guyatt, *Have a Nice Doomsday* (Reading: Ebury Press, 2008), 3-9, 245-77.

[440] Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 104.

[441] Typological interpretation was employed by Abbot Joachim of Fiore, a former Cistercian monk who lived in the twelfth-century C.E. in Calabria, Italy. The core of his method is *Concordia,* which shows the historical concordance between the unfolding of history in the Old Testament and that in the New Testament. "We define *concordia* correctly as a similarity, equality and proportion of the Old and New Testaments. I call it an equality of number but not of dignity, when, of some likeness, one person and another person, one order and another order, one war and another war seem to gaze into each other's faces," cited byMarjorie Reeves in B McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius. Adso of Montier-en Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), 102. This definition is the essence of typology, a foundation well established in the Old Testament, repeated in the New and rediscovered and applied in the 5th century B.C.E. by the Antiochan School, of which John Chrysostum was a leading exponent and again during the Reformation is still the hermeneutic on which Historicism has been built, though the Antiochan School would not have developed the predictive dimension in the same way.

[442] Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,*105.

[443]A historicist such as Reed, *Left Behind Answered Verse by Verse.* n.p. writes, "No, the use of 'beasts' in scriptural imagery consistently to represent governments – whether imperial Rome or papal power or a revived Roman empire or other Gentile world powers – argues against Left Behind's attempt to find fulfillment of this passage in 'a sort of bronzy iron thingie' of Nicolae Carpathia." See also Steve Wohlberg, *End Time Delusions: The Rapture, the Antichrist, Israel, and the End of the World* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image. 2004), 57, for a negation of Left Behind's futurist construct that places Carpathia, rather than the papal institution, already identified during the Reformation, as the antichrist emerging after the Rapture.

seven historical ages. LaHaye and Ice link each of the churches with seven parabolic references to the kingdom of God in the gospel of Matthew.[444]

A final strategy is that of transfer – in which a "contemporary rhetor wishing to borrow the prestige of the ancient apocalyptic grounding will begin a discourse or passage with heavy use of grounding and will gradually introduce progressively more secular and modern references until the rhetor is established as a credible figure in his or her own right."[445] In his *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Lindsey begins each chapter with a brief quotation from a range of secular authorities such as Demosthenes, T.S. Eliot, Hegel, David Ben Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Albert Einstein, Robert Oppenheimer, John Kennedy, Pope Paul VI, and finally Christ himself.[446] LaHaye[447] is more restrained in this rhetorical strategy, but there are examples from two chapters in *Mind Siege*:

9

Humanists Control America

The [secular] humanistic system of values has now become the predominant way of thinking in most of the power centers of society.[448]

JAMES C. DOBSON

8

Humanism is a Religion

Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant.[449]

JOHN DEWEY

Where LaHaye differs from the rhetor Brummett describes is that he does not link the grounding text to statements that are not explicitly in those texts, nor does he "slide"

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[444] See LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times,* 49: Ephesus = the Sower (Mt 13:3-9; Smyrna =Wheat and Tares (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43; Pergamos = Mustard Seed (Mt 13:31-32); Thyatira = Leaven (Mt 13:33-35); Sardis + Treasure Hid (Mt 13:44); Philadelphia - Pearl (Mt 13: 45-46); Laodicea = Dragnet (Mt 13:47-50).

[445] Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 132-133.

[446] This is a condensation of Brummett's text. See full text in Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric,* 133.

[447] Tim LaHaye, *Mind Siege* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001).

[448] LaHaye, *Mind Siege,* 173.

[449] LaHaye, *Mind Siege,* 155.

out of the sacred grounding texts explicitly into secular pronouncements. In citing James Dobson, he is appealing to an authority on family life that will endorse the family values he wishes to stress. However, in the second example, La Haye cites a figure he vehemently opposes, namely John Dewey, and in doing so, he in effect strengthens his own point of view and diminishes that of his opponent.

6. LEFT BEHIND: ETERNAL FORCES

6.1 Basic Information

As an introduction, Troy Lyndon, co-founder of Left Behind Games, in *The Game Manual of Left Behind Eternal Forces: The PC Game*, states that "video games no longer have to enter into a dark world." [450] "We have created an alternative you will find just as exciting of an adventure . . . similar to an Indiana Jones' real-life story." Some of the most relevant factors for prospective gamers and analysts are the following:

- Left Behind: Eternal Forces is a Real Time Strategy game where the player controls forces from a "vantage point high above the action." Players do not personally participate in the action but command units to perform tasks by giving orders via the game interface. [451]

- There are three basic groups in involved in the game, namely the Tribulation Force (the good guys), Global Community (the bad guys) and Neutrals who "haven't allied with anyone yet. [452]

- "The single player game is played from the perspective of the Tribulation Force – the "good guys." "However, in a multiplayer it is possible to switch sides and play as the 'bad guys' – the Global Community Peacekeepers." [453]

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[450] Troy Lyndon, *The Game Manual of Left Behind Eternal Forces: The PC Game* (Left Behind Games, 2006), 2.

[451] Lyndon, *The Game Manual*, 9.

[452] Lyndon, *The Game Manual*, 23. Tribulation Force characters are encircled in Green and Global Community of Peacekeepers characters in red. Neutrals consisting of a Civilian Man, a Civilian Woman, and a Friend have a grey stripe above their heads.

[453] Lyndon, *The Game Manual*, 22.

6.2 The Outline

6.2.1 The Opening Video

TABLE VI: LEFT BEHIND: ETERNAL FORCES: THE OPENING VIDEO

Scene	Music	Comment
An eclipsed earth throwing off sparks moves across the screen. Two angels bear up the body of the young woman in repose, with a few flowers in her crossed-over hands.	Left Behind soundtrack "Amazing Grace" by Tata Vega or "Take you back" by Jeremy Camp "Strong Tour" by Rutless "I need you" by Smokie Norful	As a framework the introductory video with the voice over serves to communicate to the player that this is no ordinary entertainment but a matter of eternal importance, ignored at the player's own peril.
Zooms in on a replica of Michelangelo's creation of man. Scenes from American history scroll over screen …1621…1776…1830…1861 … 1965 Husband and wife kneeling in prayer at the side of their bed. A group of criminals, one with tattoo on the back of his neck, stands in front of a pillar scribbled over with graffiti under an overarching highway.	**Voice Over** "Throughout history men and women have chosen one of three paths: Those who daily seek relationship with God; Those unbelievers and believers who don't seek after God and those who choose to ignore God.	The pictures will going on revolving unless the player, after one further shot, that of a group of youngsters in a New York point a dazzling light in the sky, makes a choice to either play a tutorial, of which there are three levels, follow a storyline or review game options. Strong binary opposites reinforce the conflict between good and bad.
An hourglass hurtles forward through a passage in clouds. Shots of the Eiffel Tower and charred vehicles in the foreground and London Bridge, No humans are sighted anywhere.	And as the prophets foretold God will come to take his people. No one knows the day or hour. Without any warning all infants and children and many people will disappear. Terror and confusion will reign the world over. For those left behind the apocalypse has just begun."	Overall, the synchronisation of texts, images, sound and penetrating voice of the speaker succeed in creating for the game player an extreme sense of urgency and even melancholy.

TABLE VII: LEFT BEHIND: ETERNAL FORCES: THE MISSIONS

Mission 1 – Back to New York
"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" (Eph 6:12).

Video clips
• A father and his young son throw a ball to one another in a New York street. The ball goes over the father's head and when he, after turning around to retrieve it, sees a flash and his son is gone. • A very depressed man, flipping through a magazine sits at a diner drinking coffee. A hearty waitress says he needs a "big hug from God." A flash and the waitress is gone. The man drops his cup of coffee. • A vagrant is given a free hotdog by a kindly vendor. As the vagrant devours the hotdog the vendor disappears, his shoes, shirt, trousers and cap lying in a heap on the sidewalk. • Chaos ensues as cars pile up and people scuttle around shrieking, "Oh my God!" 18 months later . . . • Adam Brink a news reporter facing the crowds, refers to Nicolae Carpathia as the man of peace . . . "We are thankful for his leadership and commitment to freeing us from the bondage of religion." • After close up shots of the impressive GCP headquarters and GCP forces standing on guard. Carpathia arrives in a limousine and is taken up to his office. He stands gazing out of the window and with a smirch says, "This is MY time."

Your Journey Begins
From this point the game starts, the goal being to assist Leonard, "a friend," who has travelled all over the globe and has now returned to New York from Ecuador. Specifically Leonard's objective is to meet his friend Brad Clayton and to meet Taylor inside the Church.

Location	**Action**	**Comment**
On the one corner is Liberty Travel. One road is shut off by three charred buses, presumably not cleared away after the rapture. In normal camera view, which can be shifted up and down and sideways, the player can walk the characters through the streets in accomplishing his or her mission by zooming in and out of the location and moving along the streets as demarcated. On the interface panel at the bottom of the screen is a mini-map of 500 square meters of New	In going after his objective, Leonard finds it more difficult than he thought. When he asks a civilian about Brad he gets a rude answer. "Don't talk to me. I don't know you and you don't know me. So leave me alone." As he moves further a weird voice calls out: "Beware of the evil musicians. If you get too close to them they will play their screaming guitars to get you on their side." A woman warns him not to go down a street because of the	This first mission serves to familiarise the player with the protocols of the game and to instill its essential dynamic – to gain spirit points by prayer, or to lose spirit points by harming anyone intentionally. The eerie characters and the malevolent poisoning units in the streets of New York foreground the evil forces still to come.

York. However, the map is covered in "war fog," a patch of light showing the whereabouts of the scene on the larger screen.	"gangs hang out there." Unless Leonard keeps pushing up his spirit points with prayer he will not be able to withstand the horde of units that descend on him to poison him (that is spiritually). If his spirit points drop below 60 he falls down and the game must be restarted.	

Only when Leonard has met his objective, and this could take countless attempts, can the player move to the next mission and so over the remaining missions, forty in all. Every mission requires that Tribulation Force builds up its units by building a Bank, Clinic, Mission Training Center, Chapel, Home, Combat Training Centre, Café, Food Court, Food Warehouse. For this are needed various levels of Builders, the Evangelists, the Missionary; Influencers – Musician, Praiser, Worship Leader, Prayer Warrior; Healers – a Healer, Nurse and Doctor; Soldiers – Soldier, Special Forces soldier, Elite Forces Soldier, Spy.

The Global Community Peacekeepers has its own team consisting of Influencers – Secularists; Builders; Healers – the Medic, Nurse and Doctor; Musicians – Level 1 Musician, Band Member/Recording Artist, Rock Star, Pop Star; Soldiers − Soldier, Special Forces soldier, Elite Forces Soldier, Spy. Pretenders – Level 1 Pretender, the Street Performer, the Activist, the Cult Leader; Criminals – the Thief, the Thug, the Gang Boss.

As the storylines advance the foggy and deserted streets are overrun with troops from both sides and in an almost carnival spirit lit up with the white flares from the Tribulation Force mingling with the orange ones of the GCP helicopters hover over the streets, turrets are set up on the sidewalks and Humvees and tanks move up and down. Corpses lie underfoot – the females as if in peaceful sleep. On their sides, ankles together and skirts below the knees.

The horned and cloven-foot demon may arrive on the scene and attack units of the Tribulation Force. He is described as being vile, enormously powerful and thoroughly wicked – these demons revel in the destruction they inflict upon this world and feed on evils committed here (Lyndon, *Game Manual*, 51). It is cautioned that only the most powerful spiritual warfare teams should even consider taking on such a malevolent thing. Even so, it is quite likely that casualties will be suffered. Other Evil spirits with special abilities that may attack the Tribulation force is the Lost Soul (Cry of Despair), the Evil Spirit (possession, Imp (Burning Touch, Swarms), Death Demon (Riot, affliction.)

One of the many scenes portrays a semi-circle of Tribulation Force members, each glowing as they bow their heads and put their hands together. A few meters away a soldier points a rifle at a man who drops down at his feet. (Unless provoked, a soldier loses spirit points which he can regain afterwards by prayer.)

Two of the most controversial aspects of the game are (1) The white ambulance with the blue 911 painted on its roof – apparently since the first version replaced by a newer model. (2) The exclamation, "Praise the Lord!" – this emanates as the attack button on the interface is pressed, and can also be heard from units other than soldiers.

6.2.3 Video Game Theory and Procedural Rhetoric

Playing a Real Time Strategy game such as LB: EF is strikingly different to reading a Left Behind novel or viewing a film or videocast. However, much the reader/viewer is drawn into the fictive world which although constructive of meaning, is a pre-manufactured object which can only be consumed with a certain amount of passivity. Certainly the video game has also been programmed but requires the player to activate the narrative which can strike out in more than one direction. What kind of rhetoric are we dealing with here?

Rachel Wagner, first putting game play into context, writes that video games, like traditional apocalypses,[454] can be viewed as revelatory literature with a "narrative framework," about an otherwordly location and a human recipient.[455] Video games invite players to actively enter a "world accessible to the player only through the medium of the video game console. Games even exhibit the characteristic dualisms of apocalypses in their presentation of the player-protagonist, sometimes with helpers, in a battle against fierce and often deadly opponents."[456]

"If we think of God as a programmer, then God is the producer of the set of choices we have in history which is played out according to a set of rules that God designed. Apocalypses are augmented by a sense of determinism . . . by affirming that the course of history or the structure of the cosmos was determined a long time ago."[457]

Calling to mind that players of the PC game, Solitaire, often sense that no matter what choices they make they cannot win the game as it has been programmed to throw out one 10 after the other while holding back all the 2s till the end of the game, thus blocking the required sequences. The same principle applies in video-game theory where this notion of control is called *procedural rhetoric*, which game, Ian Bogost, defines as those processes that define the way things work; the methods, techniques,

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[454] Rachel Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse" offers a Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) definition of an apocalypse: "An apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which the manner of revelation is described. This always involves an otherworldly mediator and a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal in so far as it envisages eschatological it involves another, supernatural world."

[455] J.J. Collins, ed. "Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14, (1979): 9.

[456] J.J. Collins, cited in Rachel Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse."

[457] John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 40.

and logics that drive the operation of systems. "Thus the gods who determine our set of choices in a video game consist of the team of programmers and designers who put it together."[458] Arthur Asa Burger notes that "in a game the player's feeling that he or she is in control is only an illusion. Every choice and its attendant consequences, has already been placed in the story by the programmers, writers, and artists who created the game."[459]

Wagner, however, notes that video games exhibit "one markedly important difference in comparison to their ancient counterparts in their typical depiction of agency in the end times."[460] "In traditional apocalypses, visionaries look forward to rewards for the faithful and punishment for the wicked as enacted by God. Even righteous beings act in synergism with God or angelic hosts, *not* on their own. In traditional apocalypses, God alone is in control of salvation."[461] Wagner continues to drive the point home that "agency is situated squarely with the player," who may seek assistance from guides, but ultimately has to "enact salvation by himself or herself, often in dramatically violent form."[462]

> This messianic purpose is easiest see in popular first-person shooter games like *Halo and Resistance: Fall of Man* and also *Left Behind: Eternal Forces,* the Christian produced PC video game. Despite its assumption of God as in charge of on earth, it also up to humans alone (and the single player in particular) to enact God's charge on earth. There are no supernatural agents to assist us; rather we are more likely to see demonic and evil forces fighting us as we battle single-handed against them.[463]

However, Wagner realises that a video-game is only that − a game: "Death in video games is temporary not permanent − thus salvation is also temporary or perhaps even imagined. Worlds visited are transient. Enemies defeated are not real. When one turns off the game and returns to one's daily life, the same hardship, the same problems, the same doubts remain."[464] However, even if, as Wagner suggests "worlds are transient"

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[458] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Video Games* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 3.
[459] Arthur Asa Berger, *Media Analysis Techniques* (3rd ed.; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 191.
[460] Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse," n.p
[461] Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse," n.p.
[462] Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse," n.p.
[463] Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse," n.p.
[464] Wagner, "Xbox Apocalypse," n.p

and death imagined there exists in LB: EF a discrete discourse that can only be discerned by probing its source, the Left Behind novels.

6.3 LB: *EF A Theology of Extermination?*

Having analysed the game and reviewed some theories on video game playing, one can better judge to what extent the discourse, of LB: EF can be said to foster a theology of extermination. Neiwert aptly defines the word he uses, "eliminationism," as "a politics and a culture that shuns dialogue and the democratic exchange of ideas in favor of the pursuit of outright elimination of the opposing side, either through suppression, exile, and ejection, or extermination"[465] Following on the internal logic of a system of consistent literalism, with its prophecy component, within a Common Sense Realism framework, linguistic phenomena is equated with sensible realities outside the text, added to which the rationale of Just War Theory.[466] The actions of Tribulation Force must by necessity oppose the evil forces. To counter this is to by default is become a follower of Antichrist, the ultimate in "bad guy." [467]

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[465] David Neiwert, *The Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right* (Sansalito, CA: PoliPointPress 2009), 11.

[466] Just War Thesis, as referred to by Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003) 56-57, "derives from the fourth-century bishop Ambrose of Milan, who within a new political social framework set out the theological and moral justification for the use of violence under certain conditions. Ambrose believed that the stories of the God-sanctioned wars of Hebrew scriptures provided the divine authorisation that allowed him to bypass the predominantly pacifist message of the gospels, and so to justify the use of military force even to subdue those challenged what they regarded as orthodox Christian beliefs." His fellow bishop and one time student, Augustine of Hippo, developed the Ambrosian doctrine on the use of force but rejected outright violence for its own sake or for revenge. Only "right motives and in proportion to the threat posed by an unlawful perpetrator," could justify the use of violence. See also James Turner Johnson and John Kelsey, *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

[467] It is not possible here to give a detailed account of the origin of belief in the Antichrist. However, in terms of the binary opposites "good guy" and "bad guy" reference to a medieval concept is apposite. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London: Pimlico, 2004), 84-85, illustrates that symmetrical to the image of an eschatological Messiah is an eschatological Enemy, the Antichrist. "As 'good father' and 'good son,' are fused so are the images of bad son and bad father. As the 'son of perdition' Antichrist is in every way a demonic counterpart to the Son God. It was his birth that was to usher in the last days; men waited tensely for tidings of the mysterious and ominous nativity at Babylon." According to Cohn the Antichrist, in his relation to God the Father, defiantly and rebelliously tries to frustrate the intentions of the father and even dares to usurp the father's place and to ape his authority. In his relation to human beings, on the other hand, antichrist as father can hardly be distinguished from Satan himself; he protects his devilish brood, but to the Saints he is "an atrocious father, deceitful, masking evil intentions with fair words, a cunning tyrant who when crossed becomes a cruel and murderous persecutor. He has supernatural power, works miracles but since his power is not of the Spirit no radiance comes from him, like Satan he is the Beast who ascends from the bottomless pit, he is an earthbound monster out of whose mouth come unclean frogs, scorpions and other familiar symbols of earth and dirt." See also

Now, many Christians confess an expectation of the Second Coming of Christ, preceded by the advent of an Antichrist. However, they part ways with PMDs in how end-times events are configured; by refraining from preoccupation with end-time timetables, they rather actualise the consolations and encouragement the book of Revelation offers to Christian suffering under oppressive regimes. Conservative Christians, not of PMD orientation, are concerned about prevailing secularism, take a pro-life stance to issues such as abortion, but prohibit bombing of pro-choice clinics or killing of medical staff active in these. However, by supporting peace initiatives, entering into dialogue, respecting religious freedom, those Christians fail the litmus test. Syllogistically it could be phrased, "Christians work for peace; The Antichrist promises peace therefore by working for peace Christians are followers of Antichrist."

By virtue of the internal logic of PMD reflected in LB: EF, the Tribulation Force, being a defence against the forces of evil, the stated aim of the game is "Save as many people from the clutches of the antichrist as possible. Your purpose is absolutely NOT to wipe out the enemy forces. Remember, those PEOPLE he has deceived and can be recruited."[468] It is not stated, as critical reviewers have intimated, that the Tribulation Force are to go out and kill Jews, Catholics, Muslims and gays and non born-again Christians. Such a blatant statement would be considered as ill-advised even by more prejudiced producers than Left Behind Games.

In an interview, Tom Horn, puts it to Greg Baumann that "critics say that this game reflects a black-and-white polarisation of good and evil. Anybody who is not Christian – whether they be Jew, Muslim, Hindu, whatever is faced with a single choice. Convert to Christianity or be killed by Christians." Baumann's reply is that there is no mention of any religious groups in the game: "Those saying that the game (or the book series for that matter) targets certain groups because they were left behind only need to look at what group the four main characters which were left behind fit into 'Protestant Christians.' The Neutrals are just that – no affiliation to anything."[469] The implication of

Richard Kenneth Emmerson. *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Ancient Apocalypticism, Art and Literature*. (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1981), 19: "The peculiar fascination that medieval Christians felt for the figure of Antichrist is probably due to to his effective parody of Christ. Antichrist 'son of the devil,' deceptively imitates Christ, the son of God."

[468] Lyndon, *Game Manual*, 26.

[469] Horn, Tom "Left Behind Games Hosts Conference Call, Answers Tom Horn's Questions Sep 13th, 2006 [Cited 18 December, 2008] Online: RaidersNewsNetwork_com – Breaking News, U_S_,

this statement is that if Neutral should become a Christian, he or she would be on God's side and therefore receive salvation. For "everybody else," and this would include this would include Atheists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus etc.) who being drawn to the Antichrist have the potential for being destroyed by the game's Christian commandos.[470]

So while LB:EF acknowledges the identity of "everybody else" without demonisation of any group in particular, the novels embellish these, sometimes more overtly, other times more veiled, but always in the flexible rhetoric discourse which has come to characterise the Left Behind novels. A peculiar strategy employed in the Left Behind novels is to let names and surnames signify meaning, and this characterisation becomes a prelude to a rhetoric of violence and combat. The main characters, already present in the novels, are the Tribulation Force (Good Guys) consisting of Rayford Steele, Cameron (Buck) Williams, Chloe Williams and Bruce Barnes. The Opposition (Bad Guys) consists of Pontifex Maximus (Peter Mathews), Jim Hickman, Steve Plank, Dr Samuel Kline. What the Game Manual omits about these characters can be found in the novels, the character of Peter Mathews serving as an example of one who embodies everything outside of the pale of PMD.

All that the game manual mentions is that the nuns at Mathews's all-boys school noticed early on that Peter was an unusual child. Though he was intelligent and was great in sports and drama his main gift was with people. "More than one Sister said that he had a great future in the world of politics. And they were right."[471] More specifically in the novels, Mathews is Pontifex Maximus, the self-appointed Peter II (the former Catholic Archbishop of Cincinnati, Ohio) who helps secure Carpathia's domination by overseeing the development of Enigma Babylon, a One World Religion that complements Carpathia's One World Government and One World Economy.[472] This might not be seen as a demonisation of Catholics as Mathews is described as a "former Catholic," thus in a class apart, yet the boundary between traditional and renegade pontiffs is blurred in the post-rapture period. Explicit anti-papal sentiment is expressed in LaHaye's non-fictional works. Yet, neither should critical comment imply

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World, Science, and Mystery.mht

[470] Horn, "Left Behind Games" n.p

[471] Lyndon, *Game Manual*, 11.

[472] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Nicolae*, 282.

demonisation if the parties engage in ethically based apologetics and respectful dialogue. This is not LaHaye and Jenkins's intention but they do concede that the world religions could only unite once the true believers in the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, liberal Protestantism and the evangelical church are raptured.[473]

However, in a first interview Buck capitalises on the disappearance of the previous pope, who had been installed just a few months before the vanishings, in extracting doctrinal statements from Archbishop Mathews. The raptured pope stirred up controversy in the church with a new doctrine that seemed to coincide more with the "heresy" of Martin Luther than with the historic orthodoxy they were used to.[474] Ignorant of the rapture teaching, Mathews's understanding is that "those who opposed the orthodox teaching of the Mother Church were winnowed out from among us."[475] "The Scripture says that in the last days it will be as in the days of Noah. And you'll recall that in the days of Noah, the good people remained and the evil ones were washed away."[476] Sadly, for the archbishop his sister and aunt were among those raptured who had left the church, and since "'opposing the teaching'" they were separated as chaff from the wheat."[477]

By asking the archbishop to comment on certain passages of Scripture, primarily Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast," Buck gets a desired response: "Now you see this is precisely my point. People have been taking verses like that out of context for centuries and trying to build doctrine on them."[478]When Buck says that that there are other passages like other those,"[479] Mathews replies "I understand that, but, listen, you're not Catholic, are you?" "No, sir," replies Buck "Well, see, you don't understand the broad sweep of the historical church,"

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[473] See LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant*, 229. Six years into the rapture, when the remnant of Christians live in tents and caves in Petra, a new character is introduced, namely, Luis. Having spent several years as a student in the United States he had had enough exposure to campus ministry groups that when he returned to Argentina and suffered through the disappearances, he knew exactly what had happened. He and some friends from childhood raced to their little Catholic Church, where hardly anyone was left. Their favorite priest and catechism teacher were gone too. But from literature they found in the library they learned how to trust Christ personally. Soon they were the nucleus of the new body of believers in that area.[473]

[474] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 62.

[475] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 62.

[476] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 62.

[477] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 62.

[478] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 64.

[479] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 64.

[480] to which Buck again replies, "Excuse me, but explain to me why so many non-Catholics are still here, if your hypothesis is right."[481] "God knows," Archbishop said. "He knows hearts. He knows more than we do"[482] to which Buck says, "That's for sure." [483]

"Of course Buck left his personal comments and opinions out of the article, but he was able to work in the Scripture and the archbishop's attempt to explain away the doctrine of grace. Buck planned to transmit the finished article to the Global Weekly offices in New York on Monday."[484]

Buck emerges as the victor over the stammering Mathews and as Fred Clark puts it: ". . . the poor archbishop was constructed and inserted here entirely for the purpose of this anti-works-righteousness rant in defense of thoughts-righteousness, so he's not meant to be anything more than a straw-man embodiment of the worst evangelical fantasies about what it is that deluded Catholics believe."[485]

In terms of prejudice against modernistic scholars, the character of Mathews doubles up as yet another foe of the faith, namely modernism. In a second interview by Buck, Mathews states that Revelation is "wonderful, archaic, beautiful literature, to be taken symbolically, figuratively, metaphorically." When asked about those who interpret the book of Revelation literally, Mathews responds, "But these are the same holdovers from your rightwing, fanatical, fundamentalist factions who have always taken the Bible literally, including the myths of Adam, Eve, and Noah, and that only he and his three sons and their wives survived to begin the entire human race as we know it."[486]

Prejudice against Jews is less overt in the Left Behind texts. However, Sherryl Mleynek who having examined the novels' "layered rhetoric," concludes that the Left Behind series "displaces all cultural and religious pluralism, and that through its layered rhetoric announces its underlying anti-Semitic assumptions."[487]

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[480] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 64.
[481] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 64.
[482] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 64.
[483] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force*, 64.
[484] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 64-65.
[485] Fred Clark, Slacktivist, 12 June 2009, [cited 14 June 2009] Online: slactivist.typepad.com
[486] La Haye and Jenkins, *Nicolae,* 306-307.
[487] Mleynek, "Rhetoric of the Jewish Problem,"367.

Given the history of denial of the memory of the Shoah experience and attitudes to the "Jewish problem" she sees the Left Behind series as, "*de facto,* post-Holocaust writing, one which can "neither evade, nor escape its post-Holocaust moral facticity."[488] It is this evasion, or eluding, in the Left Behind series, Mleynek believes, that compels one to examine the Left Behind rhetoric: "We pose to ourselves this question: is there, or ought there to be, a moral or ethical aesthetic self-discipline, or restraint, exercised when writing about the Jews after the Shoah? To what extent can Jewish history be fictionalised without becoming, de facto, Holocaust denial?"[489]

> The Left Behind books implicitly foreground the "Jewish problem" by making Jewish conversion the *sine qua non* of the Second Coming. If the Jews (continue to) resist conversion, and (again) do not recognise the Messiah, they betray humanity by preventing the Second Coming. If they convert, they, themselves, become the "ultimate" solution to the "Jewish problem" – erasure.[490]

Interrogating the novels' rhetoric, Mleynek finds it is "layered," implying 'a verbal archeology of intolerant attitudes toward Jews and other non-Christians." She identifies the rhetorical strategy in the series as depending on "effectively suppressing one meaning by privileging another – "the rhetoric is the verbal equivalent of a background/foreground phenomenon, and the authors seem to assume most readers will notice only the foregrounded meaning.[491] Mleynek notes that the Anti-Christ (sic) utters the phrase "Jewish Problem" twice, thus giving the authors an opportunity to repeat this "anti-Semitic term."[492] An uninformed reader, oblivious to the rhetorical construction of anti-Semitic stereotypes and attitudes could easily read the novels without noticing the arcane implications of language.[493] While Mleynek's comments apply to the Left Behind novels, one can assume that anti-Semitism is nascent in LB: EF.

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[488] Mleynek, "Rhetoric of the Jewish Problem," 369-370.
[489] Mleynek, "Rhetoric of the Jewish Problem," 369-370.
[490] Mleynek, "Rhetoric of the Jewish Problem," 374.
[491] Mleynek, "Rhetoric of the Jewish Problem," 374.
[492] The passage Mleynek refers to is in LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant*, 397. "It seemed to Chang that Carpathia was less concerned about water and heat because neither plague had affected him personally. What occupied most of his time was the failure, particularly in Israel, of his master plan for taking care of the 'Jewish problem.' In many other countries, the persecutions had had relative success. But of the 144,000 evangelists, those assigned to the Holy Land had had tremendous success seeing the undecided become believers."
[493] An example of how, according to Mleynek, the layered rhetoric functions occurs in the opening of the first book, *Left Behind* a miraculous event occurs in Israel. The Russians attack the Israelis; the Israelis are spared, the Russians destroyed. This is an opportunity, not at odds with the plot, for the authors to have

There is no direct reference to homosexuals in LB: EF. More overtly such prejudice is inferred in the novels where the "militant" Verna Zee,[494] Buck's boss, is shocked and embarrassed when Buck says he won't tell anyone she is a lesbian.[495] Buck responds, "My Bible doesn't differentiate between homosexuals and heterosexuals . . . It may call practicing homosexuals sinners, but it also calls heterosexual sex outside of marriage sinful."[496] "Semantics Buck, Semantics," Verna replies,[497] not convinced that she will be at home in the evangelicalism to which she has found herself attracted.

Then there's the Carpathia's head artist, Guy Blod, who fashions an "au naturelle"[498] 24 foot high statue of Carpathia to be erected at the funeral of Carpathia who has been assassinated.[499] Though it is not stated that Blod is of homosexual orientation, repartee between him and Hassid is suggestive:

> "David headed for his quarters, phoning Guy on the way. I'd like to see the positioning of the statue when you're ready."
> "Now?"
> "I say, when you're ready. The regular schedule will be fine."
> "You're asking permission?"
> "I'm just saying I'd like to watch. There a problem with that?"
> "I don't need my hand held."
> "Believe me, Guy, I don't want to hold your hand."
> "Protocol demands that you not refer to me by my first name.""Sorry, Blood."

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mentioned the Holocaust − that 'whirlwind' as George Steiner calls it − the singular event that leads to the founding of the state of Israel. "For those who are sensitive to the 'background' meaning of the rhetoric, the 'trace' of the Holocaust imposes itself on the reader's consciousness, and that it is not mentioned at this intersection is disturbing. This absence is the initial instance of the series' a-historicism and Holocaust evasion".

[494] Fred Clark, Slacktivist, March 13 2009 [cited 14 June 2009]. Online: slactivist.typepad.com Clark explains that the word "militant" used to describe Verna Zee does not mean that she is a supporter of Hamas, or of the IRA or of some Sunni insurgency in Iraq. LaHaye and Jenkins assume that their intended audience will understand it in the "context of a larger, ongoing story," one they like to call the 'culture war' in the United States. "Culture warriors" would indentify Verna Zee with the familiar phrase either "a militant *feminist*" or a "militant *homosexual*." The latter is apparently so common in religious-right jargon and "provides us a glimpse of how they perceive the Pink Menace of homosexuality − a faceless horde in refugee camps south of the border, lobbing deadly, indiscriminate rockets a faceless horde in refugee camps south of the border, lobbing deadly, indiscriminate rockets of gayness toward their peaceful homes." But as Clark points out the key point here, in regard to the militant Verna, is that for the authors and their intended audience, 'militant feminist' is "always regarded as a subset of 'militant homosexual.' For them, in other words, all feminists are presumed to be lesbians, and all lesbians are presumed to *hate* men."

[495] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Nicolae* 307.

[496] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Nicolae* 307.

[497] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Nicolae* 307.

[498] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Assassins,* 319. Rayford, who has been planning the assassination for some time eventually aimed at Carpathia who was addressing a crowd. Someone bumped him and the shot went off. However, it was a second shot a few seconds later fired by Tsion Ben David that killed Carpathia.

[499] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Indwelling*, 58

"It's Blod, and my last name."

"Ooh! My title is Minister!"

"Sorry, Reverend Minister. But your supreme commander and mine wants a liaison from administration present when you move naked boy into position."

"How rude and tacky."

"That's sort of what I thought, but I'm surprised you agree."

"David!"[500]

So as one scans through the entire LB Corpus one can identify referents that would refer to prejudice not only to Roman Catholics, Jews and gays, but also to adherents of Islam, Eastern religions, liberal Christians and secularists. The point is that however much the authors may insist otherwise – to the point of occasionally counterbalancing prejudicial portrayals with more positive ones[501] – representatives of these groupings are portrayed as undesirable and obnoxious characters, besides the few already named, the Game Manual lists friends soldiers, recruiters, influencers, musicians, pretenders, cult leaders, builders, healers, activists, musicians, criminals, gang bosses who share the common ability to swear, though this is not audible in the game. Characters in Tribulation Force and their units by contrast, are attractive and likeable, having their weaknesses, but nevertheless dependent on divine grace to transform their lives and strengthen them in the suffering they endure.

