

intersections online

Volume 10, Number 1 (Winter 2009)

Keith Gordon, "The End of (the Other Side of) the World: Apocalyptic Belief in the Australian Political Structure," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 609-645.

ABSTRACT

In the United States, hundreds of thousands of Christians trust their hearts and souls to the belief that the world is on its final chapter. In their understanding, this chapter that spells out the last days is available to them in a proverbial 'advance printing.' This notion, known as dispensationalism, is a potent force within modern American Christian circles. Dispensationalists adhere to the belief that God's foreordination of the end times is available to them in the form of Biblical prophecy. Clearly such a belief deeply affects an individual's outlook on life on a personal level, but by extension these same beliefs have the potential to affect larger national and global spheres. Just such a thing is happening now, in the United States, where a large number dispensational Christians are looking to the political arena as a venue to exercise their beliefs. In other words, these Christians base their political actions (the votes they cast and the lobbies they endorse) upon their prophecy belief, hoping to influence and direct U.S. foreign policy to fulfill Biblical prophecy. I ask, is this happening anywhere else? Is this a distinctly American phenomenon? America, occupying the position as the (arguably) eminent superpower in the world, has a certain responsibility to uphold, and allowing extreme and fatalistic worldviews to influence decision making at the highest level of government not only raises concerns but compromises that responsibility. To answer this question we look to Australia. The similarities run deep between America and Australia, making it a logical choice to use as a test study. Both countries share deep cultural roots that begin with their conceptions from British colonialism, lending both an analogous cultural background. Both are populated with a core demographic of white Anglo-Saxon Christians, with large immigrant populations from Southern and Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Both share a colorful history largely centered upon a 'frontier' mentality.

http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Winter_2009/Keith_Gordon_The_End_of_the_Other_Side_of_the_World.pdf

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The End of (the Other Side of) the World Apocalyptic Belief in the Australian Political Structure

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Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. . . . So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matthew 24:42-44

Look around you! You do not know when the master of the house is coming. . . . Do not let him come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all: Keep watch.

Mark 13:35-37

At first glance these passages may seem little more than anachronistic rhetoric or devout poetics, but the simple fact of the matter is that many people—people living in our modern and contemporary times—take these ancient imperatives to heart and, consequently, reshape the way in which they view the world around them. With these and countless other stern warnings echoing in their heads, a great number of believers anxiously anticipate the return of Jesus Christ. Beyond his mere return, there is also anticipation for all of the events that surround his Second Coming: the Rapture, the coming of the Antichrist, the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, and dawn of the Millennium. To someone outside of ‘the know,’ these terms have little bearing or significance, except what is disseminated through the channels of the media and popular culture. But to believers, these are more than just words and phrases: they are inevitabilities—unavoidable and necessary events that have been foreordained by God Himself and passed down to a select few in the form of Biblical prophecy.

This anticipation has the potential to reorder a believer’s entire view of the world. As a result global events are no longer random or inconsequential; they start to take on another meaning, a meaning that pertains to something greater

¹ This paper was researched and written between June and August 2006. In the intervening years John Howard and his Liberal Party Coalition lost control of the Australian government to Kevin Rudd and the Labor Party, a change that is indicative of the shifting (i.e. liberalizing) mood of the Australian political climate. Likewise in America the political climate has also drastically changed since the writing of this thesis, with the new administration unlikely to seek the favor of radical Christians or to pursue the foreign policy aims of the previous administration. Nevertheless, it is certain that the dispensational beliefs and political agendas laid out herein are still very much alive and well in the United States today.

and more divine. If the belief that God has foreordained the coming end (and listed the signs in the Bible in the form of prophecy²) is faithfully held, then the events of the world can be reread through the filter of that very belief. A war in Israel is more than just a war; it very well could be the precursor to the end of the world. And the faithful, equipped with their prophecy and armed with knowledge of all signs, attentively interpret current events in the hopes that they indicate that eternal salvation is finally at hand.³

This sort of apocalyptic thought and interpretation is of undeniable significance to the world in which we live. In the United States, hundreds of thousands of Christians trust their hearts and souls to the belief that the world is on its final chapter. In their understanding, this chapter that spells out the last days is available to them in a proverbial ‘advance printing’. This notion, known as *dispensationalism*, is a potent force within modern American Christian circles. Dispensationalists adhere to the belief that God’s foreordination of the end times is available to them in the form of Biblical prophecy.