Jewett and Lawrence recall John Adams's letter to Thomas Jefferson on Nov 13, 1813, in which he claimed nothing less than millennial sainthood for Americans: "Many hundred years must roll away before we shall be corrupted. Our pure, virtuous public spirited, federative republic will last forever, govern the globe and introduce the perfection of man. How were such paragons to live in a world of sinners? Those who clung most ferociously to their own stereotype of virtue were willing to declare eternal war on those who fit their stereotype of wickedness."[502] In the same vein Lincoln observes, "that all knowers are themselves objects of knowledge as well as subjects

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[500] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Indwelling,* 208-209.

[501] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Assassins*, 89. Suhail Akbar, from Pakistan is Director of Security and Intelligence for the Global Community, and attempts to destroy Christians by bombing Petra where they have taken refuge, but Abdullah Smith the former Jordanian fighter pilot, who experiences conversion and makes a commitment to Christ is on the Tribulation Force side.

[502] See Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism* (Grand Rapids /Cambridge UK: William B.Eerdmans, 2003), 223-4. who propose six features of popular stereotypes, which we would recognise, some more than others, in the characters of LB: EF: cowboys vs Indians, cops vs robbers, Popeye vs Bluto, the Jedi and the Empire or

insofar they cannot and do not stand apart from the world that they seek to know. One consequence of this (and from the least important) is that 'categorizers come to be categorized' according to their own categories. Taxonomy is thus not only a means for organizing information, but also – as it comes to 'organize the organizers' – an instrument for the classification and manipulation of society, something that is particularly facilitated by the fashion in which taxonomic trees and binary oppositions can conveniently recode social hierarchies, as we have begun to see."[503]

Stereotyping, rephrased as "classification" morphs into discourse which can manifest itself as blatant hate speech or conversely, speech that softens or obscures the stereotyping, essentially retaining the intention to demonise and in the process justify these actions. Bandura's thoughts on military moral disengagement, though more general in nature, are relevant in the LB: EF context.

> Rapid radical shifts in destructive behavior through moral justification are most strikingly revealed in military conduct (Kelman, 1973; Skeykill, 1928). The conversion of socialized people into dedicated fighters is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives or moral standards. Through moral justification of violent means, people see themselves as fighting ruthless oppressors, protecting their cherished values, preserving world peace, saving humanity from subjugation or honoring their country's commitments. Just war tenets were devised to specify when the use of violent force is morally justified. However, given people's dexterous facility for justifying violent means all kinds of inhumanities get clothed in moral wrappings.[504]

How this takes place is through language that shapes thought patterns on which actions are based. Activities can take on very different appearances depending on what they are called. Not surprisingly for Bandura, euphemistic language is widely used to

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Captain America vs. the Enemy of the Moment. "So familiar are Americans to this scheme that 'good guy' and 'bad guy' are often the first words they use in describing the cartoons they watch."

[503] Lincoln, *Discourse*, 137, prefaces this statement by pointing to Durkheim and Mauss who first insisted on classificatory logic, and more recently, Bourdieu who "contributed to our understanding of the ways in which taxonomic systems provide ideological mystification for sociopolitical realities." And, "Yet there remain those who, taking their lead from Kant, maintain that taxonomy is primarily an epistemological instrument, that is, a means of gathering, sorting, and processing knowledge about the external (especially the natural) world: a science of the concrete" in which the infinite atomized data of experience are organized and given a form in which they become knowable and manipulable."

[504] Bandura, "Moral Disengagement," *Personality and Social Psychology Review,* 3, Violence without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of Victims and Victimizers." *Journal of Social Issues* 29, (1999): 25-61.

make harmful conduct respectable and to reduce personal responsibility for it − "People behave much more cruelly when assaultive actions are verbally sanitized than when they are called aggression."[505] There are a variety of euphemisms, one form relying on sanitizing language. Bandura gives some examples of how camouflaging pernicious activities in innocent or sanitizing parlance the activities lose much of their repugnancy: Soldiers "*waste*" people rather than kill them.[506] Bombing missions are described as "*servicing the target,*" in the likeness of a public utility.[507] The attacks become "*clean, surgical strikes,*" arousing imagery of curative activities.[508] The civilians the bombs kill are linguistically converted to "*collateral damage.*" In an effort to "sanitize state executions," a United States senator proclaimed that, "*Capital punishment is our society's recognition of the sanctity of human life.*" [509]

At first glance the language used in LB: EF is not as drastically euphemised as the instances mentioned above. However, the text of the game manual couches its phrases in such a way as to assure players that they are engaged in a noble cause. Tsion Ben-David counsels that as things get difficult they must remember the mission they have been given. Their efforts may mean the "difference between people living for eternity or falling into the antichrist's clutches."[510] Rayford addresses the neutrals, "Greetings and blessings from your friends in the Tribulation Force. Your participation encourages us and others. Welcome to the largest human counter-culture movement in world history."[511]

In terms of *Attribution of Blame*, "blaming one's adversaries or circumstances is still another expedient that can serve self-exonerating purposes. In this process people view themselves as faultless victims driven to injurious conduct by forcible provocation."[512] Indeed, Left Behind argues that attack is not only legitimate defence but the regrettable, nevertheless inevitable, sentence on those neutrals who have failed to make the right choice, thus bringing upon themselves chastisement and even death.

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[505] Bandura,"Moral Disengagement,"4.
[506] Bandura,"Moral Disengagement,"4.
[507] Bandura,"Moral Disengagement,"4.
[508] Bandura,"Moral Disengagement,"4.
[509] Bandura,"Moral Disengagement,"4.
[510] Lyndon, *Game Manual,* 22.
[511] Lyndon, *Game Manual,* 23.
[512] Bandura, "Moral Disengagement," 11.

However euphemistically LB: EF may come across, the question at stake is can its discourse, as stereotyping and characterisation, actually motivate killing? At what point are players capable of translating their combat experience into real life? Put in another way, is it possible that after playing LB: EF a player can go out and kill members of a group, as did Timothy McVeigh after poring over the pages of *The Turner Diaries*?[513]

Looking at the three modalities presented in this chapter one might hypothesise that there is an escalation of violent inclination from the onset of the videocast through the novels to the playing of the video game. However, in reality people enter the world at different points, experiencing first internalisation then externalisation. The videocast may introduce viewers to the first novel and lead them straight through to video game, or a person may enter at the game and reading the first novel follow up the whole series and movies. However, interest in the novels may wear off, or be read tongue-in-the-cheek, and game players, unless skilled and experienced, will find working through the forty missions such a daunting task that they never reach the most violent missions. Ultimately there are too many variables, as well as inherent subjectivity in players, to arrive at conclusive survey as was the case in attempts to prove that Dungeons and Dragons led to suicides and other abnormal behaviours.[514]

Mindful of Bandura's moral disengagement justified by a cherished cause[515] and Waller's "four-pronged" explanation,[516] I conclude that playing LB:EF may not trigger

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[513]Andrew Mcdonald, *The Turner Diaries* (New York: Barricade Books, 1978). William Pierce, as the actual author, leader of the neo-Nazi National Alliance, wrote the fictional diaries of Earl Turner, leader of underground white supremacist group which in an Aryan insurrection overturns the United States government in the not-so-distant future. The book is rife with violent apocalypticism, misogynism, racism and anti-Semitism. A homemade bomb at FBI headquarters, detonated by Turner's guerrilla unit, kills hundreds − a grim foreshadowing of the Oklahoma City atrocity. A copy of the book was found in McVeigh's car, as well as letters he wrote to his sister citing passages from the book. The widely read *The Turner Diaries* became a blueprint for the far-right, specifically the Aryan Republican Army and The New Order. The diaries which began in 1991, ended in 1993 with a successful suicide bombing of the Pentagon. In 1999 Aryan forces triumph, and the new era begins – in 2099 the narrator publishes Turner's diaries.

[514]According to Waldron, "Role-Playing Games and the Christian Right," n.p., this material is very hard to source in a global or statistical sense, as his commentary to this effect comes from newspaper clippings, gamers discussions online, letters to the editor in roleplaying game magazines and discussions with numerous gamers at conventions, etc. While it is clear that the response was widespread and creates the impression of a sense of widespread harassment by gamers, it is difficult to gain statistical evidence of the size and scale of the public response due to the inherent subjectivity of the experience.

[515] Bandura, "Moral Disengagement," 11.

[516] James Waller, "Perpetrators of Genocide: An Explanatory Model of Extraordinary Human Evil," *JHS* 1 no.1 (2001/2002). This paper is excerpted from James Waller's book, *Children of Cain: How People Commit Extraordinary Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). The theories of James Waller, who has specialised in genocide studies, are not immediately relevant in terms of discourse, but his interest in the "rank-and-file killers, ordinary men and women at the bottom of the hierarchy who personally carried out the millions

extreme calculated violent acts as it did in the case of the *Turner Diaries* influence on McVeigh.[517] It may, however, introduce players to a militaristic mindset as it configures with groups like Joel's Army and militia movements where such extreme actions are not outruled. (These groups will be referred to more fully in the next chapter.) Taking Neiwert into account, such possibilities are not remote. He sees right-wing rhetoric as having been "explicitly eliminationist, calling for the infliction of harm on whole blocs of American citizens: liberals, gays and lesbians, Latinos, blacks, Jews, feminists, or whatever target group is the victim *du jour* of right-wing ire.**"**[518] "Eliminationism is an acute warning sign that has historically played the role of creating permission for people to play out their violent impulses against its targets."[519]

As I see it, the combat-ridden LB: EF stands out from conventional acts of terrorism and genocide because of its essentially religious dimension; it is at once proclamation and propaganda, evangelism and proselytism, dogma and fantasy, catechesis and combat training, an *objet d'art*[520] and a consumer product, gaming and ritual, and singling out ritual one is drawn to the community aspect of LB: EF, which resonates with Jewett and Lawrence's concept of "civil religion:" "Where a citizen's brief interludes at church, synagogue or mosque being less likely to impart a significant vision of how to cope with the world's conflicts, popular entertainments respond to current events with mythic scenarios, they help to shape the public sense of what is appropriate in confronting the crises of national and international life."[521]

One might conclude that LB: EF, as more than a surrogate ritual, actually performs similarly to traditional war rituals, yet in its absence of gore, mutilation and indecorum

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of executions," are worth noting, particularly when read in conjunction with Bandura and Neiwert. Waller rejects the theories of "common impulse," "lethal soil of specific extraordinary cultures (referring to Germany)," "psychopathic persons," "personality structures," (though he admits all four contain grains of truth), as well as Milgram's theory of the agentic self in which we are not governed by the operations of our own conscience, instead is given over to the conscience of authority.

[517] Edmund D. Cohen, "Review of the "Left Behind" Tribulation Novels: Turner Diaries Lite, in *Free Inquiry Magazine* 21, no. 2 (2006) n.p. "In the short run, *Left Behind* does not seem likely to incite anyone to drastic action. Still, how dissatisfied must the fans of these books be with normal, quiet lives − how much repressed anger against those in authority over them must they harbor − to identify so strongly with Trib Force? Why is the idea of the world they know being torn to pieces so alluring to them? It is troubling to contemplate what mischief might develop as masses of North Americans, induced year after year to become so fundamentally alienated, get tired waiting for God to send up the balloon."

[518] Neiwert, *The Eliminationists,* 24.

[519] Neiwert*, The Eliminationists*, 28.

[520] Indeed middle-brow art, the *l'artmoyen* as defined by Bourdieu, nevertheless in terms of the design and animation intrinsic to video games, has an aesthetic of its own.

[521] Jewett and Lawrence, *Captain America*, 28.

it morphs into an elevated bloodless cosmic ritual, with a liturgical cadence in the recurring "Praise the Lord!" and circle-forming light-ensconced prayer and worship choirs. Ultimately LB: EF is a ritual act of cleansing, a merciless severance between good and evil, to the satisfaction of a warrior-divinity[522] who has both authored and convened this confrontation.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I set out to critically analyse three items from the LB Corpus: the YouTube videocasts promoting the first novel *Left Behind*, a passage from Chapter 23 of Left Behind, and its visual counterpart, the film "Tribulation Force," and finally the video game, LB:EF. The analyses of three modalities of discourse illustrated the movement from internalisation to externalisation from whatever point of entry into the LB Corpus. While the artefacts in the Corpus differ in terms of materiality, they share a communicative text – literary techniques, and visual coding adding up to a subtext which drives the text to its desired outcomes which have been foregrounded every so often, but only become clearer in the next chapter.

What rhetorical patterns were found within the frameworks of the texts analysed? In terms of enhancing the rhetor's discourse Aristotle's three proof, logos, pathos and ethos, with visual codes, were clearly identified in the videocasts. Both O'Leary and Brummett stressed the primacy of the grounding text, and perceived authority of the rhetor, and this was consistently a factor in all the Left Behind scripts, but with variations according to the life situations of the characters.In the Videocasts from the Future rhetorical authority lies precisely in a wife and mother who because of her trials through which she came to understand the direction world was taking qualifies her as a reliable witness. She never refers to the grounding texts in scripture, for as she says Bibles have been outlawed. These the viewer will assume are the basis of the tattered copy of the *Left Behind* she holds up for all to see.

In the text from Tribulation Force rhetorical authority is funneled through Pastor Bruce Barnes, who having suffered grievous loss and experienced the regret of being

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[522] The constructedness of the "crusader divinity" will feature in context of the ideology in Chapter 5.

left behind, can assess the situation of anomie and confusion, and motivate his friends to mobilise their efforts in opposing the forces of Carpathia. The grounding texts are more visible in this discourse.

LB: EF brings the whole gamut of visual and textual codes into play. Quite evidently the rhetoric of Left Behind is not derived from classical rhetoric sources but is also improvised and adapted in unpredictable ways; not only in the game but also in the novels and films euphemistic language (Bandura), foregrounding (Mleynek), and wordplay and characterisation by names are deployed for desired effect. There is nothing static about discourse which unlike the term language is both a noun and a verb, therefore an *act* rather than a thing, "both an interactive process and the end result of thought and communication, "[523] then importantly, "Discourse is the social process of making and reproducing sense (s),"[524] but also a "product" as explicitly stated here.

Discourse in a novel therefore cannot be said to be purely for relaxation and enjoyment. There is inherently no difference between the ancient Greek novel/romance Van den Heever, describes as representing a deliberate confluence which characteristically of reality and fantasy, fact and fiction."[525] It was the "vividness (*energeia*) of the narration (implying the presence of story-telling in history) that compelled belief in the veracity of the historical account. Then equally it is the conventions of realism employed in the novel that created the 'illusion of belief' in fiction as if it were a fact."[526] Even the select number of scenes and dialogues referred to in this chapter bear out the close interface between reality and fantasy, fact and fiction, not verifying history, but creating new futures. The vividness of the missions in LB: EF, for example, foregrounds the crusader exigency, thus bringing underlying ideology/ideologies into full focus.

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[523] O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts*, 73.
[524] O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders and Fiske, *Key Concepts*, 73.
[525] Gerhard van den Heever, *Loose Fictions*, 61.
[526] Gerhard van den Heever, *Loose Fictions,* 61.

CHAPTER 5

IDEOLOGY: WHO WINS AND HOW MUCH?

1. INTRODUCTION

In approaching the third facet of consistent literalism, namely *Ideology*, I concentrate on two scenarios which embody the theology of extermination: the first that of the rebuilding of the temple and second, the establishment of a Theocracy, both bringing to a climax all we have considered so far about interpretation and discourse, as well as ushering us into prevailing ideologies. The question, "Who wins, and how much?" or inverted, "Who loses and how much?" becomes paramount. Since LaHaye is associated with both the escape-from-the-world and occupy-and-rule-over-the-world visions, some explanation of this dichotomy is needed if the two scenarios presented are to have any significance in the overall purpose of this thesis.

This chapter in effect caps the foregoing chapters and allows the scenarios to image possibilities in the future, this being the nature of a "scenario." However, because the thesis is primarily about the LB Corpus, more weighting will be given to the first scenario and less to the second, which examines some writings of LaHaye, which without euphemism and word play, reveal the scope of his ideology. I will therefore devote a brief section to this question, and thereafter posit some first thoughts on the nature of ideology in dispensational/apocalyptic/fundamentalist context.

2. IDEOLOGY

2.1 A Dichotomy of Ideologies

If premillennialists are waiting for the Rapture, why should they bother getting involved in politics? The question may be framed in another way, for example, "How is it possible that LaHaye can be both a premillennialist and a postmillennialist?" On the one hand, the Rebuilding of the Temple is a declared premillennial vision in which the

sooner the temple is rebuilt, and Armageddon can take place, the sooner the coming of Christ and the ushering in of the Millennium. On the other hand, the theocracy vision, being essentially postmillennial, envisages an indeterminate stretch of time before the coming of Christ, a time in which to establish a theocracy in which the law as applied in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus is applied in all aspects of society. As oxymoronic as this statement may be in the case of LaHaye, the answer is not as contradictory as it seems and may quite easily be explained from a particular socio-religious situation arising in the 1970s to 1980s.[527]

Tim LaHaye, following a trend of Lindsey,[528] was compelled in the light of social and political upheavals, to communicate a double directive, the one, to be ready for the rapture that could occur at any time,[529] the other, that as long as the rapture is deterred, Christians must be active in the world by participation, indeed control of government and public institutions, thus assuming an imperialist stance congruent with the nature of Dominionism. In 1980 Tim LaHaye struck out in a new direction with *The Battle for the Mind*[530] in which he called for a resistance against secular humanism, one that would "deluge the entire land in the next few years, unless Christians were willing to become much more assertive in defense of morality and decency than they had been during the past three decades."[531] Twenty years later in *Mind Siege*, LaHaye repeats this call,

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[527]Harding, *Imagining the Last Days,* 67. Typical of these tumultuous decades were: "Earthquakes, typhoons, famines, wars, arch-villainous leaders and men who preached world unity and peace; global communications, the space age, and the computer revolution, rapid population growth, the rise and collapse of great economic systems; the common market, the Cold War and the end of the Cold war; shifting political alliances and borders in Africa, Asia, Europe, and above all the Middle East – all these world-scale events and many, many more were seen as fashioning the future leaders."

[528]Harding, *Imagining the Last Days,* 68, citing Lindsey: "We need to get active electing officials who will not only reflect the Bible's morality in government, but will shape domestic and foreign policies to protect our country and way of life." Lindsey was the first of the rhetors who was the first to make this adjustment. In the 1980's a follow-up to *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Lindsey made a shift that was not strictly postmillennialist, but one that converged with others thinking in the same direction. Lindsey argued that if Christians got involved in "preserving this country" it was possible that America would remain a world power during the last days. Christians should live as if Jesus would come today and that means that we must actively take on the responsibility of being a citizen and a member of God's family.

[529]In light of the Great Disappointment in 1844, following the failed predictions of the Adventist, William Miller, Lindsey and LaHaye were careful not to set dates. See O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 150-154, for an explanation of Lindsey's articulation of "generation" made so as to avoid any conclusions to be made about the date of Christ's Second Coming.

[530] Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1980). Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, revised, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, [1981] 1982); Francis A. Schaeffer, and C. Everett Koop. *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1979).

[531] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege*, 238.

lamenting that "some Christians have concluded that a takeover of 'our culture' by the forces in inevitable."[532] LaHaye refers to this conclusion: "They say 'It is necessary in perilous times shall come as we approach the end of the age,' so they are unwilling to raise their voices in protest."[533]

LaHaye emphasises that while the seven-year tribulation in which the antichrist will rule the world will come to pass, "belief in a humanist takeover of America must not be part of that scenario."[534] By recognising a pre-tribulation period before the rapture and the tribulation proper, LaHaye is in effect aligning himself with a more dominionist, post-millennial position that is motivated by activism rather than passivity and fatalism.

While the conundrum of LaHaye's dual-motivation appears to be resolved, a perception prevails that PMD and Dominionism have converged in *Left Behind: Eternal Forces.* Hutson, asks "Could such a violent, dominionist Christian video game really break through to the popular culture?"[535] This raises the question of ideology, for it is precisely in this sphere that the linkage between violence and Dominionism is nurtured.

2.2 First Thoughts on Ideology

In approaching *ideology*, I speak of "first thoughts" as the notion of ideology is not monolithic in the sense that one definition is applicable in every instance, as becomes evident in the thoughts of Gary Lease and Terry Eagleton.

Lease, sees ideology as initially referring to "a pattern of thought, a way of life, and a political course of action" – in other words, "a more or less coherent system of ideas – that are bound to set of ideas with little or no connection to reality, is opposed to experiential reality."[536] He sees ideology as presupposing "a gap between theory and practice, between idea and reality," and it is only when the belief in the primacy of thought is attacked as the reverse of what the actual state of human conscious is, that

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[532] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege*, 238.
[533] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege*, 239.
[534] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege*, 239.
[535] Hutson, "The Purpose Driven Life Takers." n.p.
[536] Gary Lease, "Ideology," in *Guide to the Study of Religion* (ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon; London/New York: Continuum, 2006), 438-439.

ideology also assumes the secondary meanings of illusion and self-deception. In this form then, ideological criticism becomes the process of establishing truth revealed."[537] The notion of ideology as presupposing a gap between theory and practice, between idea and reality, is one surfaces as the scenarios unfold.

Eagleton claims that nobody has "come up with a single adequate definition of ideology, and my book is no exception."[538] "To try and compress a wealth of meaning into a single comprehensive definition would be unhelpful even if it were possible. He gives this first thought: "The word "ideology one might say is a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands; it is traced through with divergent histories, and it is probably more important to assess what is valuable or can be discarded in each of these lineages than to merge the forcibly into some Grand Global Theory." [539]He goes on to list more or less, at random, sixteen definitions of ideology currently in circulation.[540]

3.   SCENARIO 1: REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE AND ARMAGEDDON

3.1 The Outcome

"Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the Lord" (Zechariah 6:15). In the beautiful pictorial book on the third Temple, "The odyssey of the third Temple," we find these words: "When the third Temple is built, the Gentiles will sincerely wish for it to be done, to facilitate the resting of the Shechina in Jerusalem." (*Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 8:4).[541]

So this is a great day for Israel!
A great day. Since the birth of our nation, we have collected millions from around the world! For the rebuilding of the temple. Work has begun. Many prefabricated walls are finished and will be shipped in. I will live to see the reconstruction of the temple, and it will be even more spectacular than any in the days of Solomon![542]

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[537] Gary Lease, "Ideology,"439.
[538] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction.* (London/New York: Verso), 1.
[539] Eagleton, *Ideology,* 1-2.
[540] Eagleton, *Ideology,* 1-2.
[541] Cited by Jan Willem van der Hoeven, Tisha B'AvAugust 06 [cited 5 February 2009]. Online: www.jewishindy.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2632 Van der Hoeven is Director of International Christian Zionist Center.
[542] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 204.

Here are two expressions of intense yearning for the rebuilding of the Temple after its destruction in 70 C.E. by Roman forces. For Jews it is the fulfillment of a divine promise. For PMDs it is this, and more – a clearing of the way for Armageddon, the final battle before the ushering in of the thousand-year reign of peace. However, before examining how LaHaye and Jenkins promote the rebuilding of the temple, it is essential to refer to Jewish and Christian Zionism and the role of the Scofield Reference Bible in catalysing this aim.

3.2   An Overview of Jewish and Christian Zionism

A great deal has been written about the phenomenon of Zionism, both Jewish and Christian; besides referring to works on Jewish Zionism *per se*, I have drawn on Stephen Sizer's *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon?* while referring to a number of other works[543] factually substantial in their treatment of the Zionist phenomenon in Christian context. The nature of Zionism is well captured by Sizer:

> In general terms, Zionism may be defined as "the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel'.[544] The term Zionism was first coined in 1892 by Nathan Birnbaum, then a student in Vienna. A year later in 1893, he published a booklet entitled, *The National Rebirth of the Jewish People in its Homeland as a means of Solving the Jewish Problem*, in which he advocated Jewish nationalistic ideas that Theodor Herzl was to later expound in *A Jewish State*, published in 1896. [545]

Of Christian Zionism he wrote:

> At its simplest, Christian Zionism is a political form of philo-Semitism, and can be defined as "Christian support for Zionism." The term "Christian Zionist" first appears to have been used by Theodor Herzl to describe Henri Dunant, a Swiss philanthropist and founder of the Red Cross. Dunant was one of only a handful of Gentiles to be invited to the first World Zionist Congress. Walter Riggans interprets this term in an overtly political sense as "any Christian who supports the Zionist aim of the sovereign State of Israel, its army, its government, education

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[543] Randall Price, *Fast Facts on the Middle East Conflict* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House, 2003).

[544] Sizer cites *A Definition of Zionism* (2004), Jewish Virtual Library, a division of the American-Israeli Cooperative enterprise, [cited May 2004]. http://us-israel.org/jsource/Zionism/zionism.html.

[545] Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 18.

etc., but it can describe a Christian who claims to support the state of Israel for any reason."[546]

Around these definitions by Sizer is woven a mass of detail about the roots of Christian Zionism in Britain, Lord Shaftesbury and the influence of restorationism upon British foreign policy, the Balfour Declaration and the implementation of the Zionist vision, Dispensationalism and the birth of Christian Zionism in America, the theological emphases political implications of Christian Zionism.

Price accentuates Zionism as defined by the PLO: "Zionism is a political movement organically related to world imperialism and hostile to all movements of liberation and progress in the world. It is a racist and fascist movement in its formation; aggressive, expansionist, and colonialist in its aims, and fascist and Nazi in its methods. Israel is the tool of the Zionist movement . . . ."[547]

Christian Zionism, as an ideological movement, focuses on Israel and the Middle East, imbued with the belief that God fights on the side of Israel. Christian Zionists, numbering up to 20 million in America, call for unqualified support for the most extreme political positions related to the conflict in Israel. [548]

It is precisely in consistent literalism that fulfilled prophecy becomes normative, and it is in this apparent fulfillment, fuelled by the ensuing discourse it generates, that dispensationalists gravitate to the Zionistic ideal of complete land ownership. Christian Zionism has its own interpretation of these eschatological events, since it not only recognises the unfolding events as a fulfillment of prophecy, but believes that Christ

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[546] Walter Riggans, *Israel and Zionism* (London: Halsall,1988). In *The Covenant with Jews* (Turnbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), 91, Riggans envisions a "biblical Zionism, which is surely the desire of every Christian, will be fundamentally about God and his purposes, Thus Zionism, when seen in a proper Christian perspective, will be understood as a branch of theology, not of politics . . . The state of Israel is only the beginning of what God is doing for and through the Jewish people."

[547] Article 22 of the Palestine National Charter, cited in Price, *Fast Facts*, 15.

[548] See Ross Moret, "Potential for Apocalypse: Violence and Eschatology in the Israel-Palestine Conflict, *JRS ,*Vol 10 (2008) for an engaging argument based on Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Manus Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Thomas Robbins, "Sources of Volatility in Religious Movements," in *Cults, Religion, and Violence*. Edited by David G. Bromley and Gordon J. Melton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 57-79; James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "The History of a Metaphor: Christian Zionism and the Politics of Apocalypse," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 36e Année, 75 (1991): 75-103; Michael Baigent, *Racing Towards Armageddon: The Three Great Religions and the Plot to End the World* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

will not return until the great suffering of Israel and the eventual conversion of his chosen people. *It is this "until" that compels PMDs to actually hasten these events to Christ's coming, regardless of consequences since these things "had to happen."* (Italics mine.MM)

From the alliance of dispensationalist teachers, Tim LaHaye, Thomas, Ice, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and John Hagee there are, however, shifts in emphasis which can be quite vitriolic as in the case of LaHaye's and Hagee's differences[549] on the conversion of the Jews. LaHaye and Jenkins's views on Israel reflect typical PMD tenets though the very nature of LB Corpus harnesses an element of imagination in order to strengthen Christian support for Israel.

> .
> While most of the major events In the *Left Behind* series are based directly on specific biblical prophecies about the tribulation and end times, a few significant plot elements depend less on careful prophetic interpretation than on pure imagination. Thus, in *Left Behind* scientist Chaim Rosenzweig develops a secret chemical compound that makes the desert bloom and its inventors rich − and by consequence its neighbors envious and angry.
> While the invention of such a chemical compound has no basis in scripture, as a literary device it did enable us to develop two plotlines with definite prophetic bloodlines, 1) The extraordinary blessing of God on the physical land of Israel; 2) A plausible trigger for the surprise attack of Russia and her allies against Israel.[550]

A fuller understanding of the sentiments of Christian Zionism must be sought in the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

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[549] John Hagee in *Jerusalem Countdown: Prelude to War* (Florida: Frontline, 2007), 222, accommodates on the basis of Romans 11, the idea that "Jews will possibly be grafted at some point in the future; that it is probable that the Jewish people will come to redemption in the future and that it is absolute that at a time in the future, redemption will come to all righteous Jews." LaHaye concludes from this that Hagee is saying that the Jews don't have to believe in Jesus, and when Guyatt, *Doomsday*, 253, asks if he sees this as the dual-covenant theory, LaHaye replies, "Yeah, that's nuts. I've never heard that before, and I think it's heresy. I don't care whether you're Jew or Gentile or whatever you are, Without Jesus, you're not going to be saved." In San Antonio fundamentalist battles anti-Semitism," Julia Duin, "San Antonia Fundamentalist Battles Anti-Semitism," *Houston Chronicle,* April 30, 1988, 1, Hagee is cited as saying, "In fact, trying to convert Jews is a waste of time, The Jewish person who has his roots in Judaism is not going to convert to Christianity. There is no form of Christian evangelism that has failed so miserably as evangelising the Jewish people. They (already) have a faith structure." La Haye points out that Hagee believes that everyone else, whether Buddhist or Baha'i, needs to believe in Jesus, but not Jews because they already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced by Christianity." LaHaye does not mention that dual-covenant theory actually did not originate with Hagee, but was already present in the teachings of Darby and Scofield.

[550] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 81.

The *Scofield Reference Bible* was published in 1909.[551] The editor was Cyrus Ingersoll Scofield. The publisher was the Oxford University Press.[552] The translation was that of the King James Bible, the footnotes being the fountain from which PMD interpreters, including LaHaye, imbibed.[553] The King James Bible was replaced in 1982 by the *New International Version*, and this is the version that has been used in the Left Behind novels.

John Nelson Darby, a former Irish Anglican minister and father to the Plymouth Brethren, is recognised as the one who systematised the newly circulated teachings of the rapture, tribulation and millennium into what became known as "premillenial dispensationalism." During his frequent visits to North America, Darby came to win over evangelical leaders such as James A. Brookes, Dwight. L. Moody, William Blackstone, but it was Cyrus Ingersol Scofield who rose to prominence by lacing the footnotes of the *Scofield Reference Bible* with Darby's doctrines. Besides the concepts of "pre-millennialism," and "dispensationalism," "Judeo-Christianity," and "Christian Zionism" took their place in the vocabulary of Evangelicalism.

Within a few decades the Scofield Bible, was accepted as a standard version in seminary, Bible School curricula and Bible study group programmes and of course

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[551] A most authoritative source of information on the *Scofield Reference Bible* is Sizer, *Road to Armageddon*, 74-77; for Scofield's personal background; 115, for a comparison between the 1917 version, *Scofield Reference Bible* and the 1984 version, E. Schuyler English, *The New Scofield Reference Bible.*

[552] Joseph Canfield, *The Incredible Scofield and His Book* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1988), proposes a sinister dimension that might be written off as another conspiracy theory, or may at least contain some verifiable facts that need to be reckoned with in assessing Zionist teachings and activism. According to him, world Zionist leaders initiated a program to change America and its religious orientation. The scheme was to alter the Christian view of Zionism by creating and promoting a pro-Zionist subculture within Christianity. Cyrus Scofield's role was to edit the King James Version of the Bible by inserting Zionist-friendly notes in the margins, between verses and chapters, and on the bottoms of the pages. Canfield's investigation also brought to light a connection between Samuel Untermeyer, a New York lawyer and one of the wealthiest and most powerful World Zionists in America.

[553] In LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Rapture,* 214, Cyrus Scofield is one of the parade of saints who approaches the Bema Throne to receive his crown of life. After referring to his flawed past, for which he asked forgiveness, the narrator lists what happened from this point on: he led people to Christ, began cottage prayer meetings, married a Christian, saw his Dallas Texas Church send out missionaries, and also saw the work grow and spawn new churches. He designed the Scofield Correspondence Course, which was later licensed to the Moody Bible institute and taken by more than 100,000 students. And he created a reference bible to aid those just beginning to read the Bible, which became an authoritative guide to millions for more than a century. Raymie (raptured with his mother, Irene Steele) "had heard Pastor Billings mention his Scofield Bible, but he had never quite understood what he meant and was fairly certain that he had never seen one. Now as Raymie,

around the family altar. It has been published in at least four editions since its introduction in 1909 and remained the preferred choice for countless evangelicals over many decades. The Oxford University Press held the copyright for *The Scofield Reference Bible* from the first edition, and still did for the 1984 edition, although the copyright of the text of the New International Version was held by New York Bible Society International New York Bible Society, while the concordance was owned by the Zondervan Corporation. So it is only the footnotes that belong to the Oxford University Press, and from one edition to the next they have exercised their right to reflect a dispensationalist outlook.

Referring to the theology of Darbyism, Sandeen writes that *The Scofield Reference Bible* "has thus been subtly, but powerfully influential in spreading those views among hundreds of thousands who have regularly read that Bible and who often have been unaware of the distinction between the ancient text and the Scofield interpretation."[554]

Distinctly pro-Zionist notes were added to the 1967 edition, and some of Scofield's most significant notes from the original editions were removed where they apparently did not reflect Zionistic aims sufficiently. Still referring to Scofield as the editor, Oxford University edited the former 1945 Edition of the *Scofield Reference Bible* in 1967, at the time of the Six Day War when Israel occupied Palestine. The new footnotes to the *King James Bible* granted the rights to the Palestinians' land to the State of Israel and specifically denied the Arab Palestinians any such rights at all. This following footnote was linked to Genesis 12:3 in the 1984 version.

> It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew, well with those who have protected him and the future will still more remarkably prove this principle.[555]

This example suffices to show the central role of the Scofield Reference in the formation of premillennial support for the state of Israel, and by implication the rebuilding of the temple. I now return to where I left off with the expressions of expectancy from both Jewish and PMD perspectives.

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watched Jesus give Cyrus Scofield the Crowns of Glory, Righteousness and Rejoicing, he thought he was a man he'd like to talk with, and it was nice to know he had an eternity to do it."

[554] Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism,* 222.

[555] Schuyler English, ed., *The New Scofield Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 18.

La Haye and Jenkins categorically state, "All prophecy teachers who interpret the Scriptures literally agree that the Jewish temple in Israel will be rebuilt."[556] They point out that the first temple, built by Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. The Second Temple – begun in 535 B.C.E. and completed in 516 B.C.E. then lavishly renovated by Herod the Great starting in 19 B.C.E. was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. A third temple as predicted by "the prophet Daniel, the apostles Paul and John, and none other than the Lord Jesus himself."[557] They all taught that Israel's Third Temple will be built either before the Tribulation begins, or soon after, for it is seen in full operation by the middle of the Tribulation, when it will be desecrated. In the PMD scheme the temple cannot be desecrated if the new temple has not already been built.

The grounding texts on which LaHaye and Jenkins build their discourse are, first, Daniel 9:27: "Then he (Antichrist) shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be the one who makes desolate."[558] And Daniel 11: 31: "and following, ". . . and forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation." This links to the Olivet discourse where Jesus says in Matthew 24:15: "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place." The next link in this chain of grounding texts is 2 Thessalonians: 2:3-4, where Paul writes: "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exults himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."[559]

LaHaye and Jenkins situate the Antichrist's exalting of himself as God in the temple at a time before or after the Rapture, but in the ninth novel in the Left Behind series,

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[556] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,*118.
[557] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 118.
[558] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,*118.
[559] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,*118.

Desecration,[560] this takes place after the rapture, specifically forty-two months, into the tribulation when Carpathia breaks the covenant signed with Israel and occupies the rebuilt temple. Palm-waving throngs follow the white robed Carpathia through the Via Dolorosa, the Place of the Skull, the Garden Tomb and ending on the Temple Mount. A guillotine in a free-standing frame with a drape is seen where the crowded is congregating, apparently as Buck muses, "so that the disembodied could be discreetly hidden once the awful sound and severing had served their determining purpose."[561]

> As the supplicants finished showing each other their marks and posing for pictures, they were funneled to the east-facing steps of the new temple, where the winning image of Carpathia stood at the second to the top level. The temple itself, a sparkling replica of Solomon's original house for God, was pristine but simple on the outside, as if modest about the extravagance of cedar and olive wood, laden with gold and silver and brass on the inside.[562]

Outside the entrance to the temple were two freestanding pillars where Buck could see what appeared to be a recently fabricated platform, made of wood but painted gold. "Carpathia leaves out nothing," Chaim told him. "That appears to be a replica of where both Solomon and the evil Antiochus – a forerunner of Antichrist – stood to address the people in centuries past."[563]

> Many gasped and fell to their knees upon their first glimpse of the golden statue, the sun bouncing off its contours. Unlike the mark application lines, this one moved more quickly as dozens at a time rushed the steps and knelt − weeping, bowing, praying, singing, worshiping the very image of their god.[564]

The irate Carpathia, however, is dissatisfied: "This assemblage is not unanimous in its dedication to me!" the image booms, and grown men it is related, fall to the ground

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[560] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration,* 67-9.
[561] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration,* 68.
[562] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration,* 68.
[563] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration*, 69. The non-dispensational interpretation, either in preterist and historical critical sense, would be that the history of Antiochus as narrated in the book of Daniel 10-11, was a singular train of events that had already taken place and not to be repeated as a future event. For PMDs, it is prophecy of a future event and in terms of historicist typology, an Old Testament event patterning a historical event in the future.
[564] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration*, 69.

weeping: "I am the maker of heaven and earth, the god of all creation. I was and was not and am again! Bow before your lord!" and again, "The choice you make this day," the golden image roared, "It is between life and death! Beware, you who would resist the revelation of your true and living god, who resurrected himself from the dead!"[565]

Back to the present and the non-fictional, we find that many PMD authors and researchers[566] are engaged in documenting and analysing events pertaining to the rebuilding of the temple. We also find that the zeal of extreme Jewish Zionists[567] and American Christian Zionists co-dependently work towards hastening this fulfillment. A major concern is who is involved in preparations for the construction of the temple, and what progress has been made towards this end. According to LaHaye and Jenkins, ever since the Jews took temporary possession of the temple site after the Six Day War in 1967, there have been rumours that various groups[568] have been working clandestinely to prepare all the material it needs – from the robes of the priests to the tapestry in the temple.

- The Temple Institute has made almost all the 102 utensils needed for temple worship according to biblical and rabbinic standards, and these with garments

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[565] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration*, 69.

[566] See Grant R. Jeffrey, *The New Temple and the Second Coming* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2007); Ben-Dov Meir, *In the Shadow of the Temple; The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem* (London: Jason Aronson, 1985); Thomas Ice and Randall Price, *Ready to Rebuild: The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House, 1992; Don Stewart and Chuck Missler, *The Coming Temple* (Orange, CA: Dart Press, 1991); See Sizer, *Road to Armageddon*, 170-182, for a comprehensive commentary on the temple in the context of Christian Zionism. Also Baigent, *Racing Towards Armageddon*, Chapters 1-5.

[567] Carmi Gillon, "The Faithful and the Eccentric," n.p. [Cited 31 May 2009]. Online: www.bitter_lemons .org regards the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif in the holy land as "a nitroglycerin keg upon which are sitting together Jews and Muslims." Gillon relates how for 2,000 years the Jews have not only referred in their morning prayers to the sacrifice of Isaac which, as tradition holds took place on the Mount, but have also prayed for the renewal of redemption there. The Muslims who with short interruptions have controlled the Temple Mount since 638 C.E. equally sanctify it. "No wonder the Temple Mount was the only issue that moved the most moderate of Muslims, such as the Israeli Arabs, to take to the streets when disturbances broke out there in 1990 and after the Sharon visit in 2000. Gillon, past Israeli General Security Service (Shabak) from 1994 to 1996, and past head of the department in the Shabak that dealt with extremist right and left wing ideological criminality, and mayor of Mevasseret Zion, near Jerusalem."

[568] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,* 120. Of the various groups referred to two most prominent are the Temple Mount Faithful led by Gershom Salomon, and the Temple Institute led by Israel Ariel. Salomon was criticised throughout the world for organising prayer meetings on the site of the first two temples. He even tried to "lay a four-and-a-half ton cornerstone on the Temple Mount, but was halted by the Israeli government, whose officials know that the Middle East is a tinder box waiting for a spark to thrust the nation into another war and nothing would start it sooner and protract it longer than to desecrate this Muslim holy site."

and vessels are on display for tourists to see at Temple Institute's Tourist Center in the Old City.[569]

- Yeshivas have been established to train and qualify Levites for the future priesthood, clothing is being made and efforts are underway to secure kosher animals for sacrifice.[570]

- Red heifers, traditionally significant in Jewish temple worship, have been bred in a programme set up in Israel in 1996 with the help of Texas ranchers who are fundamentalist Christians a red heifer was born resulting in immense excitement among messianists of the Israeli Religious Right, and their American Christian counterparts.[571]

Efforts to recover lost temple treasures in the city's substructures, to find the ingredients for the oil of the anointing, to produce the rare blue dye needed for the priestly robes, from the mollusk, an extinct Mediterranean creature, but identified as the hillazon snail in Red Sea, are followed closely by Christian Zionists. No less, the reconvening of the Sanhedrin, which to all accounts[572] took place on January 20, 2005. Besides issuing directives and overseeing operations, the task of this body is to locate the correct spot for the rebuilding, to draw up architectural plans, and to call for donors to contribute funds, which would run into billions of dollars, to build the temple.[573] Awaiting the sign to start actual construction, the necessary material is quarried off-site, prefabricated, and stored away "in the manner of King David."[574]

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[569] Jeffrey, *The New Temple*, 125-144.

[570] Jeffrey, *The New Temple*, 120-121.

[571] Gershom Gorenberg cited in Rod Dreher, "Red-Heifer Days: Religion takes the Lead, NRO," [cited 28 August 2008] Online: www.nationalreview.com/dreher/dreher041102.asp relates how the project turned out after the three years of waiting for the heifer to reach the mandatory requirements: "White hairs popped out on the tip of her tail. This bovine was, alas, not divine. But now there's a successor, and rabbis who have examined her have declared her ritually acceptable (though she will not be ready for sacrifice for three years). She arrives at a time when Israel is fighting a war for survival with the Palestinians, who are almost entirely Muslim, and a time in which Islam and the West appear to be girding for battle with each other, as Islamic tradition predicts will be the state of the world before the Final Judgment." Also Baigent, *Racing Towards Armageddon* 20-24.

[572] Jeffrey, *The New Temple*, 106.

[573] Interest in the end-times and the prophetic role of Israel has meant tens of millions of dollars of support every year from evangelical Christians in the U.S. Besides solidarity tours and Feast of Tabernacles celebrations, this support funds projects in Israel ranging from helping immigrants and planting vines to promoting settlement expansion through funding of temple projects, and decrying any plans for Jerusalem other than unilateral control by Israel. See Sizer, *Road to Armageddon*, 206-53.

[574] Jeffrey, *The New Temple*, 106-10.

The issue of where the new temple will be situated is as volatile as that of when the temple will be rebuilt.[575] The major obstacle is obvious: the *Haram al Sharif,* the Dome of the Rock, is located on the very spot Christians believe the First and Second Temples were located.[576] For LaHaye and Jenkins there are three possible scenarios: (1) When Russia and her Muslim allies invade Israel, probably least three and a half years before to the Tribulation, their destruction will draw Jews to giving them sufficient time to rebuild their temple,[577] (2) When the Antichrist enters into an agreement with Israel and the remnants of the Arab world move to other countries,"[578] and (3) "elaborating on this, the covenant between Antichrist and Israel, the Jews might be permitted to rebuild the temple.[579]

3.5 Igniting the keg – Armageddon!

Gillon says that these very days, when the large majority of Israelis support dismantling settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, are the days when these "dangerous people[580] rouse themselves." "They hold the flame that is liable to ignite the nitroglycerin keg upon which we sit on the Temple Mount and to bring disaster upon us

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[575] Gillon, "The Faithful and the Eccentric," n.p [Cited 31 May, 2009]. Online: www.bitter_lemons .org contends that Israeli far right wing ideology is inclined to "combine national symbols of secular origin with messianic mystic ideas." Many religious people the thought of the Six-Day War and the return to the "land of the fathers" in Judea and Samaria as the "beginning of redemption." The issue of the Greater Land of Israel which inspired ideological consensus among members Gush Emunim and messianism in general, in contrast to the legitimacy of activism concerning the Temple Mount resulted in disputation – this being rooted mainly in religious law (halacha) and from the more technical matter of where the precise location of the holy of holies, the temple is. Gillon points out that it is "the prohibition by the rabbinic establishment on entering the holy of holies that prevents the vast majority of the religious public from ascending to the Mount and leaves the issue of its redemption to the messiah."

[576] Jeffrey, *The New Temple*, 95-100.

[577] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,*123.

[578] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,*123.

[579] LaHaye and Jenkins, *End Times,*123. It is however, not an uncontested fact that the First and Second Temples stood exactly on the spot where the Dome of the Rock stands today; Jeffrey supports the view of recent archeological research that the original temple site is located more than one hundred and fifty feet north of the Dome of the Rock, opposite the Eastern Gate. Israel could there rebuild the Temple without disturbing the Dome of the Rock.

[580] Gillon, "The Faithful and the Eccentric," n.p., past Israeli General for Security Service (Shabak) from 1994 to 1996, and past head of the department, is referring to ideological criminals capable of deep and serious political messianic thinking: Jewish underground leader Yehuda Etzion, Rabbi Meir Kahane, leader of the Kach movement, who was placed under administrative detention in 1980 because he intended to fire a missile at the Temple Mount, also messianic groups of criminal born-again Jews also sought to assist the coming of the messiah by blowing up the Dome of the Rock. See Baigent, *Racing Towards Armageddon*, 5-11 for an account of tensions between Jews and Muslims around the Temple Mount in 1967, the year of the birth of the State of Israel.

all."[581] I add that in the face of the inflammatory hostilities between Jews and Muslims, leading to wide-scale extermination of human life, idealogues such as LaHaye and less nuanced, Jerry Falwell, John Hagee,[582] and Pat Robertson,[583] continued to enjoin Americans to support Zionism, through temple financing, public and foreign policy and opposition to peace initiatives – all for the sake of Armageddon.

According to LaHaye, Armageddon, the last great war of history will take place in Israel in conjunction with the second coming of Christ. The battle or campaign of Armageddon is described in Daniel 11: 40-45; Joel 3: 9-17; Zechariah 14:1-3 and Revelation 16:14-16. It will occur in the final days of the Tribulation and John tells us that the kings of the world will be gathered together "for the great day of God, the Almighty" in a place known as "Har-magedon (Rev16:16:14,16 *NASB*). The site for the converging of the armies is Esdraelon, around the hill of Megiddo. The area is located in northern Israel, about 20 miles southeast of Haifa, and 50 miles north of Jerusalem. This area was the scene of many battles in Old Testament times.[584]

LaHaye also relates that great armies will gather and assemble on this plain; the Antichrist will defeat armies from the south that would threaten his power, destroy Babylon and finally turn his forces to Jerusalem, at which time "God will intervene and Jesus Christ will return to rescue his people."[585] "The Lord and His angelic army will destroy the Antichrist's armies, capture the Antichrist and the false prophet and cast them into the lake of fire (Rev 19:11-12)."[586]

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[581] Gillon, "The Faithful and the Eccentric," n.p.

[582] See John Hagee, *In Defense of Israel* (Lake Mary, Florida: Frontline,1982) and Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, for provocative pro-Zionist statements. See also Julia Duin, "American Jews Don't Support 'Christian Zionism,' New Survey Indicates" in *Church and State* 61,, no. 8, September, (2008): 21, for a report on a poll which indicates that the "Religious Right Backed Christian Zionist" groups have not won the support of other prominent Christian Zionists. According to the report a survey of 800 Jews taken by J. Street, a group that supports diplomacy to achieve peace in the Middle East, found that 78 percent oppose Jewish groups forming an alliance with Pastor John Hagee and other prominent Christian Zionists. Hagee, referred a Texas mega-church minister, was in the news earlier this year after he endorsed Republican presidential candidate John McCain . . . . The poll showed that Hagee is fairly well known in the Jewish community. "Sixty-five percent of respondents said they had heard of him, but he also has high negatives. Only 7 percent of respondents said they view Hagee favourably, while 57 were unfavourable."

[583] See Pat Robertson, *The New Millennium: 10 Trends that will Impact You and Your Family in the Year 2000* (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1990), 263-94 for a plea for American support of Jews against the Palestinians.

[584] Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, *Global Warning: Are We on the Brink of World War III?* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 201.

[585] LaHaye and Hindson, *Global Warning,* 202.

[586] LaHaye and Hindson, *Global Warning,* 202.

LaHaye points out that the detailed sequence of events, and the terms used in relation to Armageddon, show that it is a campaign of a series of battles rather than a single battle: "Rather than referring to it as the final battle, we should refer to it as a campaign or war."[587] Armageddon will be a series of conflicts that culminate in the second coming of Jesus Christ. The battles occur over a period of at least several days, and more likely, several weeks are carried out over a wide geographic area to the north and south of Jerusalem and as far east as Babylon."[588]

In the eleventh novel in the Left Behind series, *Armageddon: The Cosmic Battle of the Ages*, Carpathia introduces in a GCNN broadcast his three most trusted aides, namely Ashtaroth, Baal and Cankerworm. Carpathia lays hands on these "spirit beings," conferring on them the "power to perform signs and heal the sick and raise the dead, if need be, to convince the world that victory is ours. And now go in power. . . "[589] As Carpathia departs with the words, "Farewell one and all. I will see you in six months in the plain of Megiddo on that great day when victory shall be in sight,"[590] Buck and Tsion reach for their Bibles, recognising that the three spirit beings are the three frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet (Rev 16:13). [591]

Although the narrative has moved forward from Revelation 7 to 16, the 144,000 converted Jews, under leadership of Tsion, are still active in their attempts to evangelise unbelieving Jews. The eight stages of Armageddon are deployed mainly around Petra and Jerusalem. The Tribulation Force has scattered; new characters have been drawn into the circle, and leadership has fallen to Rayford Steele. Towards the end of Armageddon, Chloe, who has been held in detention by Global Community forces, is martyred by the blade of the guillotine.[592] Then six years and eleven months into the

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[587] Hal Lindsey, *Planet Earth 2000 A.D.* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front,1994), 215, stresses that talking about "the battle of Armageddon" is incorrect; "This isn't a battle. It's a war. The Bible never talks about a 'battle' of Armageddon. There are several huge battles. And the reason Armageddon is at the center of things in this great conflagration is simply because it is the geographical, strategic center of the land bridge between three continents and a vital link for Asia to the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf." Also, "What we're talking about here is simply the greatest holocaust in the history of the world. For the first and last time, man will be totally released from God's restraint to do what has always been in his heart."
[588] LaHaye and Hindson, *Global Warning,* 202.
[589] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 259.
[590] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 259.
[591] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 260.
[592] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 221-25.

Tribulation, Buck's hip is torn when a wall over the Old City crumbles and hanging upside down he dies from a loss of blood.[593] The climactic moment when Jesus descends on Mt Olivet to finally declare victory over Antichrist is held over till the last novel, *Glorious Appearing*.

4. SCENARIO 2: ESTABLISHMENT OF A THEOCRACY

4.1 The Outcome

And God said unto them, [Adam and Eve] Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and *subdue it;* and have dominion …over every living thing ….." (Gen 1:28).

4.2 Dominionism and its Many Movements

Scofield, refers to Genesis 1:28 as "the divine Magna Charta (sic)," authorising as it does, "man's mastery over the earth and every living thing."[594] As Yurica defines it: "Dominionism in its broadest sense believes [or teaches] that 'Christians' have a right to rule and dominate over others."[595]The following table is an aid to situating LaHaye's dominionist orientations. A number of titles can be consulted in order to grasp the various facets of Dominionism.[596]

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[593] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 316-17.

[594] Schuyler, English, *The New Scofield Study Bible*, 3.

[595] Yurica, Katherine, *Bloodguilty Churches*, (Erasmus Books, 2005), xiv

[596] For further consultation a selection of the most relevant works, is referred to. Essential reading is John Rousas Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1973). See also works of his son-in-law Gary North, i.e. three articles as appendices in *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. For a sampling of typical Dominionist teaching without the Rushdoonian theocracy vision see C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion! How Kingdom Action Can Change the World* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 2008); Documentary works include Frederick Clarkson, *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy.* Monroe, Maine: Common Courage, 1997); Derek Davis and Barry Hankins, *New Religious Movements and Religious Liberty in America*; (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2003); Chip Berlet, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000); Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005). See also Katherine Yurica www.yurica.com and Chip Berlet, www. Publiceye.org for a wide array of articles on Dominionism and related issues as well as links to relevant sources.

TABLE VIII: DOMINIONIST-ORIENTATED MOVEMENTS

ROOTS	MOVEMENT OR INSTITUTION	KEY FIGURES
John Calvin Cornelis van Til Abraham Kuyper	**Reconstructionism Chalcedon Foundation**	Rousas Rushdoony
Accent: Conservative Christian Protestants are destined to transform North American society and the world according to the precepts of the law as enshrined in the Pentateuch.		
Rousas Rushdoony	**Christian Institute of Economics**	Gary North
Accent: Reconstructionism as above, with emphasis on the biblical mandate for free market capitalism and anti-socialism.		
Latter Rain teaching of 1940s to 1950s and Serpent-Seed Theory of William Branham	**Joel's Army, or Manifest Sons of God**	Rick Joyner, Jack Deere, John Wimber, Todd Bentley
Accent: One aspect is that God's warriors will inherit the earth, and rule the nations before Christ comes back, another, that evil resulted from relations between Eve and the snake (See Serpent-Seed Theory in Glossary of Select Terms)		
"Kansas City Prophets," the Vineyard Fellowship	**Spiritual Warfare Movement**	Cindy Jacobs, Peter Wagner, Chuck Pierce, Bill Hamon
Accent: Advancement of the Kingdom of God through "spiritual warfare" activities such as chanting, walks, and marches, creating spiritual "canopies" over regions.		
Pentecostals, Neo-pentecostals and charismatics.	**New Apostolic Reformation "The Third Wave'**	Peter Wagner
Accent: The placement of a key apostle in a region invites intercessors and prophets to claim dominion over the region.		
Paul Vereide	**The Family** Cell groups that meet for National Prayer Breakfasts.	Douglas Coe
Accent: Establishment of an American Empire through fundamentalist elites.		
British-Israelism Two seed teaching (similar to Serpent-Seed Theory of Branham)	**Far Right** The Aryan Nations Neo Nazis, Neo Fascists Christian Identity Ku Klux Klan, Patriot and Militia Movements The Hutaree	Given the fluidity of these movements it is impossible to name leaders. A number of authoritative works can be consulted for fuller information.[597]
Accent: White supremacy and a negation of the rights of non-Aryan races.		

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[597] For an analysis of the origins, splintering and internal shifts within the far-right extremism in the U.S. See Neiwert, *The Eliminationists*, 148-200. Also Richard Abanes, *End-time Visions: The Road to Armageddon* (New York and London: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998) and Simon Pearson, *The End of the World: From Revelation to Eco-Disaster* (London: Robinson, 2006); Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*: *The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1996); A recommended introduction to Seedline Theology is Jon F. Schamber and Scott, R. Stroud, "Mystical Anti-Semitism and the Christian Identity Movement: A Narrative Criticism of Dan Gayman's 'The Two Seeds of Genesis 3:15.'" (A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association, 86th Seattle WA, November 9-12, 2000).

The main characteristic of Dominionism is networking; one person being a member of three different organisations, boards of directors interlocking, several movements drawing from a particular prophetic teacher.[598] Yet, a first glance at the table elicits the feeling that it seems quite incongruous that such diverse groups should be networked.

It will be noticed that the table of movements is divided into three sections. The top section indicates movements of a Reformed background, therefore postmillennial and cessationist; the third a cluster of movements originating in early pentecostalism, neo-pentecostalism and charismatic movement is by its nature not cessationist, but most likely harbouring a mixture of premillennialism and postmillennialism; the third section is a conglomerate of so-called hate groups of mixed religious and secular orientations. Given the doctrinal differences between the groups one might imagine that the Reformed group would not be in conversation with the pentecostal group, and that both these groups would not be in conversation with the Far Right, and vice-versa. Yet what binds them together is a future utopia, one not necessarily shared by the wider evangelicalism.

While Dominionism is essentially a kaleidoscope of Protestant movements, it has some interaction with right-wing Traditional Roman Catholic[599] alliances, forums, publications, forums, legions that by definition are pro-life, anti-secularist and Anti-Semitic. These movements, some regarded as schismatic, also referred to as "hate groups," strive for the revival of "Christian Civilization," which differs doctrinally from Dominionism but shares some of its proclaimed values and sentiments.

In the nature of the "culture wars," critiques of Dominionism tend to draw from conspiracy theories in pointing out sinister connections and occult sources. That is not to say that all this evidence is false − given the networking nature of Dominionism, an absolutely accurate picture will always elude, as obfuscation is an inherent effect of any networking movements aspiring for ideological hegemony.

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[598] Networking is a typical strategy of the New Age movement which Dominionism seems to emulate though in actual fact it would regard it as an enemy of Christianity. One aspect of New Age networking would be that if, at any time, one part of the network suffers and is no longer functioning effectively to further the mass acceptance of new age philosophy, the defective part can conveniently be cut out without affecting the system as a whole. See Dirk Goertz, *Transcendental Typology: The Essence of Primal/New Age Theology* (Shippensburg*:* Destiny Image Publishers,1990), 84.

[599] "Catholic Hate," Ad Dominum, [Cited 6 August 2010]. Online: ad dominum.com/p=2372

4.3 LaHaye and Dominionism

4.3.1 The Influence of Rushdoony

Tim LaHaye was among the first religious right leaders to popularise Dominionism with his *The Battle for the Mind* in 1980. Although LaHaye credits Francis Schaeffer[600] for his inspiration, he would also have been familiar with Rousas Rushdoony's *The Institutes of Biblical Law* published in 1973. Presumably interaction followed when Rushdoony was named to the Council of National Policy founded by LaHaye in 1980.

The significance of *The Institutes of Biblical Law* was that it emphasised biblical mandates for proposed action against the pervasive humanism. The first was the *creation mandate* that required that man subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it. "There is not one word of Scripture to indicate that it was revoked."[601] The other was a cultural mandate of which the first step is by bringing man to regeneration by giving him the Word of God, and the second to demolish every kind of theory, humanistic, evolutionary, idolatrous or otherwise, and every kind of rampart or opposition to the dominion of God in Christ.[602] These mandates are embedded in the immutable law of God as prescribed in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy and the literal application of these laws covering detailed treatments of taxation, government, virtue, oaths, penal sanctions, property, and nearly every domain of jurisprudence.

Many of the issues raised by Rushdoony resonated with LaHaye's concerns[603] about the humanistic onslaught, however, in *Battle for the Mind* LaHaye's solution revolved around the belief that "No humanist is qualified to hold any governmental office in America − United States senator, congressman, cabinet member, State Department employee, or any other position that requires him to think in the best interest of

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[600] Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982). While Schaeffer opposed humanism he did not favour the establishment of a theocracy as did Rushdoony.

[601] Rushdoony, *The Institutes*, 14.

[602] Rushdoony, *The Institutes*, 725.

[603] Beyond this common concern Rushdoony and LaHaye, both members of the John Birch Society, Council of National Policy and Coalition for Revival, were different in many respects. Rushdoony was more doctrinaire and intellectual, demonstrating an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the Church, while LaHaye was more of a populariser and pragmatist. The biggest difference, however, was that Rushdoony the Calvinist was a postmillennialist laying great emphasis on covenant theology; LaHaye a premillennialist with emphasis on fulfilled prophecy.

America,"[604] and again, "The major problems of our day – moral, educational, economical, and governmental – are primarily caused by the fact that over 50 percent of our legislators are either committed humanists or are severely influenced in their thinking by the false theories of humanism."[605]

In a next stage he wrote: "It is time that the 110,000 faithful ministers from every Bible-believing denomination in our country lead the 60 million Christians to vote out of office every devotee of humanism and every politician naïve enough to vote for humanist programs. For example, every office holder in our land – local, state, and national − regardless of party, who votes for or advocates the following, [606]should be voted out of office."[607]

4.3.2 Dominionist Movements and the LB Corpus

While a number of PMDs looked to postmillennialism in the early 1980s in their move to the social arena, postmillennialists,[608] were extremely critical of the rapture teaching of the PMDs. LaHaye, experiencing alienation from the Reconstructionists on account of his premillennial teaching, would find greater rapport among the neo-pentecostal and charismatics, in so far they believe in the imminent rapture and offensive against the forces of the Antichrist during the tribulation. Dogemperor suggests a link between LaHaye and the Joel's Army, a movement which "not unlike Al Quaida – has their own versions of 'training centers and religious indoctrination to breed kids in the group to be blessedly violent'. Some of the 'Bible-based boot camps' double as 'Joel's Army madrassas,' . . . and often paramilitary training occurs there. Not only that, but there's an

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[604] LaHaye, *Battle for the Mind,* 78.

[605] LaHaye, *Battle for the Mind,* 77-8.

[606] Abortion-on-demand, Equal Rights Amendment; Decriminalization of Prostitution; Approval of Homosexuality and Lesbianism; Child's Rights over Parents' Rights; Legalizing of Marijuana; Gambling; National Weakness through Disarmament.

[607]See Katherine Yurica in yuricareport.com/Dominionism/OutingCreepingDominionism.html for the report. On September 25, 1985Tim LaHaye, appeared in a film clip with Phyllis Schlafly in which he laid out the plan to take over the government of the United States: La Haye, *Battle for the Mind,* 137-138: "Suppose that every Bible believing church − all 110,000 − decided to . . . . raise up one person to run for public office and win . . . If every church in the next ten years did that, we would have more Christians in office than there are positions . . . there are only 97,000 elective offices."

[608] See Gary North, *Rapture Fever: Why Dispensationalism is Paralyzed* (Tyler, Tex: Institute of Christian Economics, 1993). See also Gary de Mar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church with the Last Days* (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1997). See also Gary de Mar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical*

increasing trend to home-educate kids and then send them to paramilitary training facilities as part of the 'Joshua Generation' that − in their mythology − is destined to sweep the land like a plague of locusts."[609] Then in the same vein as Hutson who saw LB:EF as a Dominionist game, Dogemperor makes the thought-provoking statement that the Left Behind" books − and especially the Left Behind: Eternal Forces game – "are essentially fictionalizations of Joel's Army theology."[610]

LaHaye, whose dominionist involvement[611] became less public after 1995 when the first Left Behind novel was published is not referred to at all by analysts of the Far Right, John Gray[612] and David Neiwert.[613] However, Edmund D. Cohen observes this connection of LaHaye with the Patriot and Militia movements: "When I first became acquainted with this story, I had the nagging feeling that I had run into it before. That prompted me to reread *The Turner Diaries*. The parallels between it and the *Left Behind* saga are stunning."

> The *Left Behind* series and *The Turner Diaries* each present a nightmarish, through-the-looking-glass world. Each work's hero is an insurgent against an

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Consideration of the Left Behind Theology (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001).

[609] Dogemperor, "Dueling Holy Wars: Air Force Commander Embraces Joel's Army Paramilitary Group," n.p. [Cited 18 July 2009].

[610]Dogemperor, "Dueling Holy Wars," n.p., describes Joel's Army as essentially teaching that the "Saved" are a "kind of übermensch, and that everything is the subject of massive territorial battles between them and the "Armies of Satan." He mentions a number of tactics of spiritual abuse common in these groups. These include a "Big Brother' system of 'shepherding;'" "horrific involuntary 'exorcisms' of walkaways;" "domestic terror;" "frank murders and assaults against LGBT people;" "Pogroms against Moslems and members of non-Abrahamic religions."

[611] Main involvements of LaHaye since running seminars for the John Birch Society during the 1960 have been: 1979 – Founds with his wife Beverley, Concerned Women for America, a group that counters feminism and the women's rights movement; 1980 – LaHaye witnesses the birth of the Moral Majority and agrees to serve on its first board of directors under the mentorship of the Rev. Jerry Falwell; 1981− LaHaye co-founds and becomes first president of the Council for National Policy (CNP), a covert umbrella group of far right leaders who plot strategies to advance a theocratic agenda; 1983, LaHaye opens the American Coalition for Traditional Values. (ACTV pronounced "active") The group, which drew support from powerful religious broadcasters and other right-wing church leaders, pledged to mobilise "Christian" voters to elect ultra-conservative candidates to public office. 1985 to 1990 – LaHaye faces revelations about LaHaye's sponsoring of the anti-catholic group, Mission to Catholics, during the 1970s; his firing of the principal of Scott Memorial's private school because the man was a registered Democrat who dared to take issue with his pastor's far-right political views; his acceptance of money from the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the controversial Korean evangelist, and his joining the board of another Moon front, the Council for Religious Freedom (CRF), which was formed primarily as a vehicle to protest against Moon's 1984 imprisonment after he was convicted of filing false tax returns and obstructing justice.1995 – LaHaye, and Jenkins publish the first Left Behind novel. For a fuller account, see Rob Boston, "Left Behind" in *Church & State*, February 2002. n.p.

[612] John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).

[613] Neiwert, *The Eliminationists,*47.

insidious, uncanny conspiracy of world domination originating in Israel. Each is an evangelist, always on the lookout for qualified recruits. The parallelism of GC and the System, Judah-ites and the Organization, the Trib Force and the Order is clear enough. (For all Turner knows, there could be a conspiratorial, Jewish Nicolae-counterpart behind the scenes.) The Trib Force has supported itself thus far by embezzling the GC. The Organization financed its rampages by armed robbery and counterfeiting. Rayford Steele's sights are set on a believers-only utopia; Earl Turner's on a gentiles-only utopia.[614]

Cohen relates extreme racist views of the milieu in which *The Turner Diaries* transpire to the Left Behind novels. In fact Frykholm also remarked that in the novels white men are the "natural" leaders of the Tribulation Force and all "others" – African Americans, Arabs, Asians, people from many nations and converts to Christianity from many faiths – submit to their leadership, sometimes in scenes of disturbing capitulation."[615] Indeed, in reading the novels, white leadership is taken for granted and ethnicity never questioned. In the films, however, Pastor Bruce Barnes is black and although he missed the rapture, like so many whites did, he becomes a leader of the Tribulation Force and dies a martyr. Another Black, the U.S. President, John Fitzhugh, wearied by the question as to why Christians are so averse to peace, honours and serves the interests of Nicolae Carpathia, but after converting to evangelical Christianity, heads for martyrdom through the supernatural powers of Carpathia.

Racism in Evangelical, Dominionist-orientated movements, and by implication the LB Corpus, must be viewed against the 252 year old history of white-black relations in the U.S. culminating in the Civil Rights Act in the 1960s.[616] Since slavery, harassment, discrimination, demonisation and scapegoating were typical behaviours and attitudes in evangelical sectors not associated with fundamentalism and PMD, I would not regard racism as a major outcome of the LB Corpus in particular. Given LaHaye's resilience in portraying blacks in a positive, light for whatever motivation, it is not clear to what

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[614] Edmund D. Cohen Review of the "Left Behind" Tribulation Novels: Turner Diaries Lite, in *Free Inquiry Magazine, Volume 21,* no.2 (2006) n.p. www.secularhumanism.org/ library/ fi/cohen_21_2.html

[615] Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 178.