Clearly such a belief deeply affects an individual’s outlook on life on a personal level, but by extension these same beliefs have the potential to affect larger national and global spheres. Just such a thing is happening now, in the United States, where a large number dispensational Christians are looking to the political arena as a venue to exercise their beliefs. In other words, these Christians base their political actions (the votes they cast and the lobbies they endorse) upon their prophecy belief, hoping to influence and direct U.S. foreign policy to fulfill Biblical prophecy. Since the order of events that surround the end of days has long been dispensed, the various prerequisites for Jesus’ return and ultimate salvation of the righteous are not only known, but active maneuvers can be taken to ensure their timely and efficient fulfillment. And what better vehicle to fulfill these final, preordained events than the most powerful government in the world? Acknowledging the gravity of such a situation begs many questions, but there is one which is the chief concern of this paper. Namely, the question is: Is this happening anywhere else? Is this a distinctly American phenomenon? America,

² One need only read the Book of Revelation to understand the scope of Biblical prophecy. Thick with mythological illusions, the book essentially maps out the events of the final days. Along with other key apocalyptic passages in the Bible, such as Ezekiel 37-39, Daniel 7:13, and various passages within the synoptic Gospels, a modern believer of the coming Apocalypse has at his or her disposal a complete prophetic framework, full of signs that supposedly indicate the events surrounding the Second Coming and the end of the world.

³ Paul Boyer, *When time shall be no more: prophecy belief in modern American culture*, Studies in cultural history (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992). This work gives an exhaustive survey of the prevalence of prophetic speculation of current events in the United States over the past 100 years.

occupying the position as the (arguably) eminent superpower in the world, has a certain responsibility to uphold, and allowing extreme and fatalistic worldviews to influence decision making at the highest level of government not only raises concerns but compromises that responsibility. To uncover whether this is an isolated phenomenon indicative of some inherent particularity to the American mindset, or a widespread feature of Protestant Christianity active in other Western nations, is of the utmost importance if we are to understand the potential contemporary apocalyptic belief has on our world.

To answer this question we look to Australia. The similarities run deep between America and Australia, making it a logical choice to use as a test study. Both countries share deep cultural roots that begin with their conceptions from British colonialism, lending both an analogous cultural background. Both are populated with a core demographic of white Anglo-Saxon Christians, with large immigrant populations from Southern and Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Both share a colorful history largely centered upon a 'frontier' mentality. Though other factors would shape them into the distinct societies they are today, their similar pasts provide an immense cultural foundation upon which both societies are built.

And yet, as we shall see, the cultural foundations are, in actuality, not at all as analogous as a cursory glance might reveal. There are deep differences within the cultural psyches of both cultures, differences that manifest themselves most evidently in the practice of extreme religion. Though superficially both countries are witnessing an increasing interaction between religion and politics, in Australia those with religious agendas receive little more than token nods from an economically-focused government seeking as many votes as possible. Moreover, of the little interaction, none of it is inspired by any sort of apocalyptic thinking. It is that innate difference deep within the cultural psyches that makes the United States a hotbed for apocalyptic thought and political activism whereas in Australia the apocalyptic climate is palpably dormant.

This dormancy provides perhaps the most telling and relevant clue into the nature of American culture and its various predispositions that allow for the unique and powerfully unsettling combination of dispensationalism and politics. Despite much current focus on the interaction between religion and politics, and despite a long history of interaction between the two that produced results more substantial than in contemporary times, Australia simply does not breed the same kind of religious-political activism or engagement, much less engender any kind of apocalyptic sentiment.