[616] See Michael O' Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race* (Oxford: Oxford: University Press, 2000), especially Chapter 2 for a detailed treatment of race issues in the United States.

extent Rushdoony's invectives[617] against "Negroes," inter-racial marriages and non-slavery have found correspondence in LaHaye's anti-humanist thinking.

4.4 The Revival of Fascism

Recurring terms in critiques on Dominionism are fascism and utopia, often linked together, sometimes apart, but always in the context of the growing emergence of a totalitarian state promoted by the idealogues of the early 1980s. In this section I deal, however, with fascism, reserving reflection on utopia to the concluding chapter where the question will be become relevant.

If fascism seems a rather and outmoded and weighty term to describe contemporary dominionist movements, it must be borne in mind that as used by a number of theorists, it is a nuanced and graded movement not bound to any time or place. According to Neiwert, the consensus and debate since the early 1990s over fascism has tended to revolve around the work of Roger Griffin who boiled fascism down to a basic core which he calls "palingenetic ultranationalist populism;" (Palingenesis being the concept of mythic rebirth from the ashes, embodied by the phoenix.)[618] Griffen resists the idea of viewing fascism as a mature phenomenon such as Payne or Marxist models and qualifies his argument thus: "However, if we think of it as 'a core ideology of nationalism that aspires to bring about the renewal of a nation's entire political culture, then the picture changes.' The fascist core that emerges 'is its only permanent feature: the war against the decadence of society and the struggle for national rebirth." The

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[617] Three examples: Rushdoony, *Biblical Institutes*, 251, 286: "Biblical Law permits voluntary slavery because it recognizes that some people are not able to able to maintain a position of independence …. The law is human and also unsentimental. It recognizes that some people are by nature slaves and will always be so. It both requires that they be dealt with in a godly manner and that the slave recognize his position and accept it with grace;" Rousas Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Fairfax VA: Thoburn Press, 1978), 3-4, 19, 25: "For example the white man is being systematically indoctrinated into believing that he is guilty of enslaving and abusing the negro. Granted that some negroes were mistreated as slaves, the fact still remains that nowhere in all history or in the world today has the negro been better off…." Rushdoony, *Biblical Institutes*, 257: "The burden of the law is against inter-religious, inter-racial, and inter-cultural marriages, in that they normally go against the very community which marriage is designed to establish."

[618] A fuller definition by Robert Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford; Oxford University Press,1995), see Neiwert, *The Eliminationists*, 108: "*Fascism:* Modern political ideology that seeks to regenerate the social, economic, and cultural life of a country by basing it on a heightened sense of belonging to ethnic identity. Fascism rejects liberal ideas such as freedom and individual rights, and often presses for the destruction elections, legislatures, and other elements of democracy. Despite the idealistic goals of fascism, attempts to build fascist societies have led to wars and persecutions that caused millions of deaths. As a result, fascism is strongly associated with right-wing fanaticism, racism, totalitarianism, and violence."

implication thus in terms of research and investigation is that until such time that a movement becomes mature there is a 'presence of latent fascistic forces at work around the world.'"[619]

Mel White, a former pastor, professor, television producer and ghostwriter for evangelical leaders such as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Billy Graham, draws closer to religious-right in documenting what he regards as the alarming rise to power of fundamentalist Christians in American politics and religion.[620] White does not advocate a direct comparison of fundamentalism with the regimes of Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco, but cites Henry Giroux in support of the idea that "fundamentalism is moving in this direction:" "The point is that it happens to be developing a number of characteristics that are endemic to fascist ideology. . . fascism is not an ideological apparatus frozen in a particular historical period but a theoretical signpost for how democracy can be subvert the future, if not destroyed."[621]

Ideology, as an outcome of a consistently literal interpretation within the framework common sense realism, presumes a constructedness of the divinity in both PMD and Dominionism. I will therefore, briefly examine the notion of a "crusader divinity," alternatively the term "Warrior God," so prevalent in the contemporary apocalyptic discourse.

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[619] Neiwert, *The Eliminationists,*109.

[620] Mel White, *Religion Gone Bad: The Hidden Dangers of the Christian Right* (New York: Jeremy Tarcher/Penguin, 2006). White exposes what he calls a "vicious campaign that fundamentalists are waging against homosexuality and gay Americans in order to raise funds and mobilise volunteers in a much broader war to control church and state alike." Pp. 70-1. He holds that the true goal of today's fundamentalist leaders are nothing less than to break down the wall that separates church and state, superimpose their "moral values" on the U.S. Constitution, replace democracy with theocratic rule, and ultimately to create a new "Christian nation" ruled exclusively by "righteous men." 2. White recalls a letter written to R.J. Rushdoony, founder of the reconstructionist Chalcedon Foundation and answered as follows: "God in His law requires the death penalty for homosexuals as restated in Romans 1:32." White, *Religion Gone Bad*, 108, adds that before his death Rushdoony made it clear that the death sentence should be applied to homosexuals if God were to bless the country once again. White acknowledges that "fortunately most fundamentalists don't go that far, at least not yet." White relates how at the Glen Eyrie Conference in May 1994, forty-three men and twelve women gathered to share mutual fears about the consequences of the "militant homosexual agenda," to determine how they could take "back the ground" that homosexual rights organisations had gained, and to prevent homosexuals from ever being recognized as a "protected class," 141-221. He views this event as being analogous to fifty-two years previously when "fifteen servants of the Third Reich assembled in an elegant guesthouse in a wealthy suburb of Berlin to organise a 'Final Solution' for six million European Jews."

[621] See White, *Religion Gone Bad*, 214, citing Henry A. Giroux, *The Terror of Neo-liberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder/London: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 14.

5. THE CRUSADER DIVINITY

5.1 In Service of God and Christendom

> We are coming to the times when passive Christianity and passive Christians will cease to exist. There is a maturity, a discipline, and a divine militancy coming upon the people of God. Those who have succumbed to humanistic and idealistic theologies may have a hard time with this, but we must understand that God is a military God. The title that He uses ten times more than any other in Scripture is "the Lord of hosts,' or "Lord of armies." There is a martial aspect to His character that we must understand and embrace for the times and the job to which we are now coming.[622]
>
> Rick Joyner, "Taking the Land"

> I can assure you that God never delivered any people from greater peril than that from which he saved our troops that day. There was not a man in the army, however bold and courageous, whose heart was not filled with joy. Thus the battle was halted that day, and by God's will nothing further happened . . . .The whole company joined in the most devout and reverent praises of our Lord, for having within so short a time delivered them and exalted them so high from such low estate. And therefore one my rightly say: "The man whom God desires to help no other man can harm.[623]
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> Joinville and Villeharouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*

Joyner, an affiliate in the PMD and Dominionist network, preparing for spiritual and physical combat against the forces of evil, and Joinville and Villeharouin, knights in France, setting out on the First Crusade to conquer infidels in service of God and Christendom, stand centuries apart. The former is situated in twenty-first-century United States of America and the latter in twelfth-century France. There would be many differences: Joyner would be guided by biblical prophecies, the latter by papal edict.[624]

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[622] Rick Joyner, "Taking the Land − We Are Establishing Our Eternal Place And Position Here On Earth," n.p. [cited 10 January 2009]. Online: www.elijahlist.com/words/ displayword.html?ID=3617

[623] Joinville and Villeharouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades* (New York: Dorset Press, 1963), 73.

[624] Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 29, contends: "The foundation texts of the Old and New Testaments were mediated even to the educated through the prism of 'so called' Church Fathers, theologians such as Origen of Alexandria, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo and Pope Gregory I who from the third to the sixth centuries, undertook the often tricky task of translating obscure, incomplete, contradictory or idealistic apophthegms into an intelligible and satisfying system of thought and action within the context of the action within the context of the institutions of

Besides many contextual differences they, however, shared a common belief − the imminent Second Coming of Christ, but with different accents − Joyner (more particularly for his PMD affiliation) this coming of Christ would be preceded by wide-scale evangelism (sometimes perceived as proselytism); for the latter the Jewish people must precede this return, but it would be necessary to force baptism on the Jews and to punish the obstinacy of those who refused.[625]

The belief in a God, who desires and sanctions war, who himself is therefore a warrior, is a legacy from ancient Israel, a legacy so vast that it cannot be documented here. Brief mention must be made of the Mars Ultor[626] cult which would have permeated the Graeco-Roman world, thus reinforcing the OT image of God as a warrior.

Tyerman writes, "Even in the New Testament the apocalypse described in the Revelation of St John is shot through with violence as part of the fulfilment of the Last Judgment, Citing Revelation 19:11-15 he sees such imagery and language as well as the martial history of the biblical Chosen People of God as feeding directly the world-view of the crusaders, "proving rich quarries alike for preachers and chroniclers."[627] Raymond of Aguilers, one of the first leaders of the Crusades who witnessed the fall of Jerusalem in 1099, described the ensuing massacre on the Temple Mount: "It is sufficient to relate that in the Temple of Solomon and the portico crusades rode in blood to the knees and bridles of their horses." He was quoting Revelation 14:20: "And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even up to the horse bridles."[628]

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an active religion, a temporal church and the daily lives of believers, " and, "The Church's teaching on war reflected this process on interpretation and exegesis. See also his comment on Christian just war, 33-35.

[625] Jean Richard, *The Crusades c.1071-c.1291* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 39. "The followers of Emich of Leiningen were characteristically keener to convert Jews to Christianity than to massacre them. It was Emich and his followers who held the conviction that the Jewish people must precede the imminent Second Coming of Christ and therefore enforced baptism on the Jews." Richard makes the point that this was in fact a deviation from the idea of the Crusade and aroused opposition among the clergy, bishops and archbishops of the Rhineland. Not only did they hold to the Church doctrine forbidding the forced conversion of Jews, but as temporal lords, was supposed to protect them.

[626] Mars was the Roman God of War, the most prominent of the military gods. The martial Romans considered him second in importance only to Jupiter their main god Mars later became associated with battle as the growing Roman Empire Mars later became associated with battle as the growing Roman Empire began to expand, and he came to be identified with the Greek god Ares. The temple to Mars Ultor ("The Avenger") was in the Forum Augustus.

[627] Tyerman, *God's War*, 31.

[628] Tyerman, *God's War*, 31.

Works of the following authors may be consulted for various facets of the supposed militaristic nature of God: Trempner Longman III,[629] Karen Armstrong,[630] Robert Oakes.[631]

5.2 Demotion of the Divinity

Having drawn the resemblances between the medieval crusades and contemporary militant movements, both motivated to destroy non-believers for God who wills such destruction, I now turn briefly to an inversion of such an image, one of a demotion of the divinity. Collins and Collins, propose that the concept of theocracy, as observed in Dominionism, has been replaced with a "quasi-sociocracy, the quest an earthly theocracy having exceeded its Christian context − not satisfied with the supposed limitations of cognitio fidei (the cognition of faith), Dominionists engage in the 'neo-Gnostic practice of immanentization.'"[632] They are attempting to "accelerate the march of God on earth," the intended outcome being no different from the "earthly Heavens envisioned by earlier sociopolitical Utopians: a socialist totalitarian system."[633]

Dominionism as it has been presented here is esoteric, sinister and elusive, and I will therefore not pursue it further in this thesis. However, since this dimension of Dominionism has been linked to The Family, works by Sharlet in which he distinguishes between populist and elite fundamentalism are enlightening.[634]

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[629] Trempner Longman III and Daniel Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

[630] Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London: HarperCollins, 2000); also Armstrong, *Holy War*.

[631] Robert Oakes "The Wrath of God," in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion,* 27, no. 3 (Jun., 1990): 129- 140

[632] See Paul Collins and Phillip Collins, "The Deep Politics of God: The CNP, Dominionism, and the Ted Haggard Scandal,"(February 27 2007) n.p. [cited 11December 2009]. Online: www. conspiracyarchive.com/Commentary/CN.P._Dominionism2.htm

[633] Collins and Collins, "The Deep Politics of God," n.p. trace this practice to "earlier sociopolitical Utopians, specifically communists and fascists, who typically rejected the traditional Abrahamic faiths in favour of a radically secular *Weltanschauung*." They cite Wolfgang Smith's perspective: "In place of an Eschaton which ontologically transcends the confines of the this world, the modern Gnostic envisions an End *within history*, an Eschaton, therefore, which is to be realized *within the ontological plane of this visible universe* Elsewhere Collins and Collins speak of a "strand of cessationism," which portrays God as an "absentee landlord."

[634] Sharlet, *The Family*, also, Jeff Sharlet, "Through a Glass Darkly: "How the Christian Right is Reimagining US History," n.p [Cited: November 10 2009]. Online: harpers.org/ archive/2006/12/008/322

6. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has served to bring into relief the dialectic nature of the ideology of the LB Corpus − the rebuilding of the temple unleashing Armageddon and the establishment of the Theocracy, but also between a theocracy and sociocracy. From the first thoughts on ideology posited at the beginning we have seen how these two scenarios strive to fill the gap between theory and reality. The Millennium beckons, or rather is precipitated by Armageddon which if stalled calls for a rereading of the script. The utopia envisaged eludes as other scripts are played out in the present; to avert disheartenment alternative scripts must be devised.[635]

Whatever rationale may be offered for LaHaye's dual ideology, the fact remains that it manifests itself in the crusader impulse. This need not necessarily be a replication of the archetypal holy war in all it local circumstances, but it needs to evidence at least that one outcome of any group, or religious tradition that has constructed the divinity in terms of militancy and violence. As Jewett and Lawrence note, "The warriors who conducted the crusades and the internecine Christian wars on the European continent were little deterred by the Sermon on the Mount or the other sources of prophetic realism within the Judaeo-Christian tradition."[636] And as he sees it, "the terroristic visions of holiness in the twentieth century seem unaffected by these earlier historical experiences of disillusionment because they focus on purity and spiritual proofs of zeal rather than on pragmatic survival."[637]

Intolerance and spiritual aggrandizement remain the hallmark of such a tradition until some paradigmatic shift can take place that at least dismantles the barrier between "us" and "them." In the Roman Catholic tradition the spirit of Crusades and the Inquisition, was overridden by recognition of the "Dignity of the Human Person" as stated in the "Declaration for Religious Freedom at the Second Vatican Council."[638]

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[635] The question of realised and unrealised utopias will be referred to again in Chapter 7.

[636] Jewett and Lawrence, *Captain America*, 162.

[637] Jewett and Lawrence, *Captain America*, 162.

[638] "Declaration on Religious Liberty," *Dignitatis Humanae,* in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (gen ed. Austin Flannery OP; Mumbai: St Paul's, 1975), 704: "The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to against his convictions in religious matters in private and public, alone or in association with others. The Council further declares that the right to religious freedom is based on the very

J.M. Vorster states that the Reformed tradition founded human dignity in the doctrine of creation and especially in the biblical teaching that humankind was created in the image of God (*imago dei*).[639] Humans now display a tarnished image of God . . . but God bestows on sinful man, a dignity which comes to the fore in the duties and rights that are correlated concepts.[640] However, as Vorster argues it is exactly this kind of reasoning that is questioned by Christian fundamentalism. In their view the *imago dei* was destroyed by the fall of humankind . . . that the total depravity of humankind and human's inclination to sin are the foundations of Christian anthropology . . . As Vorster expresses it: "Therefore good human relations and human rights are low on the agenda of Christian fundamentalist theology."[641]

For Vorster, the development of a sound hermeneutics necessitates that religious people should be taught to focus on the main tenets of their respective religions. Christianity, for example, is the religion of love, reconciliation, peace and hope. When Christian approach society from the angle of these tenets they cannot condone slavery, racism, ethnic cleansing, violence and oppression of people.[642] And so, I move on to new hermeneutical perspectives as I return to Revelation 7.

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dignity of the human person as known through the revealed Word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society."

[639] J. M. Vorster, *The Challenge of Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism*. Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae, (series ed Christian Landman Pretoria; Church History Society of South Africa, 2008), 121. However, Vorster counters the common belief that the doctrine of the total depravity by which the likeness of God in man was lost, was taught be John Calvin. He states that Calvin, in agreement with Augustine, was of opinion that the likeness was tarnished, but not destroyed. Vorster cites a number of old Dutch theologians, including Karl Barth, in support of this belief.

[640] Vorster, *Religious Fundamentalism,* 122-23.

[641] Vorster, *Religious Fundamentalism,* 123-24.

[642] Vorster, *Religious Fundamentalism,* 179.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIETY AND RHETORIC IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION 7

1. INTRODUCTION

This penultimate chapter brings us to a point of weighing the entire evidence of the LB Corpus in terms of interpretation, discourse and ideology against a counter reading that does not harbour the same outcomes as Left Behind, and does justice to the context in which Revelation 7 was written.

I will present a motivation for an alternative reading: Focus on the seventieth week in Daniel 9 as a key to understanding the PMD interpretation of Revelation 7; Review the relation of Chapter 7 to the whole of the book of Revelation; Provide a reading of the text guided by Vernon Robbins's inner texture, social and cultural textures and ideological texture and informed by perspectives of theorists in the fields pertaining to society and rhetoric.

It would seem that the dispensationalist scheme, and particularly when amplified by the staggering Left Behind storyline, gives such a satisfactory solution to an otherwise incomprehensive book, that no other should be sought. Consistent literalism, in a dispensational framework is vindicated as being the only method that gives a true interpretation of prophecies and their fulfillment throughout the ages. However, the given ideological outcomes the question may be rightfully asked, "Is there an alternative approach? The first alternative could be the historical-critical method[643] and

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[643] R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*. 2 vols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920). Of the mid-twentieth century to present day the following scholars – noting only major commentaries not journal articles, or works on topics in Revelation − would stand out as taking a historical critical approach to Revelation: David Aune, *Revelation*. 3 vols. *Word Biblical Commentaries* (Dallas: Word Books, 1997); William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1974); Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); G.C. Berkouwer, *De Wederkomst van Christus* (Kampen: Kok,1961*)*; J. Eugene Botha, Pieter G.R. De Villiers, Johan Engelbrecht, *Reading Revelation* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1988); George Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St John the Divine* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1973); G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*. *The New International Greek Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Oliphants, 1974); G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revised Edition New Century Biblical*

subsequent developments, social science criticism and rhetorical criticism, respectively, provide tools for interpreting particularly New Testament texts. Another alternative would be preterism,[644] which has succeeded in situating Revelation in historical context, however differing from historical criticism on certain points.

2. THE SEVENTIETH WEEK IN DANIEL AS A KEY TO REVELATION

Grounding texts in the book of Daniel constitute the *key*[645] – a term used by Scofield − to the PMD hermeneutic, one that differentiates it from any other reading of these texts and is predetermining of the social and cultural and ideological nature of the LB Corpus. For the purpose of this comparison I will use the main source of the LB Corpus, the *New Scofield Study Bible* and the non-dispensational and broadly historical-critical *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*.[646] The significance of this comparison is to establish a more strictly interpretive framework than the one created by the multi-casted and multi-imaged LB Corpus.

2.1 The Seventieth Week in the New Scofield Study Bible

A favourite expression of PMD interpreters when referring to the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:25 is that "God's prophetic clock starts ticking" as an indication of God's plans for the Jewish nation.[647] This metaphor was not used by Scofield himself but

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Commentary (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978); Wilfred Harrington, *Revelation*. Sacra Pagina Series Volume 16 (Daniel Harrington (ed) (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1969); Howard-Brook, W & Gwyther A, *Unveiling Experience; Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), *Invitation to the Book of Revelation: A Commentary of the Apocalypse with Complete Text from the Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City N.Y: Image Books, 1981).

[644] See Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code.*

[645] Schuyler English, ed., *The New Scofield Study Bible*, 886: "Daniel's prophecy of the seventy 'sevens' (weeks) (vv. 24-27) provides the chronological frame for Messianic prediction from Daniel to the establishment of the kingdom on earth and also a key to its interpretation."

[646] *The New Interpreter's Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 2003).

[647] See Hal Lindsey, *The Promise* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House, 1982), 188. "Like a great stopwatch God's finger pushed down on the button and the 490 year allotted countdown began clicking off April 444 B.C. . . . .Then Daniel predicted a strange thing. He said that after sixty-nine weeks of years (483 years) had clicked off on this allotment of time the Messiah of Israel would be revealed to the Jews and then killed, and the city of

conceived by Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye; it is also used in the masthead of "Rapture Ready,"[648] a website with regular updates of world events signaling the rapture. The table below clarifies the concept of the "prophetic clock."

TABLE IX: THE SEVENTY WEEKS IN THE NEW SCOFIELD STUDY BIBLE

Dan 9				Rev 4	Rev 7		Rev 19	Rev 20
SEVENTY SEVENS OF WEEKS DECREED		"MESSIAH CUT OFF" 33 C.E.	THE CHURCH AGE	RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH	THE MILLENNIUM 144, 000 SEALED AND GREAT MULTITUDE	THE TRIBULATION	HE GLORIOUS APPEARING	THE MILLENNIUM / THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

69 weeks (483 yrs)the 70th week
"God's prophetic time starts
tickingtheclock ⟶ stops tickingthe ⟶ clock starts ticking

What is immediately striking about the above table is the multiplicity of events prior to and after the Second Coming of Christ. To elaborate on the analogy of God holding a stop watch in his hand, we see from PMD perspective, that from the moment Daniel is instructed to consider the message and understand the vision of the "seventy sevens" − until the birth of the Messiah, 483 years must pass, when God will stop the clock for the Church Age to commence. He will then let it start ticking again when the Church is

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Jerusalem and their Temple would be destroyed and their 490 year special time allotment would temporarily be cut by 7 years. See also La Haye, *Global Warning*, 163; "Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks (Daniel 9) tells us that God put Israel's future on a time clock . . ." and 164: "This leaves one 'week' or unit of seven years in the Tribulation period, which will come after the rapture of the church. During these final seven years, God's prophetic clock for Israel will begin to tick again."

[648] Todd Strandberg, "Rapture Ready" n.p Online: www.raptureready.com

removed at the rapture so that his plan with the Jewish nations can resume. The seven remaining years, 483 having been subtracted from 490 years, are precisely the Tribulation period, the second half, the three and a half years or 1260 days, being the worst,[649] in terms of persecution meted out by the Antichrist.

This seven-year period commences shortly after the rapture when "the future Roman prince" (the little horn of Dan 7:8), the Antichrist, makes a covenant with Jews, but in the middle of the week he interrupts the Jewish ritual of worship and introduces an "abomination" that renders the sanctuary desolate, and at the same time launching persecution against the Jews. At the end of the seventieth week, that would be in Revelation 11:15, the seventh trumpet announces the beginning of Christ's reign on earth that culminates in Revelation 19:11-16 when Christ, after the battle of Armageddon, physically appears with the raptured saints to usher in the Millennium. This literal thousand years is followed by Antichrist's unbinding and finally the White Throne Judgment when the unrepentant are assigned to the Lake of Fire.

The relation of the Church age to the tribulation is not stated exactly and Scofield deals with these gaps during the interim between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks by stating that "there must be a whole period of the Church set forth in the N.T. but not revealed in the OT."[650]

This brief overview has shown Revelation 7's importance in the PMD scheme; the transposition of Daniel 9 to Revelation 7 is not merely a recontextualisation of an OT passage but an anomalous conflation of two historical periods which has radical consequences on the temporal plane. For PMDs this scheme is predetermined by the dispensations: Innocence, Conscience; Civil Government; Promise; Law-Israel; Grace-Church; Millennial Kingdom. Being thus predetermined, it takes control over the interpretation and application of Scripture in the Christian community, thus becoming an agent of social formation.

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[649] Schuyler English, ed., *Scofield Study Bible,*1321, qualifies this by stating that while the seventieth week of Daniel is seven years in length and the terms "tribulation" and "the great tribulation," as used in the Scriptures, both have to do with the latter half of the seven years, it is customary to use "tribulation" for the whole period and "great tribulation" for the second half of the period.

[650] Schuyler English, ed., *Scofield Study Bible,* 887, validates the "seventieth week" by stating that it was referred to during the first two and-one half centuries of the Christian Church, and almost always assigned to the end of the age. "Irenaeus places the appearance of the Antichrist at the end of the age, in the last week; in fact, he asserts that the time of Antichrist's tyranny will last just one-half of the week, three years and six

2.2. The Rhetoric of Canon and Translation

Faced with the apparent power that the *Scofield Bible*, in all its editions, has exercised in evangelical communities, it is useful to refer to George Aichele and Roland Boer who respectively have pursued a series of questions associated with the canons of the Bible, Aichele asks, "How does the canon influence the meaning of the texts of which it is composed?" The ideal of the canon of scriptures is a collection of writings that produces and enforces the ideology or system of beliefs and values of the community that regard this collection as authoritative.[651] An important point Aichele makes is that the believing community desires a reading context through which the component texts can be understood correctly. The Bible as a canon is indispensable to Christian faith because it transmits the Word of God, and must therefore be understood within a logocentric framework; "in other words, it is the transmitted message or conceptual signified of the collection of texts that is holy and eternal, and not the signifying container, the physical texts themselves. The message of the canonical books must be clear and coherent, universal and perfectly translatable."[652] But does this imply control of the text?

In order to show *how* the Bible is multivalent Boer gives examples – "both crude and subtle" – of the "effort taken to assert control over the Bible."[653] "They come from the canonization and interpretation of the Bible for it turns out that both canonization and interpretation are failed efforts to control and colonize an unruly and fractious mob of literature. Like any rowdy mob, it is not all that happy about being dominated."[654] As far as canonization is concerned, Boer remarks that "Patrick Davies's point hits home. The fact is that we do not know why a canon . . . of religiously authoritative books was created, though we may reasonably assume that its establishment was *a political act,*

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months. So likewise, Hippolytus states that Daniel "indicates the showing forth of the seven years which shall be in the last times."

[651] George Aichele, *The Control of Biblical Meaning, Canon as Semiotic Mechanism* (Harrisburg, Penn: Trinity Press International, 2001), 218.

[652] Aichele, *Biblical Meaning ,* 218.

[653] Roland Boer, *Rescuing the Bible* (Malden/Oxford; Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 56-57.The examples Boer gives of the "doctoring of texts" to suit the viewpoint of those in power are on Qoholeth, or Ecclesiastes, p. 60, the Pauline Epistles, p.62 and Song of Songs, p. 63-4.

[654] Boer, *Rescuing the Bible,* 56-7.

intended to and established authority consensus, counter deviance" (Emphasis added by Boer).[655]

Fundamentalism, as becomes clear in any scrutiny of its history, is essentially reactive to "modern scientific and humanistic challenges to the Bible's authority," fundamentalism attempting "to control ideological diversity through rejection or severe lamination of critical examination of the canonical texts on the one hand and through doctrines of an infallible Bible, on the other hand."[656] As Aichele puts it, "Fundamentalism may want the Bible to be read widely, but they also want it to be read in one correct way – that is according to their own perceptions of the single coherent message of the canon."[657]

Boer would see "one correct way" as abuse of the Bible by the religious-right, but by "abuse" he means not only the twisting of biblical texts away from their supposed original meaning, but especially the use of those texts that openly support oppression and exploitation – whether in terms of economics, politics religion, gender race and so on.[658] In saying, "It involves in other words, the *use of abusive* texts from the Bible," Boer lays the blame for abuse not only the interpreters on the writers or editor's of the texts.[659]

Aichele sees the foregrounding the role of ideology in every act of translation, pointing out, that two translations of a given source text may both be literal ones in that they both adhere closely to word-by-word correspondence to the source text, and yet may differ greatly from each other in the messages that readers derive from them.[660] We can conclude that this has occurred with the *King James Version*. Of its many editions the Scofield rendering singularly has ideological power through its dispensational schema.

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[655] Boer, *Rescuing the Bible*, 57.
[656] Aichele, *Biblical Meaning,* 222.
[657] Aichele, *Biblical Meaning,* 222.
[658] Boer, *Rescuing the Bible*, 4.
[659] Boer, *Rescuing the Bible*, 4. In a more recent work Boer develops the thesis that the 'primal story" that runs through the Hexateuch is a complicated political myth appropriated by the religious right to advance reactionary political agendas. See Roland Boer, *Political Myth: on the Use and Abuse of Biblical Themes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[660] See Aichele, *Biblical Meaning,* 61-71, for an outline of how distinctions in dynamic equivalence and literal translation, or letter-by-letter translation, are understood and applied by fundamentalists.

Typically the *Revised Standard Version*, is not organically linked to the book of Daniel by way of a seventieth week as in the *Scofield Study Bible*, and by comparison appears to be lean in its sequencing of significant events. All that Matthias Henze, writes about the seventy weeks are that they are really seventy weeks of years, or 490 years. "The time is decreed to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin . . . to anoint a most holy place."[661]

TABLE X: THE SEVENTY WEEKS IN THE NEW INTERPRETER'S STUDY BIBLE

Dan 9				Rev 19	Rev 20
SEVENTY SEVENS OF WEEKS DECREED		BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH	THE CHURCH AGE	THE SECOND COMIG OF CHRIST	JUDGMENT
70 weeks (490yrs)		**Indeterminate time**			

Henze sees this apocalyptic view of history as contrasting sharply with the Deuteronomistic theology of prayer. "The period of the desolation is predetermined by God, irrespective of the Jews' repentance and prayers. In typical apocalyptic fashion,

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[661] Matthias Henze , "Daniel," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1247.

history is divided into periods (see the Jubilee year in Lev 25), allowing the author to place himself near the already decreed end."[662] In referring to Antiochus, who dispatches his soldiers to destroy Jerusalem where he makes a covenant with the Hellenising Jews and desecrates the Temple, Henze describes a history foreign to the PMD scheme.[663] It is here where the difference between a dispensational and non-dispensational becomes glaringly obvious. Because of the constraints of consistent literalism, PMDs not content that the seventy weeks included the activities of Antiochus, project the seventy weeks into the end of the age, thus creating new characters and developments.

Since Revelation 7 is not flanked by the Rapture in Chapter 4 and the second coming of Christ in Chapter 11, as in the *Scofield Bible*, it does not play a pivotal role in the exegesis of Revelation. Fitted as it is between the sixth seal and seventh seal it is regarded as a glimpse into heaven and acts as encouragement and assurance to the faithful. However, Revelation functions within a series of visions which constitutes a major part of the book, and therefore warrants closer examination.

3. CHAPTER 7 WITHIN THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

One of the most important aspects of a scholarly approach to Revelation is to establish the literary structure of the book. This would entail more than the conventional outline of chapters placed in the Introduction to the book. There have been many previous attempts to identify such a structure for the book of Revelation, most proposals using implicit indicators such as the devices of chiasm, recapitulation, reiteration, or transitional words and phrases such as "Then . . . " and, "After this . . ." "Since the aim of the thesis is not to make a dedicated study of the literary structure of the Revelation, nor to advance any new hypothesis on it, I refer to a work by Korner,[664] that is helpful

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[662] Henze , "Daniel," 1247.
[663] Henze , "Daniel," 1247.
[664] Ralph J. Korner "'And I Saw. . . ' An Apocalyptic Literary Convention for Structural Identification in the Apocalypse. *NovT,* 42 no. 2 (2000):160-183.

in situating Revelation 7 within the visionary texts, and in doing so challenging LaHaye's exact correspondence of the visions with events on earth.

Korner's article, formulated as a search for the "elusive structure of the Apocalypse" explores the implications of three literary conventions: (1) the "space/time referent"; (2) "after these things I saw" and its variations and (3) "and I saw [and behold]").[665] The "space/time referent" explains to the reader the date in the Seer's life and/or the location, or state, of the Seer' physical body at the time of the vision's initiation and/or conclusion. In other words, it emphasises the "where" and/or the "when" in conjunction with some type of vision-oriented terminology (for example, "and I saw").(4) It occurs once in the Apocalypse (1:9, 10: "I, John . . . was on the island of Patmos . . . On the Lord's Day. . . ").[666]

Following R.H. Charles, he indicates, that the three literary conventions are not unique to the Apocalypse. They are also commonly found within the vision-oriented writings of Jewish apocalyptic literature.[667] The intent of Korner's article is (1) to investigate the use of these three literary conventions as structural indicators within relevant Jewish apocalyptic vision-oriented texts dated prior to and concurrent with John's day; and then (2) to consistently and systematically use them as structural indicators within the vision-oriented Apocalypse. In this article he uses the term *vision episode* to serve as a literary classification for a section of vision-oriented texts identified through a "space/ time referent."[668]

The text of the book of Revelation from 1:9-22:21 qualifies as a single, uninterrupted vision episode. A literary structure for the solitary vision episode (1: 9-22:21) of the Apocalypse begins to emerge when attention is paid to the placement of the two other apocalyptic literary conventions. There are actually six vision blocks in the book of Revelation since the 'space/time referent' in 1:9, 10 also functions as a literary initiator of vision blocks.[669] Since the content of the vision episode naturally divides itself into three vision blocks, it logically follows that the "space/time referent" in 11:1 serves the dual function of identifying the first vision block as well as the start

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[665] Korner "'And I Saw. . . '" *NovT*, 162.
[666] Korner "'And I Saw. . . '" *NovT*, 162.
[667] Korner "'And I Saw. . . '" *NovT*, 162.
[668] Korner "'And I Saw. . . '" *NovT*, 162.
[669] Korner "'And I Saw. . . '" *NovT*, 172.

of the vision episode itself.[670] See Korner for a detailed illustration of vision blocks in Chapter 11. A systematic application of the three apocalyptic literary conventions to the entire text of the Apocalypse results in the following structure: [671]

TABLE XI: VISIONS IN THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

I. Prologue: 1:1-8 II	
II. Vision Block #1	(1:9-3:22) the Seven Letters [1 individual vision]: 1:9-3:22
III. Vision Block #2	(4:1-6:17):the Six Seals [11 individual visions]: 4:1-11; 5:1; 5:2-5; 5:6-10; 5:11-14; 6:1a; 6:1b-4; 6:5-6; 6:7-8; 6:9-11; 6:12-17
IV. Vision Block #3	the 144,000 Sealed [2 individual visions]: 7:1; 7:2-8
V. Vision Block #4	(7:9-15:4) the Seventh Seal/the Six Trumpets/ the Seventh Trumpet/the Seven Bowls [12 individual visions]: 7:9-8:1;.8:2-12; 8:13; 9:1-21; 10:1-12:18; 13:1-10; 13:11-18; 14:1-5; 14:6-13; 14:14-20; 15:1; 15:2-4
VI. Vision Block #5	(15:5-17:18): the Seven Bowls and Babylon Described [4 individual visions]: 15:5-16:12; 16:13-21; 17:1-5; 17:6-17:18
VII. Vision Block #6	(18:1-22:21): Babylon Falls and the New Jerusalem Descends [10 individual visions]: 18:1-19:10; 19:11-16; 19:17-18; 19:19- 21; 20:1-3; 20:4-10; 20:11; 20:12-15; 21:1; 21:2-22:21

In the light of this article's structural proposal, it becomes readily apparent that the text of the Apocalypse divides itself up into seven literary sections, six of which are the vision blocks which comprise the solitary vision episode. Thus, this objective tool of "textual phraseology" still divides the text into a sevenfold format without any recourse to the more subjective criteria of "textual content." However, some structural questions do arise out of this proposed outline. The third vision block of 7:1-8 is only eight verses long. Korner asks: "Would the writer of the Apocalypse signify a major vision/vision

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[670] Korner "'And I Saw. . . '" *NovT*, 174.
[671] Korner, "'And I Saw. . .'" *NovT*, 174.

block and then give it only minor textual length?" This practice has numerous precedents in the apocalyptic literature already studied. Some examples are 4 Ezra 13:12-13; 2 Baruch 53: 5b-7, 8-10, 11; 1 Enoch 89: 72-77 and Daniel 7:6. [672]

How these blocks snap together in an interpretive principle Korner calls "LEGO® blocking," which he describes as "the snapping of vision blocks and individual visions on top of one another indicating a concurrent chronology of reiteration."[673] The remainder of the article requires advanced study that cannot be engaged in here. What is significant, however, is Korner's recognition that the three literary conventions were commonly used within Jewish apocalyptic literature for the purpose of providing structural organisation for vision-oriented texts. "This being the case, the Jewish-Christian segment of the Apocalypse's first century CE audience may well have had at least a passing knowledge of these textual devices."[674]

The single principle that distinguishes LaHaye's understanding of the visions, or judgments as he calls them is that each judgment, in Chapter 6 directly relates to an event of earth. "Each seal broken in heaven introduces a tragedy on earth," therefore the tribulation or Seventy Weeks. Bruce Barnes recalls that there will be an eighteen-month period of peace "but in the three months following the rest of the seal judgments will fall on the earth. One fourth of the world's population will be wiped out."[675] This approach is weakened by examining Korner's construction of the background of the visions.

It is also significant to note that in none of their non-fictional works[676] do LaHaye and Jenkins acknowledge the role of early Jewish Apocalypses in the formation of Revelation, though they do acknowledge Revelation to be an Apocalypse. They do admit that most of the symbols in the book of Revelation depicting heaven have a counterpart in the OT, and that lines drawn from the OT to N.T. follow a promise fulfillment scheme, for example, Genesis promises that Satan's head would be bruised (3;15) Revelation shows him bruised and defeated."[677] Instead of recognising that

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[672] Korner, "'And I Saw. . . ' *NovT*, 175.
[673] Korner, "'And I Saw. . . ' *NovT*, 178.
[674] Korner, "'And I Saw. . . ' *NovT*, 176.
[675] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 40.
[676] The most seminal ones being LaHaye, *Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain*, Zondervan, and LaHaye and Ice, *Charting the End Times*.
[677] LaHaye, *Revelation Illustrated*, 77.

passages from the prophets can be recontextualised and reconfigured, LaHaye and Jenkins further a PMD scheme, in which prophecy overrides any other consideration, and therefore this interpretation can only be deficient.

4. A READING OF REVELATION 7

As referred to in Chapter 1, Robbins has moved beyond the textures in his seminal works, to new concepts such as "Conceptual Blending" and "Spatial Theory." This development does not render the five textures redundant; on the contrary they are still integral to the newly developed method. As Robbins states: "The goal of these guidelines is to integrate the progymnastic and textures phases of SRC (Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 1996 and *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, with conceptual blending theory and critical spatiality theory (Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse,* Volume 1, 2009)* which developed after December 2002."[678]

Essential to this integration is the blending of spaces and locations with rhetorolects (a collapsing together of "rhetoric' and "dialects") or "belief systems" such as Wisdom, Prophetic, Miracle, Precreation, Priestly and Apocalyptic[679] – an exercise that cannot be explicated here. I am aware of vibrant interpretative possibilities for applying this method to Revelation 7, but this would have to be in a freestanding and dedicated analysis of the text. Given the scope and structure of the thesis, and the demand placed on it by the research question, I am taking advantage of the flexibility of Robbins's approach because it allows one to select and synthesise methods as required for the purpose of the analysis. Eminently it encourages bringing various disciplines into conversation with one another. Confining myself, therefore, to the early phase of socio-rhetorical criticism I have selected inner texture, social and cultural, and ideological texture as the tools to probe relevant dimensions of Revelation 7.

This selection of inner texture based on Robbins's recommendation that while all five textures can be used in an analysis and any one of the textures can serve as an entry into a socio-rhetorical analysis, such an analysis starts with the inner texture. The reason

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[678] Vernon K. Robbins and Duane Watson, "Guidelines for Writing," unpublished working paper.
[679] Robbins and Watson, "Guidelines," 19-22. See also Sociorhetorical Interpretation Online: religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/ sri/tables/RhetTable.cfm

he gives is that since the nineteenth century, and in some circles earlier, it entails a reading "out from a text "rather than "eisegesis" (what one reads into the text and wishes to see).[680] Second, the emergence of modern literary criticism of the Bible during the past quarter of a century has brought emphasis on "the world of the Bible itself."[681]

5. INNER TEXTURE

5.1 Repetitive Texture

I start the reading with a table, as typically used by Robbins to identify the repetition of words and phrases that indicate main themes in the text. The inner texture of a text resides in the features of the language itself, like repetition of words and use of dialogue between two persons to communicate information and focusing on words as tools for this communication.[682]

When a word occurs at least twice in a text the result is repetition, also multiple occurrences of grammatical, topical, verbal and topical phenomena produce a repetitive texture,[683] which can be expanded to progressive texture,[684] and to more detailed patterns, which I will not for purposes of this chapter use now. Inner texture is also supplemented by narrational texture – hearing the voice in the text; opening-middle-closing texture and pattern – establishing the exact place where the opening ends, where the middle begins and ends and where the conclusion begins and ends;[685] Argumentative texture and pattern – investigating multiple kinds of reasoning in the discourse and finally sensory-aesthetic texture of a text – discerning the range of senses the text evokes or embodies, such as thought, emotion, sight, sound, touch, smell.[686]

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[680] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 5.
[681] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 5.
[682] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7.
[683] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture,* 8.
[684] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture ,*9.
[685] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture,*15.
[686] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture,* 21.

TABLE XII: PATTERN OF REPETITIVE TEXTURE

IN REVELATION 7:1-17

No.										
1.	angels	earth earth earth	sea	four four four						
2.	angel angels	earth	sea							
3.		earth	sea		seal					
4.					sealed sealed	Twelve thousand				
5.					sealed	Twelve thousand Twelve thousand				
6.						Twelve thousand Twelve thousand Twelve thousand				
7.						Twelve thousand Twelve thousand Twelve thousand				
8.					sealed	Twelve thousand Twelve thousand Twelve thousand				
9.							throne throne	lamb lamb		white
10.							throne	lamb		
11.	angels			four			throne throne		elders	
12.										
13.									elders	white white
14.								lamb		
15.							throne throne			

							throne			
16.										
17.							throne			

Table XI shows repetition that exhibits major characters and topics in the discourse along the following pattern: Angels, mentioned 4 times, play a dominant role in communication; earth, mentioned 5 times, and sea, 3 times; four, 4 times; sealed, 5 times twelve-thousand 12 times; throne 8 times; lamb, 4 times; elders 2 times and white, 3 times. The pattern of repetition – God, throne, lamb, throne and the interspersions of worship scenes – is strongly suggestive of sacred text which Robbins describes as including "deity, holy beings, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment and ethics."[687] But he cautions against making this texture an entry point to the analysis as these aspects are embedded deeply in the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture of a text.

The emphasis on starting an analysis with inner texture is an important challenge to the methodology of PMD, for as Robbins shows, it furthers an exegetical rather than an eisegetical approach, which, as already mentioned, is a reading into the text, that which "one wishes to see."[688] So, contrary to matching the data of a text with a overarching scheme of dispensations, in which all the details have been assembled, all meaning is taken away from the words allowing the language itself to perform this analysis.

As an interpreter works carefully with the nature of language itself in a text, with relation of a text to other texts, and with the material, social, cultural and ideological nature of life, a thick description of the sacred texture of a text emerges.[689] It must, however, be borne in mind that social and cultural ideological, intertexture and sacred texture in isolation are integrated, indeed constructive of one another.[690]

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[687] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture,* 130.

[688] See Robbins, *Exploring the Texture,* 9-31, and Robbins, *Christian Discourse*, 27-28. In the latter work Robbins defines meaning of inner texture as working together with the implied author, the narrator and the characters to communicate a message

[689] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 130.

[690] G. van den Heever, "Finding data," *Neot* 33, 2 (1998): 344. "One has to keep in mind, however, that the 'interplay of connotation and denotation' is simul-play, both mutually determining and furthermore that the different angles or multiple approaches do not describe successive stages in the reading process as in consecutive steps to be followed in the application of the method. Rather the concerns of the present-day reader, informed and determined by his/her social location and ideology or vision of the world (level 3) determine how one imagines the rhetorical situation in which the textual communication had its place (level 2)

Robbins' guideline that "the repetitive texture of a span of text provides a review of overall rhetorical movements on the discourse and that does not reveal the precise nature of the boundaries of one text to another "is important to keep in mind.[691] Also, that repetition does not reveal the inner meanings of the sequences, it does, however, introduce readers to the "overall forest" . . . so that they will know where they are when they look at the individual trees. "They provide an overarching view of the texture of the language that invites the interpreter to move closer to the details of the text."[692]

5.2 *Revelation 7 – The World Behind the Text – and of the Text*

Since the seal, the 144,000 and the great multitude clearly predominate in the analysis of repetitive texture in Revelation 7, they constitute major themes in the text. All three of these lie behind the text – their origins reaching back to early periods in Israelite history. The citation of OT texts, not necessarily verbatim, but by recontextualisation or reconfiguration, forms the basis of a substantial part of Revelation; Robbins specifically referred to the phenomenon as *intertexture.*[693] Intertextuality, has the potential of effectively countering PMD's practice of projecting John's visions into the future by showing that John consciously selected OT texts to construct his visions. However, in attempting to use OT texts in this way notice should be taken of Fekkes's view[694] that an indiscriminate use of OT references contributes little to the interpretation of the book. Since the focus in this chapter is one of the *world* created by the text, OT

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and determine our selection of textual data to construct the rhetorical situation and communicative aim (level 1). All this happens simultaneously in the reading process."

[691] Robbins, *Exploring the Textures,* 8.

[692] Robbins, *Exploring the Textures,* 8.

[693] See Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 40-71, and Robbins, *Christian Discourse*, 30, 96-143, for a definition and application of *intertexture.*

[694] Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development.* JSNT, Supplement Series 93 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994). In ranking Isaiah according to three levels of probability, namely, a. Certain/virtually certain; b. Probable/possible; c Unlikely/doubtful Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 14-15, attempts to counteract the tendency of scholars to view the discovery of OT references in Revelation as "a sort of open-ended exercise in concordancing, with the objective being to raise the tally as high as possible. Each new entry becomes just as important as another, and the whole homogeneous collection is held up as a testimony to John's remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures. Needless to say, such an approach contributes little to the interpretation of the book, since it indiscriminately lumps together primary, secondary, and even, at times, non- existent allusions." It is Fekkes's opinion that it is just as important to weed out dubious parallels as it is to substantiate which OT texts are clearly being employed. "By reducing the options to a workable core of certain texts, it is hoped that we may be in a better position to

references will be briefly commented upon in respect of the historical background of the seal, the 144,000 and great multitude. However, after looking at the major themes in the next section, an excursus will engage in the current scholarly debate on the identity of the 144,000.

The analysis of the inner texture of Revelation 7 established that the word *seal* or *sealed* occurs five times in the text. The first occurrence is in 7:2: "I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, as he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, saying, "Do not damage the earth or sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads."(NRSV). This verse also contains the word angel(s), mentioned four times and earth and sea each mentioned twice. This pronouncement follows on a sequence of events in Revelation 6:1-17: The lamb breaks open the seals, unleashing one woe after the other; At the breaking of the first seal (1-2) a white horse appears, who holding a bow, goes from one victory to the next; at the second, a red horse appears, whose rider takes away peace from earth and sets people killing each other (3-4); the third, a black horse, whose rider shouts out, "A day's wages for a quart of corn, and a day's wages for three quarts of barley, but do not tamper with the oil or wine (5-6;" the fourth, a pale horse whose rider was named Death, with Hades following on his heels. They were given the authority over two-thirds of the earth, to kill by the sword, famine, by plague and through wild beasts.

John conflates images of the four horsemen,[695] embedded in the Hebrew scripture, with apocalyptic-laden Persian texts such as the *Vendidad*, the *Denkart*, *Zand i-*

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discern patterns in John's choices and devote more attention to the texts that form the fundamental matrix of his visionary expression."

[695] The horsemen echo Zech 1:8-10: "I had a vision during the night. There was a man riding a red horse standing among the deep-rooted myrtles; behind him were other horses – red, chestnut and white. To Zechariah's question as to whom these horses are, the man among the replies that they are "whom Yahweh has sent out to patrol the world." Their report is that the world, and indeed the whole world is still and at peace. In a dialogue between the angel and Yahweh it transpires that Yahweh is burning with jealousy for Jerusalem, but angry with the nations now at ease. See also Zech 6:1-3 where the prophet raises his eyes and sees four chariots coming out between two mountains of bronze. The first chariot had red horses, the second, had black horses, the third had white horses and the fourth piebald horses. To Zechariah's question as to who these horses are, the angel replies that that they are the four winds now leaving, having attended on the Lord. The black horses, with the white following, going to the North; the piebald leaving for the south. "They came out vigorously to, eager to patrol the world. He said to them, 'Go and patrol the world.' And they patrolled the world. He called to me and said, 'Look, the ones going to the land of the north brought my spirit to rest on the land of the north.'"

Vohuman Yasno and the *Bundahishn*. In the *Vendidad*[696] the deeds of Ahura Mazda, the creator, are contrasted by the counter-creator, Angra Mainyu, who is causative of wars of conquest (6:2); enmity and social disarray (6:3-4); food scarcity (6:5-6); death (6:7-8). In *Zand ī-Vohuman Yasno*, also referred to as *Bahman Yasht*, the same scenarios are sketched:

> As in the *Gāthās* so in this later apocalyptic the sufferings of the good are dwelt upon; and the whole world is seen as afflicted in the last days by the power of the Evil Spirit. At that time "the sun's rays will be very level and low-slanting, and year and month and day will be shorter. And the earth . . . will contract. . . . Crops will not yield seed . . . and plants and bushes and trees will be small . . . And people will be born very stunted, and will have little skill or energy . . . It will not be possible for an auspicious cloud and a just wind to bring rain at its dire time and season. Cloud and fog will darken the whole sky. A hot wind and a cold wind will come and carry off all the fruits and grains of corn . . . And the water of the rivers and springs will shrink and have no increase . . . The plough-ox will have small strength and the swift horse little power . . . That wicked Evil Spirit will be very oppressive and tyrannical, then when it becomes needful to destroy him.[697]

In mentioning these catastrophes, John counters the utopian ideology of the Roman Empire as promoted by Augustus himself in his *Res Gestae*,[698] a document by which he subjected the whole wide earth to the rule of the Roman people, and of the money which he spent for the state and Roman people, inscribed on two bronze pillars, which are set up in Rome. Augustus' largesse as peace-bringer was also captured in the *Res Gestae* when he wrote: "When I returned to Rome from Gaul and from Spain, in the consulship of Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilio, having brought to a satisfactory

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[696] James Darmesteter, tr., AvestaVendidad (English): Fargard 1. *Sacred Books of the East* (American Edition, 1898). Digital edition 1995 by Joseph H. Peterson. [cited: 23 December 2009] Online: avesta.org/vendidad/vd-tc.htm

[697] *Zand ī Wahman Yašt* 4.16-20, 42-44, 46, 48, 66, cited in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [cited 23 December, 2009] online: *www.iranica.com/newsite/home/index.isc*. The Zand-i Vohuman Yasno, as it is alternatively spelt, is the ancient Iranian recension in the Middle Persian, 10th century, C.E. Pahlavi texts of which the Bahman Yasht is the Indian recension. Appearing much later, the text is the same, but differs in datings, language and versions. The Indian versions are shorter than the Pahlavi versions, which are more apocalyptic in content. See Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism; Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

[698] "When the dictatorship was offered to me, both in my presence and my absence, by the people and senate, when Marcus Marcellus and Lucius Arruntius were consuls (22 B.C.E.), I did not accept it. I did not evade the curatorship of grain in the height of the food shortage, which I so arranged that within a few days I freed the entire city from the present fear and danger by my own expense and administration. When the annual and perpetual consulate was then again offered to me, I did not accept it." Augustus, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus*. Translated by Thomas Bushnell. The Internet Classics Archive. [cited 26 December 2009] Online: http://classics.mit.edu//Augustus/deeds.html

finish my works in these provinces, the Senate decreed that there should be consecrated in the Field of Mars an altar to the Augustan Peace, and ordered that the officials, priests and vestal virgins should celebrate a sacrifice at it every year."[699]

The altar[700] referred to is the *Ara Pacis*, envisioned as a Roman goddess, and intended to be a vision of the Roman civil religion that sought to portray the peace and fertile prosperity enjoyed as a result of the Pax Augusta (Latin, "Augustan peace"). G. Karl Galinsky has made the observation that the sculpture of the *Ara Pacis* is in the first place symbolic rather than decorative, and that its iconography is multi-layered in significance;[701] he remarks that studies of the Ara Pacis and similar public Roman monuments have traditionally addressed the potent political symbolism of their decorative programmes that emphasises dynastic and other imperial policies.[702] "The *Ara Pacis* is seen to embody, without conscious effort, the deep-rooted ideological connections among cosmic sovereignty, military force and fertility that were first outlined by Georges Dumézil, connections which are attested in early Roman culture and more broadly in the substructure of Indo-European culture at large."[703] It was in the programme of the *Ara Pacis* that the people's very real fears of cyclical history were allayed by the promise that "the rule of Augustus would avert the cataclysmic destruction of the world predicted by contemporary models of historical thought."[704]

Now, having better understood John's fury at the failed imperial promises, we find in returning to Revelation 6, that the apocalyptic tribulations are suddenly stalled when John beholds under the altar souls killed on account of the Word of God. They shout out in a loud voice, "Holy, true master, how much longer will you wait before you pass sentence and take vengeance for our death on the inhabitants of the earth?" (6:9-10). Then follows the key verse: "Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to be patient a little longer, until the roll was completed of their fellow-servants and

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[699] Excerpted from Museo dell'Ara Pacis [cited 8 January, 2010] Online: www.en.arapacis.it

[700] The altar was commissioned by the Roman Senate on 4 July, 13 B.C.E to honour the triumphal return of the Roman emperor Augustus from Hispania and Gaul, and was consecrated on 30 January 9, B.C.E by the Senate to celebrate the peace established in the Empire after the victories of Augustus.

[701] "Ara Pacis," n.p. [Cited 8 January, 2010] Online: www. en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ara-Pacis

[702] See "Ara Pacis," n.p.

[703] See "Ara Pacis," n.p.

[704] See "Ara Pacis," n.p. It has been suggested by Peter Holliday that the Altar's imagery of the Golden Age, usually discussed as mere poetic allusion, actually appealed to a significant component of the Roman populace. [Cited 8 January, 2010] Online: www. en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ara-Pacis

brothers who were still to be killed as they had been (6:11). Again Persian apocalyptic motifs, come to the fore – the violent earthquake, the moon turning into blood, the stars falling to the earth and the sky disappearing like a scroll and mountains and islands shaken from their places which also occur with variation in the Markan apocalypse[705] indicate a fantasised overturning of the imperial oppressive power. However, before elaborating on verses 12-17, reference to Lincoln's "Flat Earth and Social Egalitarianism,"[706] is in order.

A dramatic and picturesque vision bodes the reconstruction of society in a radically new form, and is therefore of ideological import. A common Iranian eschatological image is found in the *Bundahishn*:[707] "The earth becomes flat, without a crown and without a seat. There are no mountain peaks or hollows, nor are *up* and *down* preserved,"[708] or as also translated: "This too one says, this earth will become a plain, without height and without bottom; and there will be no hill nor summit, nor dale, nor highland, nor lowland."[709] This vision clearly projects into the future, but only on the basis of it being a reversal of the results of Ahriman's assault and the restoration of the earth to its pristine state, which will also bring about the reuniting of humankind in a state of "the greatest love."[710]

The image of the flat earth also figures in the *Oracles of Hystaspes*, the levelling, however, not culminating in the work of cosmic revelation, but as one of the woes characteristic of that period just prior to God's salvific action. Again as in the *Gāthās* reflected on in the aforementioned *Zand ī Wahman Yašt*, there are a host of natural and cosmic calamities – unfavourable rains, injurious droughts, excessive heat, lack of fruit,

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[705] Mark 13:24-25: "But in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will come falling out of the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken."

[706] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 38.

[707] The Pahlavi version is conventionally called the *Greater Bundahishn*, while the Indian is *Bundahishn*. The real apocalyptic imagery of the fiery ordeal occurs in the *Greater Bundahishn* 33 which chapter is absent from the Indian Bundahishn which ends at 30. For the purposes of tracing Persian apocalyptic motifs the Greater Bundahishn is the preferred text. See Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism; Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

[708] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 38.

[709] *Greater Bundahishn,* 34; 33, Translation by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria. Digital edition by Joseph Peterson, 2002. [Cited 23 December, 2009]. Online: www.avesta.org/mp/grb27.htm

[710] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 39.

shortening of years and months, falling of stars, the darkening of the heavens . . . "Also the highest mountains will fall, and they are made level with the plains . . ."[711]

Lincoln deftly shows how the levelling of the plains is imaged in Revelation 6:12-1: Following on the sun becoming black as sackcloth, the full moon becoming like blood, the stars falling to the earth, the sky vanishing like a scroll, and every mountain being removed from its place, comes the reaction of earth's inhabitants:

> Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand before it? (Rev 6:15-17.)

Lincoln points out that seven types of people are mentioned in this passage, in descending order of their social rank, with one exception, where the formulaic phrase "slave and free" (Greek, *doulos kai eleutheros*) follows a grammatical rule according to which the shorter noun precedes the longer. The list is as follows: (1) The kings of the earth; (2) The great men; (3) The generals; (4) the rich; (5) The strong; (6-7); Every one, slave and free.[712]

Lincoln recalls that in the book of Revelation there is a "recurrent pattern whereby seven items of any sort – seals, trumpets, bowls, cities and so on – constitute a full and complete set."[713] This list he presents is "one more such set, in which the social hierarchy is mapped from top to bottom, kings to slaves."[714] What he finds noteworthy, however, is that the collapse of mountains at the end reduces all members of this carefully differentiated society to very same state of abject fear and utter impotence in

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[711] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 39, indicates that the *Oracles of Hystaspes*, a work of Iranian origin, famed and widely disseminated in late antiquity is now preserved only in fragmentary form within Greek and Roman sources, the most important of which is Lactantius's *Divine Institutions.* "The text is frankly apocalyptic and is highly charged politically: it contains ringing predictions of Rome's imminent fall and the subsequent return of kingship to Asia along with the punishment of the wicked and triumph of righteousness, all as the result of God's direct intervention in history." See footnote 3 in notes on Chapter 3, page 180, in Lincoln's work for a further bibliography on *Oracles of Hystaspes*. The reconstructed oracle of Hystaspes takes the *Zand i Vohuman Yasno* back into pre-Christian times contemporary to the Jewish *grundlagen* of some pseudepigraphal apocalypses, one being the Sybelline Oracles with which it shares apocalyptic motifs such as the shortening of time. See references to the Oracle of Hystaspes in Van den Heever, "Die Motief van die Wêreldbrand," 58-63, 98.
[712] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 45.
[713] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 45.
[714] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 45.

the face of divine wrath. Social stratification is thus obliterated, coincident with and dependent on the eschatological leveling of mountains."[715]

However, continuing where Lincoln ended, we find in the key verse that there were those who were elevated: "Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to be patient a little longer, until the roll was completed of their fellow-servants and brothers who were still to be killed as they had been (6:11). These given white robes are the 144,000 sealed and the multitude to great to count in 7: 4-9.[716] The 144,000 are sealed because of the protective seal which God placed on Cain (Gen 4:15), and in Ezekiel 9:4-6 where the command of the angel occurs in association with a vision of the slaughter of the guilty before the glory of the Lord leaves the temple.[717] The great multitude survive the ordeal because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and now have the white robes to show for it – the terms "washing" and image of white clothes suggest baptismal imagery (see Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:24). A point that PMD misses is that the earliest actualisation of the metaphor of seal and the white garment was that of the baptismal liturgy.[718] Jonathan

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[715] Lincoln, *Discourse and Construction*, 45-6.

[716] John's use of the 144,000 and multitude too grea t to count presupposes historical antecedents. See Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 163, for elucidation of the two groups in the context of Sukkot, and the following works for detailed information concerning the evolution of the tribes within the history of Israel. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (London: SCM/Orbis, 1979),139, 143, 243,282-284.372; Thomas R. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 165-183 and Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period. I Yehud: The History of the Persian Province of Judah* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

[717]In construing ancient roots of the seal, Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. The Anchor Bible* (New York/London: Doubleday, 1975) 121, refers to several reconfigured applications of the *taw* in Old Testament contexts, but relevant to the 144,000, she importantly links Ezek 9:4-6 to Rev 11:1. In Ezek 9:4-6 the command of the angel occurs in association with a vision of the slaughter of the guilty before the glory of the Lord leaves the temple. The man clothed in linen (in later rabbinic texts designated as Gabriel) places the *taw* on those distressed about the breaking of the covenant with Yahweh, he is followed by six other men, making a total of seven whose function is to execute judgment. The slaughter is to be wholesale. The connection Massyngberde Ford draws between Ezek 9:4-6 and Rev 11:1. lies in two keywords: "Jerusalem" and "sanctuary," and one might add "man in linen clothes." One can conclude that the 144,000 previously referred to in Rev 7 have not broken the covenant with Yahweh.

[718] Indeed, Charles Gieschen, "Baptismal Praxis in the Book of Revelation" [cited 22 December, 2009] Online: ismal%20Praxis%20in%20the%20Book%20of%20Revelation.doc, believes that one of the reasons why interpreters often overlook evidence of baptismal praxis in the book of Revelation is because they do not connect two important actions in early baptismal rites with depictions of similar actions in Revelation. "These two actions are the marking of the Divine Name on the baptismal initiate and the placing of a white robe on the newly baptised. The crucial methodological question is this: *Did mention of marking and giving of names as well as the wearing of white robes in Revelation become the source of this baptismal praxis in the early church or do these depictions reflect already existing first century baptismal praxis?* (Emphases by Gieschen) There are two solid reasons to see these depictions as reflecting already existing baptismal rites. First, these rites are

Smith draws out the significance of the clothing ceremony which actually commenced with a state of nudity. The most complete description of this rite is found in the *Liber ad Baptizandos* of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The existence of parallels would suggest that Theodore is a witness to the typical Syrian baptismal praxis consisting of a ceremony of four stages: (1) the postulant lays aside his outer garments and is exorcised; (2) the postulant is signed with oil upon his forehead, and then after removing all of his garments, is anointed on his entire body; (3) the postulant now naked, is immersed; and (4) the newly baptised is clothed in white garments.[719] The significance of the white garments has been commented on from many perspectives.[720] That these garments were washed in blood is generally seen as a reversal of the practice in Israelite tradition of holy war in which persons who are killed during the war were required to wash their robes to remove the blood of their enemies in order to be purified (Num 31:19-20), Now, only the blood of the lamb suffices as the cleansing power to obliterate the stain of sin. In context of early baptismal praxis it is possible, according to Gieschen, that Revelation understands the Eucharistic blood as the source for the regular cleansing of the Christian.[721] Jean Danielou draws on early patristic writings that relate the blood of the Lamb to the sign on the lintels and the crossing of the Red Sea.[722]

Returning to the text of Revelation, the tribulations undergone in Chapter 6, are countered in Chapter 7 by the promises to the 144,000 and multitude too great to count that that they will never hunger of thirst again, sun and scorching wind will never plague them; the lamb will be their shepherd and guide them to springs of living water

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not new rituals, but an adapted continuation of the priestly ordination rites of ancient Israel. Second, these visions communicate to Christians more readily if the imagery is grounded in actual experience."

[719] Smith, *Map is not Territory*, 9.

[720] See Dietmar Neufeld, "Under the Cover of Clothing: Scripted Clothing Performances in the Apocalypse of John," *BTB* 35, (2005): 67-76. Taking a social-science perspective, Dietmar Neufeld sees the act of being robed in white by the heavenly benefactor as speaking of the divine patron bestowing honour upon them in their hour of shame. "Their physical bodies, appropriately attired in sky garments, serve as a stage upon which their new honor is displayed at the expense of those who have shamed themselves by virtue of disloyalty to the divine patron" (Malina & Pilch:118). Public display of the white robes, signify "communal allegiance and loyal witness to the God of the cosmos in spite of enormous pressures to yield to the forces of evil. It also speaks of status transition--they will have the reward of leisure after coming out of the great ordeal. They have made the transition from the earthly realm to God's celestial temple and are thereby in a position to enjoy God's presence. They are the righteous ones whose garments have not been soiled by infidelity to the patron of the universe."

[721] Gieschen, "Baptismal Praxis," 7.

[722] Jean Danielou SJ, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1979), 86-113.

and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes (16-17). Fekkes would place this lavish intertexture within the context of Exodus imagery.[723]

In Chapter 8, judgment on the powerful, who lament about their imminent fate (6:15), is put into motion by the trumpets which themselves are instruments of divine portents, again exhibiting typical apocalyptic imagery of judgment.

The major themes that have been outlined more than adequately provide evidence, not only of OT background to Revelation 7, but also a synthesis with Persian apocalyptic scripts. In a religio-historical study of the occurrence of the motif of the conflagration in Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian texts, Van den Heever[724] found that in this case there existed a syncretic interaction between the three religious traditions, since there was deeply penetrating contact, and since there the historical circumstances favoured such an interaction and the mechanism were there through which influencing could take place.[725]

The data presented in this section, gleaned by processes of inner texture while harnessing intertexture, shows how much more there is to the text of Revelation than offered by a consistently literal approach. The social and cultural dimensions of Revelation 7 will be augmented within the wider context of early Christianity contra the imperial cult. First follows an excursus which delineates the current debate of scholars around the identity of the 144,000 in Revelation 7, the section on the social and cultural texture follows on from some preliminary considerations of the role of apocalypticism in Revelation as a whole, and particularly in chapter 7.

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[723] Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 167, views this pattern of exodus imagery as recalling the "Exodus of the host of Israel from Egypt and their own liberation from Egypt and their own liberation from Tribulation." The subsequent motifs of "God tabernacling among them" being: (7:15), provision of food and water (7:16a, 17b), protection from the elements (7;16b), guidance (7:17a) and divine comfort and assurance (7;17). The washing of robes figure fits in perfectly with this thematic progression and parallels closely Exodus 19:10, 14 where the Israelites are told to purify themselves and wash their garments before approaching Yahweh at Sinai. "It is no accident then that John follows the purification ritual of 7:14 with a proclamation of access to the presence of God on 7;15a." Fekkes's comments on further connections of chapter 7: 14-17 with OT texts follow on pp. 169-172.

[724] Gerhard van den Heever, "Die Motief van die Wêreldbrand: Zoroastrisme, Judaïsme en Vroeë Christendom: Patrone van Interaksie," (MTh Diss., University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1993). Title translated as, "The Motif of the Conflagration: Zoroastrianism, Formative Judaism and Early Christianity: Patterns of Interaction."

[725] Van den Heever's conclusions rest on the essential conditions of syncretism: similarity of elements, historical or circumstantial probability which is congenial to interaction, and a mechanism of interaction, also as historical links, 32. See Chapter Three, 36-50, for a selection of texts from exilic Judaism, the Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, patristic writings and Zoroastrian texts, and Chapter 4, 51-85 for an interpretation of these within the encompassing eschatological framework.

6. EXCURSUS: THE SCHOLARLY DEBATES AROUND REVELATION 7

Before considering social and cultural textures of Revelation 7, a brief overview of some scholarly interpreters serves to broaden understanding of an ongoing debate about the identity of the two groups in Revelation 7. Richard Yates counters the prevailing belief among non-dispensationalists that the 144,000 and great multitude portray the same group from different viewpoints, by drawing sharp distinctions between the groups. The 144,000 are a precise number, viewed on earth, and protected from impending harm; the 144,000 have suffered during the tribulation, died and are seen in heaven.[726] In a subsequent article, Yates deals with the seven rewards God pledges to gives to the tribulation saints by "protecting, shepherding and comforting them in the eternal state." [727]

Christopher Smith, suggested that an original list of the tribes was transformed by the author of Revelation into a list by making a number of changes in listing the order of the tribes changes, the most important being Judah moving from the fourth place to first, because Christ, the head of the Church belonged to that tribe; however Reuben retains his place as first-born, however, to represent the inclusion of believing Israelites in the Church. [728]

In the following year, Richard Bauckham, countered Smith's assertions regarding the revision of the precedence among the tribes of Israel as representing the inclusion of Gentiles in the new Israel. Bauckham's argument was that literary links and parallels suggest that the vision of the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude in chapter 7 should be seen as a parallel to the vision of the Lion and the Lamb of 5:5-14, therefore the 144,000 are an Israelite army in fact, that 7:4-8 is a census of the tribes of Israel where a census was always a reckoning of military strength of a nation, in which only males of military age were counted. [729]

Smith duly responded to Bauckham by stating that both of them share an essentially

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[726] Yates, Richard. "The Identity of the Tribulation Saints," *Bib Sac* 163, no.649 (2006):79-93.

[727] Yates, Richard "The Reward of the Tribulation Saints."*Bib Sac,* 163, no. 651 (2006): 332-334.

[728] C.R. Smith, "The Portrayal of the Church as the New Israel in the Names and Order of the Tribes of Revelation 7:5-8," *JNST* 39, (1990):115-16.

[729] Richard Bauckham, "The List of Tribes in Revelation Again,"*JSNT* 42, (1991): 99-115.

similar interpretive approach to the book of Revelation, in understanding the technique of the author of the book ("John" by his own description) to be the ironic transformation of conventional Jewish messianic expectations into Jewish-Christian images. They differ only on how this transformation was actually accomplished in Revelation 7.[730]

A further contribution was that of Russell Morton who pointed to both Revelation 5 and Revelation 7 as incorporating imagery which would have been very familiar to those who knew court ritual, especially in Ephesus and Perganum, where the imperial cult was especially strong.[731] R. Dalrymple's underlying thesis was that Revelation tends not only to recapitulate material, but that in doing so its general pattern is to develop and expand previous themes – often making explicit what was previously implicit, Thus, by means of this method the account of the Two Witnesses may be viewed as developing and expanding the account of the 144,000 and the great multitude of Revelation 7.[732]

These arguments do not address the social and cultural dimensions of the 144,000 Jews and multitude too great to count, since they mainly focus on issues concerning the relationship of the 144,000 to the great multitude, and these arguments, as many others not mentioned, written from a Christian point of view tend to favour, often not without overtones of supercessionism, an absorption of the 144,000 into the great multitude. With a text as rich as Revelation 7 one, however, needs a more comprehensive approach, one that would not only look at social and cultural background and language, but extrapolate all other aspects of the faith experience of the early Christians – their roots in Judaism, influences from Hellenism as well as the ideologies that modern readers bring to bear on the texts and their sense and experience of the Divine.

7. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE

This section deals with the social and cultural dimension of the first readers, therefore the *world created by the text.* It is based on the assumption that the book of Revelation

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[730] Christopher Smith, "The Tribes of Revelation and the Literary Competence of John the Seer," *JETS* 38, no.2 (1995): 213-18.

[731] Russell Morton, Revelation 7:9-17: "The Innumerable Crowd Before the One Upon the Throne and the Lamb," *ATJ* 32, (2000): 1-7.

[732] R. Dalrymple. "These are the Ones… (Rev 7)," *Biblica* 86, no. 3 (2005): 396-406.

was written by a single author[733] during the reign of Emperor Domitian from 81 to 96 C.E.[734] The one author, already referred to by Fekkes, has freely used a variety of elements, a number of which were allusions and reworking of Old Testament passages mainly from Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Zechariah.[735] Bearing in mind that texts from the Hebrew Bible interlock with texts from extra-biblical apocalypses, I recall that Korner relates visions in Revelation to 4 Ezra, Second Baruch 1, Enoch and Daniel. Frankfurter broadens the concept by advocating a regional assessment of Christian apocalyptic literature.[736]Asia Minor, one of the regions he identifies is distinctive for its prophetism, that is, the central religious function within early Christianity of figures reputed to speak as mediators of supernatural and travellers to the heavenly world, who often predicted to their audiences imminent woes, cataclysms and new worlds dawning. The word is used in its social scientific context, implying no historical relationship with "prophets' – *nĕbĭ'im* – in the Bible.[737]

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[733] Authorship of Revelation will be referred to more fully further on.

[734] This redaction has by consensus of scholars generally been fixed around 95 C.E. during the reign of Emperor Domitian. This does not exclude the possibility that pre-redactional traditions could have stemmed from the time of John the Baptist, the Essenes and the period of the Emperor Nero.

[735] It cannot be assumed that all scholars acknowledge the OT texts that Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 60, notes a tendency to evaluate and define early Christian biblical exegesis primarily on the basis of citations which are accompanied by introductory formulae or similar contextual indicators. "While such self-defined limitations are convenient for research, they automatically exclude the more numerous and equally important instances of OT allusions, concepts, characters and institutions. Consequently, the results of these investigations may be valuable for describing certain functions and stages of Christian OT interpretation, but it would be misleading and unwise to make sweeping generalisations about early Christian attitudes to the OT as a result of this evidence alone." By the same token Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 59, does not deny that Revelation is a complex of various traditions and even multiple genres, and that this should warn any who would attempt to build an interpretation alone. Yet be believes "that the sheer magnitude, variety and consistency of John's use of the OT certainly constitutes this area as a fundamental starting place for exegesis."

[736] David Frankfurter, "Early Christian Apocalypticism: Literature and Social World," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Vol. 1. The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity.* (Edited by John. J. Collins. New York/London: Continuum, 2000), 416-417. Frankfurter states that as is often the case in reconstructing ancient history, "our entry into the religious world of early Christian Apocalypticism depends almost entirely on the historical evidence of the ancient texts; the apocalypses themselves, enigmatic and often esoteric books that convey little more than their authors' attitudes toward some 'greater truth' at work in the world than historical reality itself, material of little use for documenting actual religious groups and figures. More objective witnesses in the form of church histories, letters and heresiographies seldom complement the apocalypses directly." In order to deal with this diversity he recommends that the history of early Christian religion to be grouped by regional affiliation, so that "apocalypses, along with other kinds of data from a region and a particular period, can together constitute parts of a manageable cultural puzzle." Frankfurter identifies Asia Minor as one of the regions that is distinct for its prophetism, that is, "the central religious function within early Christianity of figures reputed to speak as mediators of supernatural and travelers to the heavenly world, who often predicted to their audiences imminent woes, cataclysms and new worlds dawning." Apocalypses localised in Asia Minor were the *Sibylline Oracles*, the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, *4, 5,* and *6 Ezra and the Vision of Dorotheus,* 427-430.

[737] Frankfurter, "Early Christian Apocalypticism," 16.

Using coded language, so vital for the survival of downtrodden people, the author of Revelation quarried the book of Daniel for images which could substitute for people and situations of his present time. The occulted messages in the visions relayed by the author would not be detected by their persecutors, the Roman Emperors, who would be ignorant of the finer details of Jewish literature, and not inclined to become knowledgeable about them. Christians, however, still closely connected with their Jewish roots, and immersed in the Hebrew Bible, would have immediately recognised what the author wanted to convey and would project themselves into the groups portrayed in Revelation 7. No immunity against oppression by ruling classes could, however, be claimed; social stratification in Roman society inevitably had repercussions for Christian communities in Asia Minor.

7.1 Definitions of Social and Cultural textures

In commenting on social and cultural textures, I focus on three social locations: that of the Christians who lived in the world of the text of Revelation 7, Christians, who within the PMD framework justify a militaristic interpretation of the text who have with an elaborated interpretation of the text; Christians, who look to text in its original context, yet need to articulate their own expectation of how meaning in the original context, might impact in contemporary context. John Elliott, a key exegete in The Context Group,[738] in *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* defines the scope of the investigation and the methodological procedure necessitated in such a search for meaning:

> Social scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of social sciences. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences.[739]

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[738] D.G Horrell, ed., *Social-scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect.* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), in his own description of developments during this period distinguishes three epicentres: (a) The Context Group with Bruce Malina, John Elliott, Jerome Neyrey and Richard Rohrbaugh as central figures; (b) "The social historians," Gerd Theissen and Wayne Meeks and (c) Radical social history and emancipatory theologies with Luise Schotroff and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza as its foremost representatives.

[739] Hens-Piazza, *The New Historicism* (ed. Dan O. Via; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), 1.

Parallel to the development of the Context Group were the New Historicists associated with University of California at Berkeley. Central to the new Historicism is the anecdote, as a historeme . . . ."The smallest minimal unit of the historiographic fact suggests its integral function to doing history as distinguished from past ways of proceeding."[740] Gina Hens-Piazza from the guild of New Historicists explains it thus: "First anecdote resists location in the teleological continuum of beginning – middle – end we construct in organizing the past. At the same time, it escapes the historical positivist explanations of cause and effect we employ to contrast. Instead anecdote just lets history happen."[741]

Clearly New Historicism is a drastic revisioning of previous exegetical approaches, particularly historical criticism. Taken together with Elliott of the Context Group there is a strong move towards focus on social realities in biblical texts. Robbins, also active in this wider movement holds that "social and cultural texture aid the interpreter to focus on the social world of the readers of a particular text and how that text locates them in and moves them to respond to that world the language evokes or creates."[742] He asks, "What kind of a social and cultural person would anyone be who lives in the 'world' of a particular text?" "Do the narrator and characters in the story assert or imply that the world is evil, and if so how evil is it?" "Do they indicate how the world could be changed? If the world cannot be changed, do they indicate how it is possible to live in it without participating in evil?"[743] In the same vein, Burton Mack, a pioneer in rhetoric criticism, pushing the boundaries of social-scientific enquiry, asks, "Why do Christians think it is time to get into politics?" "Why has the language of good and evil squelched other ways of thinking about the reasons for the state of the world?"[744]

Mack looks to "our historians of religion about the ways religions worked in other societies, how and why peoples have thought their myths and rituals were so important, under what circumstances myths surfaced to rationalize public policies, and whether myths might be challenged and changed when they 'get out of sync with social

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[740] Gina Hens-Piazza, *The New Historicism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).
[741] Gina Hens-Piazza, *The New Historicism,* 4.
[742] Robbins, *Exploring the Textures,* 71.
[743] Robbins, *Exploring the Textures,* 71.
[744] Burton Mack, *Myth and the Christian Nation: A Social Theory of Religion* (London/Oakville: Equinox, 2008), ix.

situations.' If that learning could be applied to the history of Christianity, it might then be possible to understand how it could be that a president of a democracy gets to say what the Christian's God wants us to do."[745] What Mack suggests should be described are concepts such "social interests," "social formation," "mythmaking," "imagined world," "myth and ritual systems," "mythic grammars and cultural mentalities." This having been done, then looked at "from various angles in order to settle into place important components of a coherent scholarly theory," and finally "applied in some way to questions about the Christian mentality in America raised by the Christian right and its discourse about Christian nation."[746]

In applying questions to "Christian mentality two millennia ago," I will in the next section draw together the essence of three crucial facets of early Christianity: social realities, loyalty to the imperial cult and persecution. Since the field is immense and detailed descriptions not possible, the works referred to in the footnotes and bibliography serve to fully contextualise the issues in which Revelation 7 is embedded.

7.2   Christians in Asia and the Empire

The social location of the Christians in the seven churches[747] in western Asia Minor impinged on that of the many-tiered location of the Roman population – from the emperor in Rome to senators, equestrians, decurions, and freedmen in the provinces."[748]

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[745] Mack, *Myth*, ix-x.

[746] Mack, *Myth*, ix-x. Mack defines "myth" as expanding the view of the world beyond the horizon of the local natural environment. He sees rituals as "providing a lens to concentrate on details of significant actions and watch them performed in deliberate perfection as if set in a different world and time." And the times and spaces beyond the contemporary environments and histories of a people as well as beyond those environments can be investigated "by means of living memories and empirical contact," thus becoming an imagined world where located agents and events can "reconfigure and gain some distance from social interests and issues as well as the mysteries of the natural world."

[747] Wes Howard Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 89, identify the *ekklēsiai* to whom Revelation was addressed as being located in some of the most important cities of the province: Ephesus, Smyrna, Perganum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev 2-3). "The fact that the communities were located in the cities of Asia is of critical importance to our interpretation of Revelation. The historical context of the communities requires an examination of how life was lived in the cities of' the Roman province. This will involve an exploration of the politics, economics, culture and mythology of the Roman Empire., particularly those found in the Roman province of Asia. As in any society, these elements of the Roman world were not separate realities. Rather, together they constituted a social totality that was interwoven in a web of imperial power. These were the avenues by which Rome held the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the slave and free in its orbit."

[748] R.H.Worth, *The Seven Cities of the Apocalypse & Roman Culture* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999), 9-10.

This stratification matches Bourdieu's idea of "a social world that can be represented in the form of a multi-dimensional space; one constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation and distribution, and constituted by the set of properties active in the social universe under consideration. A space that is able to confer force or power on their possessor in that universe.[749] Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their "relative positions in this space, each of them is confined to a position or a precise class of neighbouring positions, that is, to a region of this space."[750] This space, as a "field of forces" constitutes a "set of objective power relations" imposed on all who enter it, these relations not "reducible to the intentions of individual agents or even the direct interactions between agents."[751]

Along the same lines S.R.F. Price describes the imperial cult, like the cults of the traditional gods, as creating a relationship of power between subject and ruler, one which enhanced the dominance of local élites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and of Greek over indigenous cultures. "The cult was a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society."[752] Price mentions further features of the imperial cult: it stabilised the religious order of the world – the system of ritual was carefully structuring; the symbolism evoked a picture of the relationship between the emperor and the gods; its ritual was also structuring – it imposed a definition of the world – along with politics and diplomacy, constructed the reality of the Roman Empire.[753]

Christians, however, could not separate themselves from the cult or deny their dependence on it – they were inextricably bound up with the temples and shrines honouring the emperor, the temples being a central place where financial transactions took place, but in actual fact only advantageous for the elite who could expand their clientele, and consequently their honour, reputation and status.[754] Being victims in the power play described above, Christians, as a result of economic insecurity, would be

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[749] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 229.
[750] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 230.
[751] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 230. This argument can be followed in notes following in which Bourdieu refers to different kinds of power or capital found in this social space.
[752] S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult and in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 248.
[753] Price, *Rituals and Power,* 248.
[754] Worth, *The Seven Cities*, 117.

reduced to divisiveness, disease and early death.[755] All these negativities were compounded by the rights and obligations of the elites who linked their fortunes more tightly to Rome and their own city. Asian cities competed with one another for imperial honour and privilege, the result being an increase in the construction of imperial temples, and other buildings and monuments.[756]

There was, however, by virtue of Roman society's pyramid of patron-client relationships, a measure of reprieve for the poor. A person of higher standing, known as a patron, could offer financial assistance or legal protection or patronage, to a person of lower standing. By accepting assistance, the client was obligated to offer respect and loyalty to the patron. Yet, the intertwined areas of Imperial economics and Imperial cult constituted a force that shaped Christian communities in the late first century C.E. [757]

Under Emperor Domitian the cult was again taken in an "extremely literal sense," as Worth puts it. Domitian even demanded that his servants address him as "master and god."[758] The province of Asia aggressively established elaborate ways of bestowing divine honours on the first emperor, Augustus and his successors.[759] In 9 B.C.E the provincial council of Asia centered among the seven cities announced a competition, a crown being awarded for the one who bestowed the highest honours on Augustus.[760] Since Augustus was regarded as being the "beginning of all blessings" his birthday became a perpetual New Year's Day – by the first century C.E. there were three shrines to the emperors, with cities again competing with one another for the honour of hosting festivities for the goddess Roma, the emperor and deities.[761] Defiant non-participation in these ceremonies was a sign of disloyalty, the result being loss of imperial favour and ultimately being sentenced to death. "Revelation portrays persecution as a consequence of fidelity to Jesus and opposition to the Beast."[762]

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[755] Worth, *The Seven Cities*, 9-10.

[756] See Howard Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 95.

[757] See Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1981; and Carter, *John and Empire*, 57. Also pp. 52-81, "Expressions of Roman Power in Ephesus." Although these expressions, e.g Roman Presence in Ephesus, and Imperial Theology are relevant to the Gospel of John, the Asia Minor context links them to the Book of Revelation as well.

[758] Worth, *The Seven Cities*, 117.

[759] Greg Carey, "The Book of Revelation as a Counter-Imperial Script," in *The Shadow of the Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance.* (ed. Richard A. Horsley. Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 162.

[760] Carey, "The Book of Revelation," 162.

[761] Carey, "The Book of Revelation," 163.

[762] Carey, "The Book of Revelation," 163.

This brings the overview to persecution that most often is offered as the main reason behind the writing of the book of Revelation. John, it was believed, wrote the book to encourage Christians facing tribulation and even martyrdom. Those scholars favouring an early dating of 64 C.E.[763] attach great significance to Nero's reign and the beginning of the wars of 69 C.E. when Christians were persecuted, to the point of death. Those accepting authorship from the time of Domitian, in 95 C.E. wide-scale persecutions were unlikely;[764] rather the issues that motivated John to address the seven churches are seen as compromise with Roman imperial society.[765] However, scholars concede that there was sporadic persecution and that John was anticipating a wave of persecution when he wrote Revelation. "While Domitian's reign was a time of an apparent increase in activity in the imperial cult and an extravagant adulation of the emperor, he does not appear to have instigated an empire-wide persecution of Christians per se. It is rather the case that mounting tensions within the society cause John to see such persecution in the near future as plausible and probable."[766]

Whatever persecution there was – for Bowersock it seems evident that the earliest authentic martyrs suffered torture and death – it was never voluntary as was frequently the case from the second century through to the fourth century.[767] Henk Versnel takes a strong stand against the "seemingly established fact" that the obligation to pay cultic reverence to the (statue of) the emperor played a marginal role in the persecutions of Christians." "In this paper[768] it is argued that the implicit – inference that ruler cult had no effect at all on the processes that led to persecution is mistaken." The clash, as

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[763] Kenneth Gentry III, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1998) strongly argues for a Neronic decreed persecution as a driving force in the writing of Revelation.

[764] Among these are Carter, *John and Empire,* 39-40; Howard Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 95 and David S. deSilva, "The Revelation to John: A Case Study in Apocalyptic Propaganda and the Maintenance of Sectarian Identity," *Sociological Analysis* 53, no.4 (1992): 375-395.

[765] Carter, *John and Empire,* 39-40, puts it this way: "Recent scholarship on Revelation argues, from an examination of life in imperial Asia and of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, that this text addressed not situations of persecution as previously thought, but situations of what the author regards as overaccommodation(sic) and compromise with Roman imperial society. The author challenges the overaccommodated (sic) lifestyle of the majority in the churches, urging them to discern the (demonic!) nature of the empire and to distance themselves from societal participation."

[766] DeSilva, "The Revelation to John," 380.

[767] See G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4. Also the entire Chapter 1, for commentary on the transition of the appellation "witness" to "martyr" and correlation with Second Maccabees.

Versnel sees it, was one between two utopian representations: one of an existing realm of bliss ruled by a mortal who had been deified "honoris causa" on account of his function as empire and as the supreme *euergetès*, guarantor of peace, order and prosperity. "The other utopia was promised for the (near) future by a god of "nature" who was reduced to the level of an insignificant mortal.[769] The ideological divide was so wide that that Christians voluntarily refused the blessings of the present utopia and chose exile, voluntary death, fleeing to their own utopia which appeared to the Romans as chaos."[770]

Having sketched the Christian predicament from several angles, I turn to the pertinent question of what kind of rhetoric characterised Christians in their ambivalent relationship with the Roman Empire. Ultimately, was armed resistance ever an option for them?

7.3 Christian Rhetoric in Imperial Society

In the second century C.E. Tertullian writes that the Christians pray for the emperors and ask them for a "long life," "a safe empire," "a quiet home," "strong armies," "a faithful senate," "honest subjects," and "a world at peace." Again, they pray for the general strength and stability of the empire which keeps at bay the great violence which hangs over the universe, and even the end of the world itself, harbinger of terrible calamities.[771] This would refer to the interpretation of a passage from 2 Thessalonians 2: 6-7 on the obstacle, either a person or object, which Christian writers up to, and including Lactantius, Ambrose and Augustine, identified as a restraining presence

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[768] Henk Versnel , "Geeft de Keizer wat des Keizers is en Gode wat Gods is. Een Essay over een Utopisch Conflict," *Lampas* 34, (2001): 233. (English translation: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's: An Essay on Utopian Conflict").

[769] Versnel, "Geeft de Keizer," 233: "Though safeguarded from all too harsh internal inconsistencies by identical mechanisms of 'cognitive dissonance', the two images represented diametrically opposite and mutually exclusive ideologies. While the present divine emperor was the *nomos empsuchos*, the reversed world of the Christians provoked the familiar socio-psychological imputations generally levelled at outsiders and scape-goats (sic). It is essential that these imputations can − and should – be valued as references to, and signals of mythical *anomie* and chaos. The 'eunomic' and real utopia of the emperor as the deified *euergetès* versus the 'anomic chaos of a humbled slave god: this is the 'semiotic' kernel of the conflict."

[770] Versnel, "Geeft de Keizer," 256. The anomie the Romans saw in Christians was their lack of *logos* – their simplicity, and lack of *nomos* – culture, convention, fashionableness, morale and law.

[771] Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire*, Translated by Annabel Bedini. (London/Sydney: Croom Helm, 1973), 173.

before the coming of the Anti-Christ with the Roman Empire and its emperor.[772]

> I personally take this as indisputable proof that the Christians were not prejudiced in any way against the Roman Empire, either as an institution or an ideology. Through their conviction that the Roman Empire would last as long as the world (*Tertullian, Ad Scape.2*) the early Christians actually renewed and appropriated as their own the concept of Roma Aeterna. "While we pray to delay the end – and it is Tertullian speaking again (*Apol.xxxii.I*) – we are helping Rome to last forever. We have no reason to say, therefore that Roman imperial ideology was in any way incompatible with their faith.[773]

Of course, the situation Sordi is describing belongs to an era nearly two hundred years after the writing of Revelation. She illustrates how the Christians, Drawing on the thirteenth chapter of Romans and the second chapter of the First Epistle to Peter, would at this early stage would have seen that agreement between the Roman tradition of the *principate*, whose ideological matrix was the stoicism of the first century, was possible. However, this was in "direct contrast to the theocratic, orientalising ideology imposed by Antony and seen at its height during the aberrant reigns of Caligula and Nero and the autocracy of Domition *Dominus Deus*."[774]

However, when it came to worshipping the person of the emperor himself Christians realised the incompatibility between the Roman cult and the Christian faith. The scene of the Beast being adored in Revelation 13 would rouse their opposition.[775] Do we know how they would have expressed their repugnance?

Researching the prevailing rhetoric in a subjugated and demoralised community assumes some symbiosis between a strong charismatic leader and the people, the former, however asserting a strategically based discourse and the latter, having cultivated the knack of understanding these strategies, internalise these and act as called for. However, to be able to trace the contours of this rhetorical discourse one needs to know who the rhetor is and this is what complicates identifying whose rhetorical voice is being heard in Revelation. Those who accept John, son of Zebedee as the author of

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[772] Sordi, *The Christians*, 173.
[773] Sordi, *The Christians*, 173.
[774] Sordi, *The Christians*, 172.
[775] Sordi, *The Christians,* 173.

the Revelation will have no problem in hearing that same voice in the Fourth Gospel.[776] Those believing that Revelation's John is an itinerant prophet of obscure background cannot but see his rhetorical style through the lens of the author of the Fourth Gospel. In the absence of more substantial distinctions between the two authors one may accept the rhetorical style of John of the Gospel as being typical of other rhetors in the situation of the time, capable of being adapted as the situation warranted. So as I assume rhetoric in Revelation as being "typical" of two Johns I concentrate on the "rhetoric of distance" while pointing out other perspectives that can be followed up.

In the context of the John's Gospel Malina and Rohrbaugh postulate that the expulsion of Jews from the synagogue and persecution by the Roman Imperium would certainly have resulted in a kind of *anti-language*.[777] Carter draws from M.A.K. Halliday a sociolinguist who has used the concepts of antilanguage (sic) and antisociety (sic) to discuss the distinctive language and communal experience of alternative and countercommunitarian groups alienated from and alternative to the rest of society.[778]

Carter notes, "readers of John's Gospel have long observed its distinctive and dualistic way of speaking. Halliday's approach suggests that John's Gospel is an example of this sort of antilanguage, which I have identified throughout as John's 'rhetoric of distance.'" Carter qualifies this by saying that the Gospel's distinctive dualistic, stark either-or language is usually understood to reflect and maintain an alternative identity and understanding of the world, an antisociety in some tension with and counter to dominant values.[779] The Gospel's language has thus been interpreted as

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[776] There is a general agreement among scholars that the seer in Revelation who names himself John, is not John the son Zebedee who wrote the Fourth Gospel. Two factors that have supported this notion is firstly, that the author does not identify himself as an apostle, and secondly, that the Greek in which he writes differs from that of the Gospel. The question of the authorship of Revelation also hinges on who the Roman Emperor was at the time of writing. For comment on all the issues involved see, Ben Witherington, *Revelation* (The New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-10.

[777] B. J. Malina & J. H. Rohrbaugh, A *Social-scientific Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 7.

[778] Warren Carter, *John and Empire* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008), 74-75.

[779] See Gerhard van den Heever, "From the Pragmatics of Textures to a Christian Utopia," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (eds., S.E Porter and D.L. Stamp. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 297-334. In a creative response to Vernon Robbins's call for an "interpretive analytics" Van den Heever writes: "This reading of (an aspect of) the rhetoric of John's Gospel concerns itself, therefore, with the trajectory of imperial language in the first-century Greco-Roman world: how John picks it up, transforms it, and eventually contributes to its becoming the foundation of the dominant world-view or religious superstructure of an empire that has becomes Christian by the fourth-century CE. In a subsection entitled "Frames of Existence" 317-19, Van den Heever, cites the phenomenon of public benefactions as providing one more nexus between the reality of the Imperium and social reality or public life in Ephesus. He notes that inscriptions testify to the fact that

reflecting, reinforcing and explaining social alienation experienced by John's community in being expelled from the synagogue.[780]

> The rhetoric of distance creates societal boundaries, establishes clarity of identity, and urges distance among those who the writer or writers think lack boundaries, clarity and distance. In terms of this approach, the gospel's rhetoric of distance or antilanguage provides a rhetorical strategy for negotiating Rome's world by challenging the current practices of Jesus believers and creating greater social space.[781]

In several instances Carter notes that John's antilanguage is more *consequential* than *prescriptive*, *performative* than *reflective*.[782] While acknowledging that the plot of John in itself creates rhetorical distance, Carter gives attention to a number of texts where this is obvious, to refer to two examples: Confession of Jesus as the Christ (John 9:2);[783] and Jesus' farewell discourse John 13-17.[784] For rhetoric distance to be of any value for this study we would need to show how it functions in the texts of Revelation, not necessarily in Revelation 7 alone. This implies a dedicated study, one beyond the scope of this chapter. The most evident examples would be found in the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2-3), with two examples being "those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads," (Rev 9:4); the call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus (Rev 14:12).

Other authors whose works shed light on the discourse in Revelation are David de Silva who situates the rhetoric of Revelation squarely within the framework of Aristotle's deliberate, forensic and epideictic discourses and his three proofs, namely

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next to public building works or the funding of games, feasting was counted as one of the most important expressions of euergetism Seeing links between benefactions of throwing bread to the crowds, and utopian expectations, John, would see in, the overabundant supply of wine and bread in John 2 and 6 respectively as countering the Augustan self-image as "the one and only one."

[780]Carter, *John and Empire,* 75, says of the expulsion theory that there is evidence for considerable levels of social participation and that the societal experience of alienation may be much less likely than previously thought. "Rather, the experience of alienation seems to be more entexted in John's antilanguage than comprise social interaction, which seems to be marked by considerable accommodation. If this context is correct, the force and starkness of John antilanguage would function not to reinforce and explain the alienation of an existing antisociety but to create an antisociety."

[781] Carter, *John and Empire,* 75.

[782] Carter, *John and Empire,* 74-75.

[783] Carter, *John and Empire,* 43.

[784] Carter, *John and Empire,* 43.

logos, *pathos* and *ethos*;[785] Greg Carey who describes Revelation's "counter-imperial script" in terms of its graphic symbols;[786] and Jennifer Wright Knust who highlights how the author of Revelation, as also other early Christian authors, levelled condemnatory accusations of sexual immorality at non-Christians, thus implying their own capability of self-control and purity.[787]

Yet, whatever the approach, underlying war rhetoric is dominant in Revelation. In a socio-rhetorical study of "Holy War" in some Second Temple sacred texts, Bloomquist and Geisterfer-Nyvlt draw out its intended effects: "Holy War is an essential feature of the last book of the canonical NT, the Revelation to John. Not only is 'war in heaven' an explicit feature of the text (Rev 12:7) but as we shall see, 'holy war' rhetoric pervades the text."[788] The war in question appears to be, as in the case of the Qumran scroll, a final (eschatological) war in which the earth is cleansed from unholy men and women by God. In this text, however, Bloomquist and Geisterfer, point out, "God is the one who made himself known to the early Christian communities in the person of Jesus Christ. The writer's clear aim is Rome, and although much of the language used elsewhere in Jewish tradition to describe the war of God against this particular city, the language is used that describe the war of God against cities that have withstood God's demands: Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Sidon, etc."[789]

Kraybill confirms the non-violent, pacifist response John expects from his readers: With God as the foundation of his strategic response to a situation of systemic evil, John longs for Rome's demise, but never issues a call for violent revolution, rather in contrast to the Zealot model of armed resistance, the faithful Christians must respond with patient endurance rather than violence. "If you are taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed" (Rev 13:10).[790]

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[785] David deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

[786] Carey, "The Book of Revelation," 164-7.

[787] Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Knust is thinking along the same lines as Versnel, *Geeft de Keizer*, 255, who shows how Revelation inverted accusations of immorality by the Romans, by assigning moral vices such as prostitution, drunkenness and infanticide to them.

[788] Bloomquist and Geisterfer-Nyvlt,,"Rhetorical strategies for "Holy War," 31. [Cited 15 December 2009.] Online: www.ustpaul.ca/ResearchServices/documents/ ScientificPublications_2001-2005_e.pdf

[789] Bloomquist and Geisterfer-Nyvlt, "Rhetorical strategies for 'Holy War,'" 31.

[790] Kraybill, *Imperial Cult,* 201.

While the world follows a beast with all its power and violence, Christians follow a gentle and (seemingly) powerless Lamb – confident that God's love will triumph in the end. A great multitude of the faithful stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb (14;1-5) and an angel proclaims from mid-heaven, "fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! (14:8). The collapse of Rome will be God's doing, not something humans engineer.[791]

So while the Christians were neither Zealots nor Maccabean-style defenders of the faith,[792] they were both dramatis personae and audience in the unfolding drama of Revelation.

7.4 Contemporary Reader-expectations of Apocalyptic

Back to the present Christians and non-Christians behold the PMD and Dominionist crusaders' engineering the downfall of God's enemies. Mack is concerned with another kind of rhetoric: "Then there was the 'terrorist attack' of September 11, 2001. Suddenly the public discourse was awash with religious language of 'evil enemies,' 'terrorists,' 'holy war,' and 'Islamic extremists,' on the one hand and the marshalling of patriotism and the military for a 'crusade' against an 'evil axis of governments' thought to threaten the USA and spawn terrorists on the other."[793] Mack remarks that the similarities of the two rhetorics, that of the Islamists and that of the US extremists did not registrar. There would be a Department of Homeland Security to protect the US at home, a "city set on a hill," "the light to the nations." There would also be a preemptive war "to destroy our enemies before they destroy us."[794]

Mack then refers to a "series of books with an Armageddon theme, describing the "rapture" of the righteous and destruction of sinners in the apocalypse at hand at hand went off the charts. There is no doubt that Mack is referring to the Left Behind novels since he refers to Frykholm's *Rapture Culture*. As he sees it, the fear of impending disaster apparently "touched the nerve of concern for personal salvation."[795] However,

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[791] Kraybill, *Imperial Cult,* 201.
[792] See Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," *JBL* 96, no.2 (1977): 241-256 for additional insights into holy war imagery and martyrdom.
[793] Mack, *Christian Nation,* 3.
[794] Mack, *Christian Nation,* 3.
[795] Mack, *Christian Nation,* 3.

on the national front, where religion now mattered for a reason for going to war, the response was not only fear, but bravado because "God was on our side."[796] Mack's expectation of an apocalyptic text such as Revelation can be spelt out by his insistence that Christianity no longer be thought of as a caretaker of personal morality and is never a private affair.[797]

Gottwald counters the insistence of the Religious Right that its vision of the apocalyptic is biblically based, by showing that there are "inner-biblical controls on apocalyptic thinking by which we can critique its use in the political life of the nations."[798] Gottwald does not discount the value of apocalyptic, and he states propositions of how it should be appropriated.[799] His expectation would be found in the question, "What are the crucial structures determining the misuses of power, by what process can they be changed, and how can I best contribute to that process?"[800]

In terms of Rhetoric and Society in the Light of Revelation 7 and a subsection Social and Cultural textures, I have explored the contours of both ancient and modern contexts in which readers respond to texts. These have not always been Revelation 7 in particular, but the wider texts in which they are embedded. This leads to the next texture, that of ideology, an aspect not to be regarded as an additional texture. Indeed it is enmeshed in social and cultural texts, yet is treated separately for the purpose of drawing out the role of social location in the framing of the ideas by which the world must be run, a simple description of a complex of definitions and application we have already encountered, and will still encounter.

8. IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE

8.1 Definitions

As Robbins phrases it, "Investigation of social and cultural texture takes the analyst to

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[796] Mack, *Christian Nation,* 3.
[797] Mack, *Christian Nation,* 4.
[798] Norman K. Gottwald, "The Politics of Armageddon − Apocalyptic Fantasies, Ancient and Modern" a lecture at the Eleventh Annual Social History and Theory Seminar, University of California, Irvine, April 1988, and published under the same title in a collection of works, Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible and its Social World and in Ours* (Atlanta: Scholars, Press, 1993), 255.
[799] Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible and Social World,* 262.
[800] Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible and Social World,* 263.

the doorstep of ideological texture. The term 'ideology' has meant, and does still mean, different things to different people."[801] From a socio-rhetorical perspective he turns to Eagleton who sees ideology as "the concept of ideology aims to disclose something of the relation between an utterance and its material conditions of possibility, when those conditions of possibility are viewed in the light of certain power-struggles central to the reproduction . . . of a whole form of social life."[802]

One of the points that distinguishes Robbins's definition of ideological texture is that the primary subject of analysis is people, not the text; the text now becomes the secondary subject, simply the object of people's writing and reading; the issue, being the social, cultural and individual location and perspective of writers and readers.[803] This section will therefore move from the island Patmos in Asia Minor in the late first century C.E., the Midwest in the U.S.A in the latter half of the twentieth century C.E., and locations across the world in the early twenty-first century.

Bloomquist and Geisterfer-Nyvlt, who conducted a socio-rhetorical analysis on "Holy Wars," see ideological texture as an important network of strands in the tapestry of texts. Texts, they write, understood rhetorically, "seek to do something to or with an audience. They are not mere replicas of the world around them for even though they may seek to explain the world around, they do so with a particular point of view or understanding, thus creating an order that, while it may be there, both includes and excludes things that are also there." [804] Texts, then, inevitably create some form of "symbolic universe" out of the often fragmented, or even just abundant reality around us. This is one meaning of "ideology," namely, the means whereby authors and readers, characters and narrators, as well as interpreters and their audiences, structure the world around them, either on their own or in conjunction with others."[805]

Having pegged "first thoughts" on Ideology in Chapter 5, Section 2.2 I return to Eagleton who in terms of discourse views an utterance as being "non-ideological or ideological depending on the particular circumstance are applicable here."[806] As he sees

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[801] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 36.
[802] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory:An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983), 15.
[803] Robbins, *Textures of Texts,* 95.
[804] Bloomquist and Geisterfer-Nyvlt, "Rhetorical Strategies for "Holy War," 5.
[805] Bloomquist and Geisterfer-Nyvlt, "Rhetorical Strategies for "Holy War," 5.
[806] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 9.

it, ideology is a matter of "discourse" rather than language − it concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects.[807] "You could not decide whether a statement was ideological or not by inspecting it in isolation from its discursive context, any more than you could decide in this way whether a piece of writing was a literary work of art."[808] The general point, governing Eagleton's thought is then, is that exactly the same piece of language may be ideological in one context and not in another; ideology is a function of an utterance to its social context.[809]

Eagleton's refusal to absolutise ideology is in line with his previous definition cited in Chapter 5 of this thesis, and the remark that "one person's rigidity, is notoriously, another's openmindedness;" that the belief that ideology is a schematic, an inflexible way of seeing the world, as against some more modest piecemeal, pragmatic wisdom was elevated in the post-war period from a piece of popular wisdom to an elaborate sociological theory.[810] It is with this flexibility in mind that I approach the ideological stances, in context of the LB Corpus, of the author of Revelation, the interpreter of Revelation, and the interpretation thereof and finally the researcher of all three of the aforementioned.

8.2 *Ideology of the Author*

This section interfaces with Section 7.3 where various modes of rhetorical discourse in Revelation were referred to. However, it focuses more on the passions and life experiences of the author of Revelation. While rhetorical discourse has a theoretical construction its success depends on the *pathos*, that is, delivery that moves the message − in this case, "Come out from her!" − from the heads to the hearts of the audience. If the audience cannot share the heart-throb of the rhetor the message has failed or is at least superficially received. The author of Revelation introduces himself thus: "I, John your brother who shares with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the

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[807] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 9.
[808] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 9.
[809] Eagleton, *Ideology,* 4.
[810] Eagleton, *Ideology,* 4.

patient endurance, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write in a book what you see and the send it to the seven churches . . . '" (Rev 1: 9-11). It is this exigency that compels John to obey this command, and the social location from which he comes, and the social location he now inhabits in the present that determines his ideological outlook, which in reality is a counter-ideology as it is pitted against the ideology of the imperial cult.

DeSilva describes the ideology inherent in the imperial cult, as including the depiction of the emperor as "savior," "benefactor," or "divine," and the expression of the proper attitude, postures and forms of address to be internalised and employed by the participants appears as an extremely important part of John's apocalyptically fashioned protest.[811] His use of the symbols of the "image" and "the beast" and all that surrounds them can be fruitfully understood as an attempt to decentralise the ideology that he understands to be communicated through the cult and to raise up a counterideology (sic) on which the churches can take their stand.[812]

> That is, John the seer assigns a new negative evaluation to the emperor and his cult and develops a different ideological landscape in which the emperor is no longer in central position, but rather off-center, which is now represented as God, or the Lamb, and their cult. As one would expect, the imperial cult will not easily suffer detraction. Opposition to an important part of the machine of world maintenance would prove dangerous.[813]

According to Kraybill, "The raw blasphemy of first-century emperor worship was deeply offensive to John and other devout monotheists."[814] Wealth and commerce was another aversion, and Kraybill amply documents the vast trading enterprises of the in *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*.[815] He points out that archaeological evidence from Roman port cities helps explain how commerce and religion blended in

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[811] David deSilva, "The Revelation to John: A Case Study in Apocalyptic Propaganda and the Maintenance of Sectarian Identity." *Sociological Analysis* 53, no.4 (1992): 375-380.

[812] DeSilva, "The Revelation to John," 380.

[813] See Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 17.

[814] See Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 17.

[815] See Kraybill, *Imperial Cult*, 17.

ways that John found objectionable, but it cannot be concluded from this that John was against commerce and trade in themselves, "as if they were intrinsically evil; he was, however, calling on Christians to give allegiance to an alternative society in the New Jerusalem."[816]

Against what social background are we to understand John's unwillingness to accommodate the circumstances of Christians living in a multicultural environment? His monotheistic legacy from Judaism is understandable; his opposition to wealth was a legacy from his Christian discipleship, but with deep Jewish roots. Yet, in his new-found convictions he ran headlong into conflict with Jews in Asia Minor.[817]

Gager's ethic of poverty characteristic of early believers coming from disadvantaged groups sheds light on John's ideology.[818] As persons of wealth began to accept the new faith problems arose in the Church − because this ideology of poverty was so firmly embedded in the sacred writings it could not discarded altogether, and therefore had to be reinterpreted and adapted to a prevailing social conditions.[819] "Thus in terms of its ideology of poverty, Christianity underwent a "dual modification that brought it closer to the social centre of the empire," with the "influx of wealthy believers" providing "a new base of financial support and at the same time forced a reevaluation of the traditional deprecation of wealth."[820]

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[816] See Kraybill, *Imperial Cult*, 17.

[817] In Revelation 2: 9 John writes to the church at Smyrna, "I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." P.R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27, points out that some scholars have thought that those who claim to be Jews are not perhaps to avoid persecution. They are thought to belong to the group which John calls the Nicolaitans. However, these "so called Jews" according to Trebilco, are clearly distinguished from the Nicolaitans. John praises the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia for resisting persecution by the Jews but he does not criticise the other churches [in Rev 2-3] for giving in to the persecution from the Nicolaitans, but for being invaded by them. "Whereas the Jews endanger the churches by persecution from the outside, the Nicolaitans endanger them from within by means of 'heretical teachings'. It seems most likely then, says Trebilco, that those who say they are Jews are precisely that. For John these Jews have forfeited the right to be called Jews by their rejection of Jesus, and through their opposition to the Christians they deserve the title of Satan's agents. Thus we can suggest that in Smyrna and Philadelphia the Jewish communities actively opposed the Christian churches."

[818] John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs. N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1975). Further on, Gager takes into account that of the apparent exceptions to the statement that early Christianity spread primarily among disadvantaged groups, were wealthy believers such as Marcion, and such highly educated figures as Valentinus and his followers.

[819] Gager, *Kingdom,* 106, refers to the case of the *Shepherd of Hermas,* whereby the Church reacted by insisting that God had provided wealth solely for the performance of his ministries (*Similitudes* 1.9), and Clement of Alexandria, in his treatise *Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?* sought to modify the tradition by showing that only the misuse of money, not money itself, constituted a barrier to salvation.

[820] Gager, *Kingdom,* 106.

John voices an ideology of poverty in his letter to the Christians. Seemingly insensitive to the social realities of living in the empire being poor would be more desirable than being wealthy. DeSilva observes that in addressing Laodicea, John calls their wealth "poor" and "wretched," (Rev 3:17) while for their poverty. John calls the Smyrnean assembly "rich." Here according to DeSilva the true nature of the tension between wealth and poverty in John's mind reveals itself to be precisely that in the social situation, wealth attaches itself to accommodation and assimilation, while poverty attaches itself to those who seek to maintain the boundaries against the external social pressures and who thus have no defence against economic embargoes.[821]

Not only did John voice an ideology of poverty, but apparently also an ideology of sexual continence. His description in Revelation 14: 1-4 of the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion as ones who have kept their virginity and not been defiled with women has raised the issue of whether or not John expects his audience to take this vision as a literal command to maintain a life of virginity or celibacy is another question. In fact, according to Lynn Huber this is the question which has left so many modern interpreters recoiling from 14: 4.[822] She examines this metaphorical representation of faithful followers of the Lamb in relation to the constructions of masculinity in the first-century Roman Empire. In so doing, it becomes evident that this imagery functions as part of Revelation's rejection of Roman discourse, including the pro-family rhetoric of the Empire and popular depictions of the hyper-masculine male.[823]

Huber draws from many resources and her argument cannot be reproduced more fully here. The essence, however, can be captured in a few broad strokes. Social reform initiated by Augustus was characterised by a renewed emphasis on the *domus*.[824] The Augustan rhetoric about the importance of the family was spread throughout the Empire, most notably, on the *Ara Pacis*,[825] which depicts Augustus "leading his family, including women and children, in a religious procession. The male head of the

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[821] DeSilva, "The Revelation to John," 386.
[822] Lynn Huber, "Sexually Explicit? Re-reading Revelation's 144,000 Virgins as a Response to Roman Discourses," *JMMS* 2, (Jan, 2008): 1-28.
[823] Huber, "Sexually Explicit?" 1.
[824] See points made by Huber, "Sexually Explicit?" 9-12.
[825] See Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, Con: Scholars Press, 1986), 197-198, for a detailed description of the frieze depicting the Augustan family. Also, Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (translated by Brian McNeil;

household (*kurios, paterfamilias*), was the primary individual responsible for worship within the household. Maintaining household religious rites reflected a family's concern for and support of the Empire, whether one's family had direct imperial ties or not. Since the household was a microcosm of the State, proper participation in the former could be understood as benefiting the latter." In particular, Domitian, who is traditionally imagined as the Emperor in power when Revelation was written, sought to recapture the success of the divinised Augustus by adopting his social vision. However, evidence suggests that he actively supported Augustan legislation regarding the family and sexual morality and adopted the imperial rhetoric that accompanied it.[826]

Huber makes it clear that Revelation's vision of a virginal community is not simply John's repulsion over sexuality, or a hatred of the body, but that this imagery is an integral part of his political and theological aims.[827] "This reading of Revelation's 144,000 not only helps us understand the imagery in relation to the text's overall rhetorical aims, but it provides another piece of the puzzle for understanding the gender and sexual ideologies that emerged in nascent Christianity."[828] For the purpose of this section of the thesis these insights underscore the lengths John went to in order to state his opposition to the imperial cult.

Despite its puristic and intransigent accents, John's ideology cannot be cast into the kind of grid that Eagleton cautions against. John had every reason to launch a traditional holy war against the Empire, yet he opted to follow the Lamb and expected the same of the Christians in Asia Minor.

8.3 Ideology of the Reader/Interpreter

During the twentieth century interpreters began to include the reader in the context of interpretation, and ideology began to appear in the context of this emphasis. From the perspective of socio-rhetorical criticism, a "complete' interpretation includes the interrelation among the author, the text and the reader. This vision comes from rhetorical analysis, which traditionally focuses on a speaker, a speech and an audience. In the context of analysis of a text, interpretation includes propositions,

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Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 55-62, for critical notes on *Religio Domestica*, and a bibliography for further reading.

[826] Huber, "Sexually Explicit," 1.

[827] Huber, "Sexually Explicit," 5.

[828] Huber, "Sexually Explicit," 21.

implicit or explicit, about the author, the text and the reader. Socio-rhetorical criticism brings all three into the arena of textual interpretation.[829]

The reason Robbins offers for this development is that language is produced out of social interaction among people; there is not simply a speaker or writer; the speaking and writing presuppose the presence of a hearer or reader. There is not simply a text; texts were produced by authors and they are meaningless without readers. There are not simply readers; readers are meaningless without texts to read and authors who write texts. All three presuppose historical, social, cultural and ideological relations among people and the texts they write and read.[830]

In reviewing how a text was actualised by an individual or a community we are led from reception theory into the realm of *wirkunggeschichte* – the history of how texts have functioned in different ages and locations. Such an endeavour requires access to not only the works of the reader/interpreter but also to those of the researchers/ scholars commenting on these works. In this section I will focus on the reader/interpreter and in the next on the researcher/ scholar.

A review of the ideologies readers/interpreters have brought to the reading of Revelation, especially Chapter 7, over two millennia is not possible here. I am familiar with a great deal of this interpretative material and have selected a number of titles[831] that can be consulted. In what may appear to be a rather obvious decision, I focus on Tim

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[829] Robbins, *Tapestry,* 39.
[830] Robbins, *Tapestry,* 39.
[831] I D. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittemberg* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. Barton, & C. Rowland, *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition* (New York: Continuum International, 2000); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1992); N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); R.K. Emmerson & B. McGinn B, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Jonathan Kirsch, *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006); D.W. Lumsden, *And then the End Will Come: Early Latin Christian Interpretations of the Opening of the Seven Seals* (New York: Garland Publications, 2001); H. O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: the Book of Revelation after Christendom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); K. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); D. Rhoads, *From Every People and Nation: the Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); J.F. A. Sawyer, "The Role of Reception Theory, Reader-response Criticism and/or Impact History in the Study of the Bible: Definition and Evaluation," (Online: www. bbib.comm.net); A.W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages* (Cambridge, Mass; Harvard University Press, 1999)

LaHaye, as the reader/interpreter under scrutiny. Of course, any literate person faced with a text is both a reader and interpreter, in the sense that he and she attempts to find meaning in the message. However, as became apparent in the surveys of Gutjahr and Frykholm, many readers were not able to interpret Revelation and found that the Left Behind helped them to understand Revelation. LaHaye, thus being a prime interpreter presents as a model from which to an ideological stance to Revelation can be observed.

From his side, LaHaye is able to reinforce this dependency by rigorous application of consistent literalism, assertion of doctrines based on authority of the Bible, endorsement of personal authority and credibility as a prophecy teacher and employment of rhetorical devices. It must be borne in mind, that neither Gutjahr nor Frykholm ask the respondents in their respective surveys, whether or not they have also read the many non-fictional works of LaHaye, a factor which would add significantly to enhancing this reinforcement.

Much has been written in this thesis about LaHaye – his methods of interpretation, his epistemological framework, his ideology, both as a PMD and a Dominionist and will, therefore, not be repeated. However, these have not closely been drawn into the ambit of his social and geographical location, all of which impact on his approach to biblical texts. I need to be mindful not to generalise in such an endeavour on the basis of similarity and assumptions within the context of Southern religion I am about to discuss. LaHaye, Cyrus Scofield and Lewis Sperry Chafer are known as PMD stalwarts – doctrinally they may be close to identical, all associated with Southern fundamentalism, therefore, all voicing the same ideology. Yet, nuances and variables must be taken account of. For example, B. Dwain Waldrep points to the fact Lewis Sperry Chafer, with Dwight Moody and Cyrus were shaped by northern millenarianism; that Chafer brought Scofield's theology to the South and founded the Dallas Theological Seminary; that Scofield did not care for controversy and never attacked modernists in the vitriolic and vicious way that some fundamentalists of his time did. [832]

These may appear to be irrelevant points, but they validate Wuthnow's theory of cultural articulation, which holds that "ideological movements succeed or fail, locate

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[832] B. Dwain Waldrep, "Lewis Sperry Chafer and the Roots of Non-denominational Fundamentalism in the South," *JSH* LXXIII, no. 4 (Nov 2007): 807-815.

themselves in particular spaces and acquire distinctive form and content through a process of articulation with their social environments."[833] Bearing in mind that attention needs to be paid to a "complex set of variables specifying relevant attributes of the social environment," and that "disarticulation" occurs whenever, the perceived pattern is disturbed,"[834] I proceed to examine the social location of LaHaye, without belabouring his biographical details.

Firstly, LaHaye in the wider sense is a citizen of America, and all that entails in terms of privilege and responsibility; in terms of his theology, apocalyptic discourse and political rhetoric he is a native of Detroit who spent formative years in the South, an area below the Madison-Dixon line,[835] known the "Bible Belt. Tweedie defines the Bible Belt in terms of the audience for religious television. He finds two belts, one more eastern that stretches from central Florida through Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and into Virginia, and another that is more western, moving from central Texas to the Dakotas, but concentrated in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, and Mississippi. The Bible Belt predominantly includes those areas that were slave states before the American Civil War.[836]

Along this belt areas with high fundamentalist populations could claim to be the "Buckle of the Bible Belt." These are too numerous to mention, but significantly they are places that are home to seminaries, bible schools, universities and denominational headquarters. LaHaye completed graduate study at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina; a university that only used the King James Version, (later the NIV), issued strong denunciations of Roman Catholicism and Mormonism, refused to enroll black students until 1971 (allowing unmarried blacks to enroll in 1975), prohibited interracial dating and marriage – threatening expulsion for any student who dated or

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[833] Wuthnow and Lawson, "Christian Fundamentalism," 22.

[834] Wuthnow and Lawson, "Christian Fundamentalism," 22.

[835] The Mason-Dixon Line (or "Mason and Dixon's Line") was surveyed between 1763 and 1767 by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon in the resolution of a border dispute between British colonies in Colonial America. It forms a demarcation line among four U.S. states, forming part of the borders of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia (then part of Virginia). In popular usage, especially since the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (apparently the first official use of the term "Mason's and Dixon's Line"), the Mason-Dixon Line symbolises a cultural boundary between the Northern United States and the Southern United States (Dixie).

[836] S.W. Tweedie, "Viewing the Bible Belt," *JPC*, 11 (1978): 865-76.

married interracially (dropping the no-interracial-dating rule (2000), and apologised for "racially hurtful" policies in 2008.[837]

The grammato-historical method of interpretation and Scottish Common Sense Realism intrinsic to the outlook of fundamentalists in the Bible Belt and in "exclaves," that is, locations outside of the Bible belt, has been referred to in Chapter 3, and the rise of dominionist-orientated movement and LaHaye's association with these groups in Chapter 5, and will therefore not be repeated. Prominent social and pastoral characteristics of Bible Belt Christianity, namely slavery, institutions and rituals necessitate further reading.[838]

However, I refer to two items of research that elucidate the ideology of fundamentalism in the Southern states and, therefore, will be of significance in relation to the ideology of "the interpreter." The first involves a study into the "image of God" and "religious ideology."[839] The authors, Nelsen, Waldron and Stewart, cite Hill (whose hypothesis they are testing), as writing that central to the southern church's ideology is a general tradition, "a simple list of propositions which comprise a popular theology."[840] In a later volume Hill developed this thesis, writing, "Formal theological propositions are always filtered through cultural experience. In the South, accordingly, the religious factor is not official creeds but what people perceive the church's truth-claims to be, in line with the complex of assumptions and pictures with which cultural participation has equipped them."[841]

Arising from the testing of the hypothesis, Nelsen linked religious outlook and social conditions as a reflection of a worldview formed by individuals with limited or simplistic outlooks, i.e. "from the lower classes and from rural areas." Nelsen ties the need for conversion to a concept of God as punishing or vindictive: ". . . a more Old

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[837] For a background to these issues see Bob Jones University cen.wikipedia.org/wiki/BobJonesUniversity, points 6.1 and 6.2.

[838] Recommended is Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization," in *Religion and American Culture* (ed. David G. Hackett, London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 205-222.

[839] Hart M. Nelsen, Thomas W. Waldron and Karen Stewart, "Image of God and Religious Ideology and Involvement: A Partial Test of Hill's Southern Culture-religion Thesis." *Review of Religious Research 15*, no. 1 (1973): 37-43.

[840] In his study of white southern Protestantism, Hill (1966:30) discussed its close relationship with the larger southern culture. He noted (1966: xv) a revealing contradiction between the long-held sectarian intentions which led the major southern bodies to dissociate themselves from a secular culture deemed impure and their growing acceptance of that culture and, by now, their nearly complete identification with it.

[841] Samuel S. Hill, "The South's Two Cultures," in *Religion and the Solid South*. (ed. Samuel S. Hill, Jr, *et al.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 32.

Testament view of God emerges here, a conception of God as wrathful and as righteous judge, rather than loving savior . . . . Man's response is emotional and fatalistic; often backsliding, he is 'saved' on occasions of revival." Nelsen comments on the consequence of the close relationship between religious and general cultures in the South: "The presence of the thesis Old Testament image of God in the present-day general culture provides a beginning point for interaction of revivalistic preachers and organizations with potential."[842]

As a complementary insight I cite Nederveen Pieterse who states that the objective of his essay is to formulate a conceptual framework for the analysis of religious metaphor, specifically Christian millenialism (sic) and the discourse of Zion." [843]"For American evangelicals in the South, with whom the metaphor came to play a central part notably in the period 1867-1920, premillenialism served as a hegemonic discourse in the wake of the Reconstruction era, as a barrier against further black emancipation and the incursions of Northerners. That is, it was counterhegemonic (sic) in relation to the domination of the North and hegemonic within the South itself. Thus it paralleled and coincided with the aversion against Blacks, Catholics and Jews."[844] Nederveen Pieterse adds, "This defensive hegemonic stream led to the 'fundamentalists' in the period of 1910-20. As in England, the metaphor also took the character of an imperial (or semi imperial project), marked by the Congressional endorsement in 1922 of Jewish settlement in Palestine."[845]

The second item to which I refer is a demographic survey by the Institute for First Amendment Studies, Inc. published in 1998. The original report cannot be accessed on-line as the institute became defunct in 2001. The chart, however, features on another site, "The Historical Roots of America's Christian Fundamentalism."[846] I highlight a few significant findings from this survey on the demographic chart which complements the research conducted by Hill and tested by Nelsen, Waldron and Stewart:

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[842] Nelsen, Waldron and Stewart, "Image of God," 38. I view this finding as very significant in so far that it validates the observation that the religious and general cultures of the 1960s meshed with the transition of the once disassociated evangelicalism with a more pragmatic outreach. The effectiveness of the LB Corpus has been that LaHaye's ideology, in its colloquial language, ordinariness of its characters, has penetrated the mass market.
[843] Nederveen Pieterse, "The History of a Metaphor," 77.
[844] Nederveen Pieterse, "The History of a Metaphor," 97.
[845] Nederveen Pieterse, "The History of a Metaphor," 97.
[846] "The Historical Roots of America's Christian Fundamentalism," [Cited 14 November 2009]. Online:

Gender:	Male 62%
Race:	White 97%
Marital Status:	Married 85%;
Region:	South 36% (Northeast 22%; Midwest 20%; West 22%)
Age:	35-65 46%
Education:	Post-graduate 47% (with high school or less 8%)
Occupation:	New class professionals 34%
Annual Income:	$50,000 - $75, 000

The significance of these findings lies therein that previous stereotypes of southern fundamentalists are challenged. In an examination of print media such as *Nation*, *Harper's Weekly* and *Atlantic Monthly*, Mary Beth Swetnam Mathews,[847] argues that "the popular conceptual linkage between the South and fundamentalism that emerged in the 1920s flowed naturally from a process begun in the late nineteenth century by popular and scholarly journalists who developed derogatory, stereotypical images of the region in order to bolster the opposite image of the North." At the time of the famous Scopes trial in 1925 Northern whites, along with southern allies had, labelled the south as poor, violent, uneducated, anti-intellectual and anti-modern. Added to this, "secular journals portrayed fundamentalism as representing a medieval form of Christianity characterized by these same traits."[848]

In concluding this section I suggest that LaHaye, the interpreter, and those for whom he interprets can only bring to a reading of Revelation an ideology forged in the social location of Southern Religion, and its exclaves, characterised by its distinctive biases, discriminations and demonisations.He acts as another John, calling the faithful to "come out of her!" – yet in supporting militarism he does not act like John, who opts for the Lamb, rather he opts for the Lion. Finally, what ideology does the third person, that is, the researcher/scholar in the triad bring to Revelation, not only of the author of the book but also to the interpreter of the book?

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www.sullivan-county.com/news/sunshine.htm

[847] Cited from a review by B. Dwain Waldrep of Mary Beth Swetnam Mathews, *Rethinking Zion: How the Print Media placed Fundamentalism in the South, JSH* (May, 2008), 493-4.

[848] Swetnam Mathews, *Rethinking Zion*, 493-4.

8.4 Ideology of the Researcher/Scholar

An ideology brought to bear upon the author and his text by reader/interpreter is equally assumed by an extension of the interpreter/reader, namely the scholar/researcher – not only is there a biblical text, and an interpretative text, but also a critical text, one that now becomes a discourse in itself, subject to the same critique and dissection as the other texts. As Van den Heever writes: "Moreover, academic discourse is increasingly characterised by rigorous self-reflexivity, so that the processes of inquiry themselves become part of the object of enquiry, and in fact help constitute the primary object of enquiry, which in our case is early Christianity."[849] We have seen, in the case of critiques of PMD, and in a particular, the LB Corpus, how such texts proliferated to the extent of constituting a corpus in own right. As many critiques as there are, so many ideologies come to the fore. Lincoln puts into words what crosses the researchers/scholars' mind at some time in their career.

> Isn't scholarship just another instance of ideology in narrative form? Don't scholars tell stories to calibrate a pecking order, putting themselves, their favorite theories, and their favorite people on top?. . . Isn't *logos* just a repackaged *mythos*? . . . to which I now respond: "If myth is ideology in narrative form, then scholarship is myth with footnotes."[850]

Accounting for my own ideological approach, using Lincoln's remark as a cue, I would be asking questions like, "Have I overemphasised certain elements in LaHaye's novels? Have I exaggerated the perceived effects of the films and video games? Have I selected and arranged material to make the best impression on those judging the value of my thesis, and so to advance academically? Do the resources I use belie my

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[849] Gerhard A. van den Heever, "Undoing the Sleights of Hand: Prophets and Scholars: Two Mythic Discourses," *HTS* 63, no.3 (2007): 2. This comment on academic discourse must be seen in the light of the foregoing paragraph: Van den Heever notes that religio-historical study of early Christianity is currently characterised by intellectual ferment that he believes has far-reaching consequences. This is partly due, arguably, to seismic shifts in the study of religion with new theories, new evaluations of older theoretical work and scholarly traditions, and generally, new applications of those fields insulated from these developments and study fields gaining currency in academic discourse. The developments of new methods of reading New Testament are configured as Early Christian Studies, with all the attendant implications pertaining to such a revisioning.

[850] Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 209.

partiality? I have not claimed to be impartial, if this were possible. Donovan believes that pure observer neutrality exists as an ideal only. As a methodological principle, whether in academic study of religions or anywhere else it unrealisable.[851]

I think therefore of scholarly interest as being an ideology, but an *ideology of enquiry*, one that I found to be best explicated by J. N. Vorster's view of rhetoric as a critical activity. It is concerned with *why?* I, like any other researcher/scholar could enumerate a number of reasons why not only the book of Revelation, but also the LB Corpus, warrants painstaking analysis and comment. As I mentioned in the Preface my past to present preoccupations with History of Art, Communication Science and Biblical Studies came to bear on the approach I decided to take in analysing the Left Behind Corpus. Likewise, the study interests of other researchers would steer them in a quite different direction, and even if Left Behind was their field of choice, they would have their own "why's" to ask, and as they come to realise, an ideology of intention has to be tempered by what I may call an "ideology of ethics." Critical thinking, however objective and incisive,[852] should never resort to fallacious arguments, and misrepresentations of facts, actions and opinions, even if doing so adds lustre to one's work. Where these encountered in any field of research it would be incumbent on the researcher to correct these.

9. CONCLUSIONS

In this penultimate chapter I have covered a very wide field in constructing an alternative reading of Revelation. While Vernon Robbins provided a useful framework for such an investigation, the other scholars cited, contributed valuable insights to strengthen the conviction that there is indeed an alternative reading that does justice not only to the context in which Revelation 7 was written, but also for a contemporary context.

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[851] Peter Donovan, "Neutrality in Religious Studies," in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion,* (ed. Russell T. McCutcheon London/New York: Cassell 1999), 235-247.

[852] Lincoln, "Theses on Method," 397: "Critical inquiry need assume neither cynicism nor dissimulation to justify probing beneath the surface, and ought to probe scholarly discourse and practice as much as any other,"

As I have attended to the hermeneutical basis of the seventieth week, the structure of the visions, the textures of the social, cultural and ideological life of the Christians in Asia Minor, deficiencies in the PMD interpretation become apparent; the main one being intransigence in recognising, the cultural, historical and social background of Revelation, all of which Robbins states have never been encountered in the New Testament, since all of these are reconfigured in terms of a world other than this earthly world"?[853] To put it in another way Robbins asks whether it is possible that the "all-encompassing nature and function of the New Testament texts is to introduce the Word of God;" whether the New Testament texts are not at all reliable as a resource for understanding the cultural, social and historical nature of first-century Christianity; whether the New Testament texts are completely – 'a world unto themselves' – a world in but not of the world."[854]

Such questions intrude into the pristine self-contained world of the text and run against the grain of the doctrines of the inerrancy and inspiration of scripture. It must be borne in mind that the epistemology of the PMD approach creates its own internal logic, one that makes the doctrines within the end-time framework irrefutable. As Einstein succinctly expresses it, "The evangelical discourse refers to itself as proof of its own validity. It cannot engage secular humanism in rational debate, because it has its own mythology, its own ideology, its own language, and its own rationality."[855]

While this immutability of a literalist interpretation isolates PMD and even sectors of evangelicalism from scholarly interaction, alternative readings are possible not only from a socio-rhetorical point of view, but from narrative-criticism[856] and reader-response theory both of which deviate from a more diachronic approach, and are therefore detached from social and cultural realities.[857] While Robbins acknowledges the value of historical-critical methods, he believes that they have their

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[853] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 7.
[854] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 7.
[855] Einstein, "Mass Market Mayhem,"59.
[856] T.M.S Long, "Narrator, Audiences and Messages: A South African Reader-Response Study of Narrative Relationship in the Book of Revelation." (PhD, diss., University of Natal, 1996).
[857] What must be taken into account that every method of interpretation referred to above is ensconced in a particular historical perspective of the book of Revelation, namely Historicism, Futurism, Idealism and Preterism. See DeSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 2-8 for an overview of how these four interpretive keys plus one more recent have functioned in the history of Christianity.

limitations.[858] So it seems that socio-rhetorical critical is the preferred choice.

Ultimately it is not a question of "Winning the argument," as if any one of the alternative reading suggested is cast-in-stone and cannot be challenged. However convincing a socio-rhetorical reading may be, it remains the prerogative of other researchers not only to challenge this perspective, but also to contribute new insights into body of knowledge about the hermeneutic and interpretive practices of the Left Behind phenomenon.

One challenge, however, remains for a socio-rhetorical approach and since it more properly belongs to the field of pastoral or practical theology than to the defined scope of this thesis, I will refer to it briefly. While socio-rhetorical criticism may offer a satisfactory alternative reading Revelation can it match the success of Left Behind in providing media products that inspire and edify audiences? Having ploughed through all the facets of the LB Corpus the obvious reaction to such a question would be that it can only be achieved by capitulating before rampant pragmatism. Although neither strictly historical-critical nor socio-rhetorical Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer's novels *The Last Disciple*[859] and *The Last Sacrifice*[860] were valiant attempts at capturing the ambience of the beleaguered Christian community in which Revelation was written. However do the first-century personalities of Darda, Paulina and Vitas rival those of twenty-first century Bruce Barnes, Tsion Ben David, Rayford, Buck and Chloe?

However, a respected voice in the scholarly guild addresses itself to interpreters across the spectrum of non-PMD interpreters: "The challenge is to be more biblical than Left Behind, rather than less biblical, and to read Revelation theologically as well as historically, taking seriously the questions people ask about the future."[861]

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[858] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 7. For a critical to the historical-critical method, particularly in the transitional period to social-science criticism see J. Muilenberg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," in *JBL* 88, (1969): 1-18.

[859] Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2004).

[860] Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice*, (Wheaton Ill: Tyndale, 2005).

[861] Koester, "Revelation and the Left Behind Series," 281.

CHAPTER 7

LEAVING BEHIND LEFT BEHIND

1. INTRODUCTION

As is the convention in an academic thesis the final task of the researcher is to summarise what has gone before that look forward to the future of PMD and in this case, particularly its flagship, the LB Corpus. This casts the researcher into the role of a futurologist who cannot make precise predictions about the course of a movement. However, he or she can but speculate with reasonable certainty on such a course on the basis of indicators embedded in past evidence.

I undertake such a speculation by firstly drawing to together the conclusions of the five chapters in assessing whether evidence validates or not the allegation of the militaristic, crusade-like, outlook and behaviours of the LB Corpus; and secondly, extending the concept of consistent literalism, dealt with in Chapter 3, by examining notions of utopia and dystopia in context of PMDs concept of time and space, and thirdly, by speculating on the future of the LB Corpus and fields of tension beyond Left Behind.

2. THE RESEARCH QUESTION ASSESSED

In *Chapter 1* I stated that while the LB Corpus has been applauded for its effectiveness in evangelising and transforming lives the question arises, whether or not its themes, in the manner of the classical crusade, foster intolerance, denial of religious freedom and ultimately extermination of non-believers. I attributed this outcome to the principle of consistent literalism, which interfaced with artistic license in fictional literature, film and real time video game-playing generates an ideological discourse, which at different levels of engagement give rise to violent and militaristic attitudes and behaviours."

On the basis of the conclusions of each chapter which I will not repeat in its

entirety, I approach a conclusion to this question by summarising the evidence validating the suggestion the LB Corpus is a Creeping Crusade on the following points:

- As a consumer product in the Christian publishing it has through its marketing associations, become a powerful force to social and cultural construction.

- Interpreting the Bible in terms of consistent literalness, interfaced with fiction has reached a popular market – within a Common Sense Realism it pragmatically adopts media forms to attract wide readership.

- Within its apocalyptic framework the rhetoric of its promotional material, novels, and films can be detected in sub-text and other visual and literary codes.

- Though a discerned reading and viewing one detects elements of ancient apocalypticism, which inherently separatist and discriminatory, draws clear lines between good and evil, the saved and unsaved, the just and the righteous.

- An alternative reading shows that violence and militant behaviour was not intended by the author of Revelation, and therefore does not justify the same in the LB Corpus.

Analysis of Left Behind discourse over a cross-section of three texts, materially differentiated, yielded rhetorical patterns indicating a proclivity for violence, each mode explicating the other. Calling the LB Corpus a "creeping crusade" is, however, not a conclusive judgment in so far that there is visible wide-scale persecution. Yet, espousing both a Rebuilding of Temple scenario and an Establishment of a Theocracy scenario, Left Behind reveals an ideology that tends to be fascist in nature, and therefore synonymous with a crusade in its religious intolerance, denial of religious freedom, militarism and violence to the point of

actual extermination.[862] However, were the medieval crusades true apocalyptic movements to the extent that would warrant a comparison with the LB Corpus? While apocalyptic fervor was replaced by entirely political motives by the Fourth Crusade, the preceding crusades, particularly the first, had the marks of an apocalyptic movement.

Cohn calls to mind that according to "the Johannine and Sybelline traditions alike, before the Millennium could dawn, misbelief had to be eliminated;" The idea of a wholly Christian society was fundamental to Christianity, "a missionary religion which insisted that the elimination of misbelievers must be achieved through their conversion."[863] "The messianic hordes which began to form in the eleventh and twelfth century, on the other hand, saw no reason at all why that elimination could not equally well achieved by the physical annihilation."[864]

> In the eyes of *pauperes* the smiting of the Moslems and the Jews was to be the first act in a final battle which – as already in the eschatological phantasies of the Jews and early Christians – was to culminate in the smiting of the Prince of Evil himself. Above these desperate hordes loomed the figure of Antichrist. The gigantic and terrifying shadow falls over even across the pages of the chronicles – Antichrist is already born – at any moment Antichrist may set up his throne in the temple at Jerusalem . . . .[865]

The apocalyptic parallels between the First Crusade and the Left Behind crusade are clear. However, there too many variables and reconfigurations – one being the rapture – to say that the Left Behind crusade is a clone of the First Crusade, or that is

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[862] This could apply to any millenarian group. See Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium comes Violently* (New York/London: Seven Bridges Press, 2000) who believes that millennial beliefs have great power to motivate people to take actions, sometimes violent actions, to create new societies and religions and to try to change the world. "For those who think 2000 and 2001 are significant dates, she states, it is well to remember that they are arbitrary dates. Millennial expectations may be especially heightened through 2033 the 2000th anniversary of the purported year of Jesus' death, but millennial beliefs will always be present because they address the human desire to overcome finitude." The violent actions of millenarians should be distinguished from the more nuanced and strategically poised actions of neoconservative politicians and ideologues, between the marginal and the mainstream. For example, direct comparisons cannot be drawn between David Koresh and Tim LaHaye. For a thoroughgoing treatment of the endogenous (internal/group) and exogenous (external/environmental) movements producing volatility or violence within marginal religious movements see John Walliss, *Apocalyptic Trajectories: Millenarianism in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004).

[863] Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium,* 75.

[864] Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium,* 75.

[865] Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium,* 75.

a *redivivu*s of the earlier crusades, or more bluntly put, that the spirit of Pope Urban II is stalking through the corridors of Left Behind. The one factor common to all crusader movements, from whatever tradition, Christian or non-Christian,[866] is the constructedness of the Warrior Divinity, a point to which I will return.

3.   EXCURSUS: A DAY TOUR THROUGH THE FUTURE

3.1 As Utopias Come – and Go

 "Utopia" calls to mind new worlds, perfect societies, and harmony. Future-orientated movements – not all Christian, but inclusive of Dominionism and PMD which though it is more "vacantist" in the sense that it eschews earthly occupancy nevertheless looks forward to the long sought after Millennium. While these movements bear in them the seeds of disillusionment and the ultimate death of their vision, they are as John Gray sees it, inevitably entwined with secular and political utopias and therefore enter into a cycle of revived tenures: "The faith in utopia that killed so many in the centuries following the French Revolution, is dead,"[867] writes Gray. "Like other faiths it may be resurrected in certain circumstances that cannot be foreseen; but is unlikely to trouble us much further in the next few decades. The cycle in which world politics was dominated by secular versions of apocalyptic myth has come to an end, and in an historical reversal, old-time religion has re-emerged at the heart of global conflict."[868] What Gray is conveying is that the Utopias that die are restored by religion even if assuming secular discourse, and we may presume that having taken on secular form head for the same apparent death of utopia.

Before proceeding to the Left Behind utopia it must be noted that Gray, following Tuveson, proposes that "a hint of the idea that progress may be found in the book of Revelation, and that early Christians believed they embodied something better than

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[866] The series on Fundamentalisms edited by Marty, Martin E. and R. Scott Appleby, and often cited in this thesis are essential reading, although the last volume in the series was published in 1995.
[867] Gray, *Black Mass*, 260.
[868] Gray, *Black Mass*, 260.

anything that existed in pagan and Jewish worlds."[869] Gray admits that the idea of the world ending soon and the idea that it is moving to a better condition view seems antithetical – "after all, why strive to improve it when it is going to be destroyed in the near future?" [870] Both in his mind express a view of history that "hardly exists outside cultures shaped by western monotheism."[871]

> In the book of Revelation history could be seen as a progressive movement *because* it was believed to have an end-point when evil would be overcome, and the same is true in theories such as Marxism. On the other hand theories of progress that claim to reject any belief in a final state of perfection turn out, on closer inspection, to retain the idea that history is a struggle between good and evil forces. Both these views take it for granted that human salvation is worked out in history – a Christian myth without which the political religions of modern times could not have come into being.[872]

We read into Gray's antithetical view elements of both PMD, which is "vacantist" in its striving for removal from the temporal plane for an allotted time, and Dominionism, which as Collins and Collins described becomes a sociocracy attempting to "engineer" a new messiah and "immatize the Eschaton."[873] For the remainder of this section I will put aside Dominionism because the utopias that will be considered are pre-eminently that of PMD, and specifically the LB Corpus.

3.2 Utopia or Dystopia – A Matter of Choice

The frequency with which utopia has been used in random discourse has resulted in its counterpart "dystopia," thus in Left Behind context pre-empting the questions, "Who will enjoy utopia and who will have to suffer dystopia? and, "Are utopia, paradise heaven one and the same place?"

Diana Forster points out that "centuries after the popularity of the ancient 'golden age' utopias, Tim LaHaye conceived the idea of the enormously popular Left Behind

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[869] Gray, *Black Mass*, 30.
[870] Gray, *Black Mass*, 30.
[871] Gray, *Black Mass*, 30.
[872] Gray, *Black Mass*, 30-1.
[873] Collins and Collins Feb. 27th, 2007 "The Deep Politics of God:"n.p.

books."[874] "Jenkins, the author of the series juxtaposes classical elements of utopian and dystopian thought in creating a world after the Rapture. The post-Rapture becomes a dystopian nightmare, thrown into the seven-year period referred to in the Bible as the tribulation, in which Christ and the Antichrist battle for the souls of those left behind."[875] "The irony of the series is that the terror of the tribulation comes from the side of good as well as evil: the totalitarian rule of the Antichrist on one side, and the often horrifying biblical judgments that are visited upon the earth by an allegedly praiseworthy God on the other." [876] So, may we conclude that while the regime of the antichrist brings utopia to his followers, [877] God withholds utopia for believers, until such time as the Tribulation has run its course?

Regarding this paradox evident in *Armageddon* and *Glorious Appearing,* Forster maintains that the authors in spite of their certainties regarding an imminent paradise fail to deal with the contradictions in the series. In reality, the millennial period is only paradise for an extremely small group of believers who have endured the ordeals of the tribulation because of the utopian promise of paradise regained,[878] and this will justify readers in asking of the Glorious Appearing, "is this series really paradise, and even if it is, does it really make all of the horrifying events of the tribulation worth it?"[879] "The Glorious Appearing absolutely does not bring about paradise on earth for the non-believers. When it comes time for judgment day, Christ grants them neither sympathy nor clemency." [880]

> With anger and yet sadness, He said, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take me in, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me . . . . Assuredly. I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of

[874] A. Diana Forster, "The Paradox of Paradise Regained in the Left Behind Series." *Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Charleston*, Vol 4 (2005): 65.

[875] Forster, "Paradox of Paradise," 65.

[876] Forster, "Paradox of Paradise, 65.

[877] In LaHaye and Jenkins, *Assassins*, 276, Carpathia hosts a Global Gala to which potentates from all over the world are invited. On the backdrop, a giant statement was printed, "One World, One Truth: Individual Freedom for All." All around the plaza, on every lamppost, fence, and wall, was the slogan "Today Is the First Day of the Rest of Utopia."

[878] Forster, "Paradox of Paradise," 66.

[879] Forster, "Paradox of Paradise, 66.

[880] Forster, "Paradox of Paradise," 67.

the least of these, you did not do it to Me. You will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.[881]

Although the 144,000 are still active at the Sheep-and-Goats-Judgment I will not dwell on this event except to draw attention to the fact that Matthew 25:34-46 is one of the texts in the dispensationalist scheme that is not applicable to Christians in the pre-rapture period, but to Gentiles who have lived through the tribulation and Armageddon, the ones ministered to being Jews who are converted during the Tribulation period. Separation of the Sheep-and-Goat-Judgment from the so-called Church Age, that is the 2000 year period before the Rapture, opens up an entirely new trajectory in which various novel concepts feature: mainly that the Gospels apply to the Jews, and the epistles to Christians, and as an off-shoot, that there is a Gospel of the Kingdom for Jews and a Gospel of Grace for Christians, and that belief is superior to repentance. The theological and canonical issues implied in these teachings cannot be dealt with here, but are suitable for a separate study.

I return now to the Millennium, not in dedicated critical analyses as was the case with Revelation 7 in the core chapters of the thesis, but in broad strokes befitting an excursus in the final chapter. While the Millennium is the penultimate terminus in the end-time scheme not much attention has been given by scholars[882] or commentators to its precise nature. Three novels, have given variegated accounts. [883]

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[881] Forster, "Paradox of Paradise," 72, citing *Glorious Appearing*. LaHaye and Jenkins, 379.

[882] Michel Gourgous, "The Thousand-Year Reign (Rev 20)" *CBQ* 47, (1985) 676-7, investigates the Millennium from a non-PMD perspective: This sparsity of data relative to the thousand-year reign contrasts sharply with the verbosity and luxuriance of certain proposed explanations. Roughly, one can distinguish two major lines of interpretation: (5a) The reign is to be understood in a *realistic way:* the end of time will be preceded by the return of Christ, who will reign on earth for a thousand years with the Christian martyrs, who will share in the "first resurrection." (5b) The reign is to be understood in a *spiritual way:* it symbolically represents the time of the church, when believers are already taking part in the life and lordship of the risen Christ and are waiting for the full eschatological participation in what they are now experiencing by way of anticipation.(6)What these two lines of interpretation have in common is that they consider the thousand-year reign as terrestrial. But this assumption does not seem obvious. Where does the text affirm that this reign − whatever may be the exact meaning of it − will take place on earth?"

[883] Besides LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, there is Salem Kirban, *1000* (Iowa Falls: Riverside Book and Bible House, 1973, and Jonathan R. Cash, *Thunder in Paradise: Satan's Last Storm* (Chesapeake: Whitaker House, 2001. Both of these, like *Kingdom Come*, trace the experiences of families and communities in settings where the resurrected, and non-resurrected share earthly amenities, with conflict emerging when the 1000 years expires and Satan is released for a short while.

As the Millennium nears the final century we read, "All is not well in Utopia," the first line of the blurb printed on back of cover of *Kingdom Come*,[884] the sequel to the last novel in the Left Behind Series, namely *Glorious Appearing*.[885] The reason for this decline in perfection is explained by LaHaye in a special note in *Kingdom Come.* LaHaye counters the likely impression that the millennial kingdom is heaven: "While in some ways (the millennial kingdom) can be seen as a foretaste of heaven, sin will still exist."[886] He mentions two classes of redeemed saints for whom the millennium will be idyllic: those who have already been in heaven (the raptured) and those who survived the Tribulation. But as newborns come along, obviously they will be sinners in need of forgiveness and salvation: "I believe that the scriptural prophecies indicate that anyone who does not trust Christ by the age of one hundred will be accursed. And while some may disagree, popular consensus among those of us who take the Bible literally wherever possible is that such people will die on their hundredth birthdays."[887]

Finding that this regulation "violates free will and rationality of thought," dissenters, namely The Other Light, issue an appeal for support against the "vengeful bloodthirsty God of the Old Testament," but they bide their time.[888] From the beginning of the Millennium[889] the erstwhile Tribulation Force reunites with loved ones;[890] everyone can speak Hebrew;[891] domestic life continues on earth with copious amounts of fruit and vegetables being consumed;[892] there is still global travel;[893] there is no night as the moon shines as bright as the sun;[894] deep purple wine drips from the mountains.[895] Buck and Chloe start COT, a ministry to children of the Tribulation who will also have to

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[884] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, back cover.
[885] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 11.
[886] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 11. LaHaye admits that there not many details provided by Christ's millennial kingdom in Revelation 20, except for the final order of last-days events. Even so LaHaye believes, "that there are enough details however, to provide an idea of the way things might unfold."
[887] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 11.
[888] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 116-17.
[889] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 116-17.
[890] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 39, and scattered on pages throughout.
[891] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come,* 31. With reference to Zeph 3:9: "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language , that they may all call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord."
[892] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, and scattered on pages throughout.
[893] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 87.
[894] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 31.
[895] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 43.

choose Jesus before they become one-hundred years old, or else they will die.[896] Buck and Chloe's son Kenny who was orphaned before he was five years old, and his wife Ekterina produce eight sons, six daughters and more than eighty grandchildren over the next two hundred years.[897]

Every tribe of Israel is allotted a portion of the land.[898] Daily sacrifice of a goat is held in the newly constructed temple.[899] During the Passover, "a feast of seven days; unleavenedbread shall be eaten.And on that day the princeshall prepare for himself and for all the people of the landa bull for a sin offering."[900] When Rayford asks,"Had Jesus not done away with the sacrifices by His own death?" Jesus replies that these sacrifices cannot make those who approach perfect, but in them there is a reminder of sins every year just as the celebration of his supper is in remembrance ofhis body and his blood.[901] "All the redeemed saints – those from the Old Testament, those raptured and who returned with Jesus at the Glorious Appearing, and those who qualified as sheep mingle and enter into conversations with Jesus the King and King David, now Jesus' prince.[902]

As the Millennium draws to a close Satan is unbound for a short while, and leads The Other Light into an ultimate conflict of good versus evil.[903] Satan is vanquished once and for all.[904] The New Jerusalem descends and dead from every age and place stand before Jesus.[905] At the Great White Throne judgment the Book of Life is opened. Those in the Lamb's Book of Life are clothed in white garments and are raised to heaven, those whose names do not appear in the Lamb's Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire for all eternity.[906] Everything, including the temple passes away. The new Heaven and the New Earth have dawned.[907]

Understandably this scheme of the final end-times events, with its minute details and perfect synchronisation provides a framework that assures the prospect of a utopic

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[896] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 36.
[897] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 272.
[898] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 53.
[899] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 47
[900] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 49
[901] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*,50
[902] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 54.
[903] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 275-7
[904] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 278-9
[905] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 280.
[906] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 281.
[907] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Kingdom Come*, 282

existence before heaven, the splendor of which *Kingdom Come* has not attempted to fictionalise beyond the opening scene. The assurance of the preceding thousand-year utopia, unlike other utopias which are destined to fail, is divinely predetermined and not dependent on the fortunes of the propaganda and rhetoric of novels and media commodities that promote its advent. Yet, these are regarded as playing a role in calling people into a relationship with Jesus that will qualify them to pass the judgments and tests that lie ahead. The final question is therefore, "What is the future of the LB Corpus?" "Can it sustain its dominant position in the Christian media?"

4. WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE LB CORPUS?

4.1 An Update of Publishing and Marketing

The Left Behind series of novels has drawn to a close, at least so it seemed judging from small piles sold at discount prices in bookstores. Of course, instead of reprints of individual titles Collectors' Editions of three titles were marketed in one cover.[908] Since these volumes have been published in 2010 it is too soon to judge whether the Left Behind still lays claim to best-seller status. However, a number of factors suggest shifts not only in marketing strategies, reader interest, but in the way the end-time scheme of the LB Corpus as a whole is being presented.

LaHaye has not retired from writing; *Edge of the Apocalypse*,[909] co-authored with Craig Parshall was published by Zondervan in 2010. Published in 2009, LaHaye's book, *Jesus*[910] should attract faithful readers, but it remains to be seen whether it will reach the best-seller lists as did the Left Behind novels. Surprisingly there are four other titles by

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[908] TimLaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Rapture's Witness*: *The Earth's Last Days are Upon Us*. *Left Behind, Tribulation Force, Nicolae.* Collector's Edition I. (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2009); *Deceiver's Game*: *The Destroyer is Unleashed.* Collectors Edition II. (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2010); *Evil's Edge*: *The Beast Rules the World* . *The Indwelling, The Mark, Desecration*. Collectors Edition III. (Wheaton,Ill: Tyndale, 2010).

[909] LaHaye, Tim and Craig Parshall, *Edge of the Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

[910] Tim LaHaye with David Minasian*, Jesus* (David Cook: Colorado Springs, 2009).

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LaHaye and Jenkins[911] − one published as far back as 2006 and another to be published in 2010: *John's Story: The Last Eyewitness, Luke's Story: By Faith Alone*, *Mark's Story: The Gospel according to Peter* and *Luke's Story (The Chronicles of Jesus).* The fact that these books have not caused a sensation is probably because they do not carry the controversial storylines of the Left Behind series; however, it is also noteworthy that the series has not been published and marketed by Tyndale but by the Berkly Publishing Group, an imprint of Penguin, thus in the mainstream of the book market. LaHaye's capacity to engage with several publishing houses simultaneously, already referred to in Chapter 2, inevitably expands his audience and shifts him from the margins to the mainstream.

The well established Left Behind Prophecy Club, which through its website, newsletter and online message boards kept subscribers informed on how current events actually relate to End Times prophecy has been discontinued. Presumably the official Left Behind website, and Found this Book with its link to the Videocasts from the Future would compensate for decline in interest shown at the usual retail outlets. The LB: EF video game has been improved and repackaged, with more emphasis on the "spiritual warfare," but Christian bookshops, at least outside the U.S. have not even heard of the first LB video game.

Rapture films, according to Walliss, in comparison to the books have not attained a significant sales record. "Whereas the *Left Behind* novels have sold in the tens of millions and generated significant revenue for both their authors and publishers, their celluloid equivalents have, by and large, made little or no impact on the mainstream. Consequently, contemporary evangelical filmmakers have not only abandoned their attempts to break into the mainstream, but have in fact gone full circle and returned to their low-budget, niche-market roots."[912]

The question of whether Left Behind is a marginalised, or a mainstream phenomenon, has attracted the attention of researchers. In a lecture in 2006, Gribben

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[911] Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *John's Story: The Last Eyewitness* (New York: The Berkly Publishing Group, 2007); *Luke's Story: By Faith Alone*, (New York: The Berkly Publishing Group, 2009); *Mark's Story: The Gospel according to Peter* (New York: The Berkly Publishing Group, 2009) and *Luke's Story (The Chronicles of Jesus)* (New York: The Berkly Publishing Group, 2010).

[912] John Walliss, "From The Rapture to Left Behind: The Movie and Beyond: Evangelical Christian End Times Films from 1941 to The Present," *Journal of Religion and Film* 13, no. 2 (October 2009).

stated that the popular idea that early modern millennial beliefs disappeared "into a world of cranks" must be revised in light of the remarkable "mainstreaming" of prophetic expectation at the end of the twentieth-century."[913] Radosh states that the best thing to say about Left Behind is that its success seems to have killed the end-times thriller genre, at least for the foreseeable future. Rather than encourage imitators, it has scared them away. "LaHaye and Jenkins's version of the Darby narrative has become so widely accepted that any other would strike readers as unnecessary and possibly inauthentic."[914]

For Chapman, description and classification of cultural products including terms such as "popular, mainstream, subculture, mass culture, counter culture, high/middle-/low-brow suddenly seems reductive when confronted with LaHaye and Jenkins's dispensational fiction."[915] "Despite its extraordinary sales figures, Left Behind's atypical subject matter and seemingly predefined, tightly delineated audience seems to preclude its designation as 'mainstream'"[916] Again she writes: "The success of Left Behind has done much to disprove conventional theories of marginality, which, rather than acknowledging the actual significance of evangelical culture in the larger story of American culture, tend to serve the interests of the secular "mainstream" seeking to maintain its own cultural hegemony."[917] Her conclusion is that "Left Behind occupies a nebulous hinterland" between subculture and the "mainstream," grass-roots popular culture and commercial mass-culture. "This demands of scholars a careful consideration of the place *Left Behind* occupies in the American landscape – not to mention a

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[913] Crawford Gribben, "The USA in Rapture Fiction: Evangelicalism's New Apocalyptic 'Other'" Chair of Christian Thought University of Calgary, October 31, 2006. [Cited: 18 December, 2009] Online:ucalgary.ca/christchair/files/christchair/GribbenLec2.pdf "The steady politicization of American evangelicalism throughout the 1980sappears to have been the causeand consequence of of several competingvarieties of propohetic expectation ranging frompostmillennial Reconstructionism (which teaches that Christians will assume power and impose Mosaic legislation in reparation for Christ's return) to premillennial dispensationalism (which certainly does not). These varieties of evangelical expectation are steadily feeding into American political discourse, but, despite the religious aspirations of occasional presidential candidates and the popular clout of single-issue pressure groups, American dispensationalists still appear to prefer the politics of withdrawal to those of constructive engagement. The paradox of evangelical eschatology is the same in the early twenty-first century as it was in the late nineteenth: evangelicals are embracing pessimism and separatism at precisely the moment when their influence is at its height."
[914] Radosh, *Rapture Ready!* 87.
[915] Chapman, *Selling Faith,* 152.
[916] Chapman, *Selling Faith,* 152.
[917] Chapman, *Selling Faith,* 155.

reappraisal of what we mean, and indeed what is at stake, when we invoke the conventional terminology of cultural studies."[918]

While Left Behind moved into the mainstream it must be borne in mind that *Soon*[919] authored by Jerry Jenkins attracted a readership on account of it presenting itself as a "futuristic thriller."[920] As described by Gribben, "the novel imagines what will happen if *Left Behind* is wrong and Christ does not come back in the immediate future. It ignores the current prophetic revival, evidenced in the millions of sales of rapture novels and describes a future for evangelicalism against the backdrop of a series of religious wars springing from attacks on the World Trade Center (2001) and the invasion of Iraq (2003)"[921] Gribben continues to list a series of "wars, attacks, counterattacks, reprisals finally an all out nuclear war that most thought signaled the end of the war."[922] Thirty-six years after the war, in 2046, Paul Stepola, a special agent with the National Peace Organisation with an attraction to evangelicalism, first resists then supports The Watchmen, a group of evangelical militia who from their underground headquarters in "a city, beneath a city" are driven by their belief that "the miracles tormenting the administration" are signs of the second coming, and exceed the characters of Left Behind in their efforts to be subversive, "to take lives in order to secure their own."[923] The significance of Gribben's assessment of *Soon* is that he discerns a movement of dispensationalists to alienation and retreat:

> Soon represents evangelicals taking on the trappings of tradition cult stereotypes, engaging in illegal and underground activity, and demonstrating an alarming propensity for violence. The novel abandons traditional dispensational expectations of this age as excessively optimistic, and imagines, in contrast to previous dispensational writers nuclear war and unprecedented worldwide destruction entirely unpredicted by Scripture.[924]

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[918] Chapman, *Selling Faith,* 155.
[919] Jenkins, Jerry B. *Soon: The Beginning of the End.* (Underground Zealot Series#1) (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2003); followed by *Silenced: The Wrath of God Descends* (Underground Zealot Series#2) (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2005) and *Shadowed: The Final Judgment* (Underground Zealot Series#3) Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 2006.
[920] Gribben, "The USA in Rapture Fiction," 7.
[921] Gribben, "The USA in Rapture Fiction," 7.
[922] Gribben, "The USA in Rapture Fiction," 7.
[923] Gribben, "The USA in Rapture Fiction," 8.
[924] Gribben, "The USA in Rapture Fiction," 13.

A surprising fact is that Jenkins, who wrote the novel in 2003, a year before the last novel *Glorious Appearing* could branch out on such a different version of the rapture. Equally surprising is that LaHaye three years after the sequel to the Left Behind series should launch the "End Series" with the publication of *Edge of Apocalypse.* The story revolves around Joshua Jordan, former U.S. spyplane expert and designer of a missile defence system and a laser shield code return-to-sender, who heroically wards off attacks by international and national assailants. Through contact with his wife's pastor he gradually comes to hear, first at attending a service and later when joining the pastor for a game of golf, of the relation of scriptural prophecies to world events. These passages are not as forthright as in the Left Behind novels in fact not so much is said about the Rapture than the threats of Globalism, One-World Government, and Global Peace. In shifting his emphasis to the latter LaHaye repeats his lament that "some Christians have concluded that a takeover of 'our culture' by the forces in inevitable," and that "some Christians have concluded that a takeover of 'our culture' by the forces in inevitable."[925] By concentrating on a pre-tribulation period before the rapture and the tribulation proper, LaHaye is in effect aligning himself with a more dominionist, post-millennial position that is motivated by activism rather than passivity and fatalism.

4.2 Rapture Readiness

In spite of market fluctuations what will support the Left Behind series is the so called-rapture culture that pervades the media and fundamentalist/PMD discourse, and even the non-rapture individuals and groups for whom expectation of the rapture opens new entrepreneurial opportunities. Among the most evocative rhetorical modes are the so-called Rapture Letters already posted on the internet and intended for those left behind after the rapture. The only way that these letters, however, can reach the unsaved is that those who expect to be raptured electronically forward-date these or entrust these to a third party, who obviously has another interest in the end-time events. In 2007 Witter, a 24-year-old self-described atheist living in Orlando, advertised Post-Rapture Post,

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[925] LaHaye and Noebel, *Mind Siege*, 238.

which bills itself as "the postal service of the saved."[926] For as little as $4.99 Witter offers to deliver the letter to friends and loved ones left behind after the Rapture, "when some Christians believe they will be whisked up to heaven while everyone else — the Left Behind of the popular book series – suffers a series of tribulations. It will fall to the unsaved to serve as the postmen of the Apocalypse."[927]

This aspect of the rapture culture, together with the "Rapture Ready" website with its regular updates on the signs of the times, and date-setting[928] for the rapture will continue to fuel obsession with imminent apocalyptic events. Ultimately the movements, utterances and policies of the president of the U.S., Barack Obama, will be a determining factor in the sustainability of the LB Corpus, and parallel literature. To the chagrin of critics, signs of the times – the riseof charismatic figures flouting themselves as saviours and harbingers ofpeace as well as the frequency of natural disasters, the Haiti earthquake being the most recent at time of writing – will appear to validate end-time expectations. Yet researchers and scholars will continue not only to detect dissonance, contradiction and misjudgment among apocalyptists butalso to probe more deeply into the hermeneutical moorings of new movements and trends within the apocalypse industry, and this will include the LB Corpus.

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5. CONCLUSIONS

As I leave the quintessentially crusader world of Left Behind, and survey the books, films and video game from which I have quarried in writing this thesis, two vignettes remain with me. The first, a troop of mounted knights slashing swords through the air as they set off to reclaim Jerusalem from the hordes of God's enemies. The second, two Friends recruited off the streets of New York emerging from the Combat Centre in their uniforms, rifles in the air, loudly crying out, "We are fighting for the Lord!" [929]

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[926] Katherine Boyle, "Atheist offers to send letters to post-Rapture." *Religion News Service* [Cited 27 November 2009] Online: /www.religionnews.com/

[927] Boyle, "Atheist offers to send letters to post-Rapture," n.p.

[928] LaHaye and Jenkins are among those prophecy writers who refrain from setting dates. Actual setting of dates is not that common, but can still be found in internet postings.

[929] *Left Behind: Eternal Forces The PC Game.*

I recall Gerhardus van der Leeuw's words:

> God is not the only thing humanized by verbal art; it humanizes everything that is holy. It must hope that that the great Lord will speak humanly with it too, as Goethe has Mephistopheles say of God. But this congruence between the spoken word and Mephistopheles has the effect of putting religion on its guard. If God speaks humanly, then either a miracle has occurred or sacrilege has been committed.[930]

6. POST-SCRIPT: CONVERSATIONS, DEBATES AND INTERVENTIONS

The LB corpus as has been examined in this thesis has filled a very wide-screen and has contextualised the expansive *universum* of political and religious polarities, namely the Right and the Left. Has the immensity of its products lent itself to exaggeration of Left Behind's role in this polarisation? Given the proliferation of end-time novels can it claim to be the leader in the furtherance of the agenda of the Right?

The hegemony-driven Right, is perceived as carving lines of separatism into once homogenous traditions, denominations and communities as it constructs a society build on the precepts of an ancient theocratic state. As a binary, the Left is synonymous with liberalism, compromise, pluralism and secularity. As the Left see it, the Right does not invite conversation therefore detente is not on the horizon. "Rather than debate the questions we have asked and the issues we have raised, they misrepresent the messengers. They have refused all attempts by one or the other of us for conversation and reconciliation."[931]

The substance of ongoing conversation and debate, of which the Bible will be central, will be internal to the Left, both religious and secular. In the U.S. Democrats are known to have used religious language in support of their agendas.[932] "The problem for them has been that some are new to the church-state linguistic game, and thus often misquote Scripture or misstate its intent."[933] So abuse of the Bible is endemic to both Right and Left, however, the case of the latter, verses are accommodated for purposes

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[930] Gerhardus van de Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Art*. Translated by David E. Green (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), 132.

[931] Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Why the Religious Right cannot Save America* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House: 1999), 8.

[932] Thomas and Dobson, *Blinded by Might*, 88.

[933] Thomas and Dobson, *Blinded by Might*, 88.

of self-promotion in campaigns rather than a basic system of belief. An example cited is when Bill Clinton quoted the Bible as saying, "Our eyes have not seen, nor the ears heard, nor our minds imagined what we can build."[934] Noting "different words and decidedly different meanings," Thomas points out that the only verse that comes close to what Clinton said is 1 Corinthians 2: 9: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them who love him. (*KJV*).[935]

The kind of hermeneutical and exegetical orientation of a Leftist intervention will be more daring than any other methodology, even one such as socio-rhetorical criticism used in a critique of Left Behind. Such an orientation is envisaged by Roland Boer in his framing of a new political myth by which the New Left will claim back the Bible from the Right. He starts by looking at the final stage in the development of political myth "that has run so far from the Hebrew myth of State-in waiting to the Christian capitalist fantasy. This final stage is nothing other than the than the myth of capitalism propounded by one of its for most mythmakers Milton Friedman."[936]

In reference to Friedman's "evoking mythical motifs straight out of the Bible, such as Paradise and Promised Land of plenty," Boer takes "this seed of myth for the Left, one requiring the risky move of calling the bluff of this myth," as the motivation for a programme in which the Bible is reclaimed from the Religious Right.[937] The bluff he calls for lies therein that he takes the same myth of plenty by asking what capitalism would look like if all its constraints. The end he envisages is a "rather more bleak picture of the end of cheap oil and large-scale environmental breakdown.[938] Boer sees a resurgence of the Left, one result of this process being that old questions are reopened. He admits an interest in the way religion, and especially the "question of myth has returned as a serious debate among the Left."[939]

This ambitious project proposed by Boer has the makings of intense conversation and debate and interventions of unforeseen proportion. This will also have

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[934] Thomas and Dobson, *Blinded by Might*, 88.
[935] Thomas and Dobson, *Blinded by Might*, 89.
[936] Boer, *Political Myth*, 5.
[937] Boer, *Political Myth*, 5. See pp. 168 for an outline of Boer's proposed path of mythic construction.
[938] Boer, *Political Myth*, 6.
[939] Boer, *Political Myth*, 6.

ramifications for the Right-inspired novel, since Boer sees culture as striding into the midst of the political myth of Genesis-Joshua could hardly take place in a vacuum. Within the "geopiety of popular culture and political positioning" he points to "three signal moments:" Leon Uris' *Exodus*, the rise of Holy Land theme parks and tours, and the *Left Behind* series of novels."[940]

To the questions posed in the first paragraph of this post-script one may conclude that it is indeed no exaggeration to say that Left Behind has been implicit in polarisation between Left and Right and that it has taken a lead in the furtherance of agenda of the Right. Indeed, having been identified by Boer as one of three signal moments it will surely not be left out of future conversations and debates.

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[940] Boer, *Political Myth*, 152.

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