Hellfire and Brimstone

The question ‘When will the world end?’ has plagued mankind ever since the concepts of time and death were consciously realized. Though articulated in countless fashions across many different cultures, the question remains the same, inextricably bound to its cousin question ‘What happens after death?’ For the death of the world is really an extension of the captivation felt at the loss of human life. To think upon the death of the world is, for all intents and purposes, to think upon one’s own ultimate destruction, shifting personal anxieties (and the associated beliefs employed to assuage those anxieties) onto a conception of the world, where person becomes world, and world person. It goes without saying that an individual’s beliefs about their own purpose in life will shape their view on the afterlife, and consequently these beliefs will also shape their notions about the end of the world. An atheist, for example, who believes he has no purpose beyond being a mere genetic happenstance—a collection of enzymes and molecules and nothing more—might conjecture that after death his consciousness merely expires with his cells, and subsequently his concept of the end of the world likely involves the destruction of the world occurring, rather unceremoniously, in several billion years when our growing sun finally overtakes Earth. A Hindu woman, believing that she will be reincarnated after her death, might think upon the end of the world without fear or trepidation because she knows that it will be the work of Shiva, who has destroyed the world myriad times and will destroy it myriad more so that it can be reborn, like herself, through Brahma.

Likewise, when fundamentalist Christians turn their thoughts towards the end of the world, their conclusions are invariably shaped by their religious convictions. Their conception of salvation and judgment as inseparable features of the afterlife are reciprocally connected to their ideas concerning the end times. These Christians have at their disposal a tradition that provides them with a deep and ancient framework, shaped over 2,500 years of social and political turmoil, for framing these eschatological beliefs.⁴ This framework, long since detached from its historical and practical roots, mingles the deep personal need for salvation with speculation about the end of the world and final judgment. The end of the world becomes very personal, and in many ways loses any semblance of tragedy.

⁴ Eschatology is the branch of theology that is concerned with the end of the world or of humankind. It is distinct from the apocalyptic because the Apocalypse entails some sort of revelation, destruction, judgment, or salvation, whereas eschatology simply refers to the speculation of the end of time. Apocalypticism is a form of eschatology, but not all eschatological thinking is apocalyptic. Dispensational eschatology, however, is overwhelmingly apocalyptic.

In the dispensational scheme, the most important aspect is the rapture of the chosen, an event that marks the beginning of the end, whereby all righteous and faithful Christians are whisked up to heaven to enjoy eternal bliss, the fruit of their salvation. Those who miss the rapture deserve their fate, and therefore the end of the world is to be heralded with rejoicing, because it is a time when just deserts are doled out. The righteous are saved and the wicked suffer.

But where do these ideas of eschatological salvation and judgment come from? And how have they come to be so engrained amongst conservative evangelical Christians in the United States? It isn't very surprising that the bedrock for much of this belief lies in the Old Testament. All of the imagery and prophetic declarations so intimately bound to dispensational apocalypticism can be traced back to the earliest seeds of Jewish eschatology⁵—though, as we shall see later on, the function and impetus of these images has changed drastically over the course of time.

Jewish eschatology has its roots in the fertile soil of the Babylonian exile, that definitive and painful period in Jewish history that would forever alter the course of that religion.⁶ It is hard to imagine the trauma an exiled Jew must have felt during this period. To them, the exile represented more than a military defeat and a forced dislocation: it represented a severing of the sacred and ineffable bond with their God. The destruction of the Temple and the violent end of the Davidic line effectively amounted to a divine dismemberment, because those two features of the Jewish culture were directly representative of the Jewish people's chosen place in the eyes of God: Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, "Concerning this house [the Temple] that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made clear to your father David. I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."⁷ David was more than a king; he was a sacred bond between the Jewish people and their God, a link that was maintained both through the Temple and the presence of a king of David's blood.

⁵ This eschatology takes shape in a number of apocalyptic texts, found within both the Old Testament and the pseudepigrapha. These 'Jewish apocalypses' came in many forms, were written across a wide period of time, had varying degrees of importance and circulation, and were tantamount in influencing, directly or indirectly, later Christian apocalyptic thought.

⁶ P.D. Hanson, "Messiahs and Messianic Figures in Proto-Apocalypticism," in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, Ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 68-69.

⁷ 1 Kings 11:11-13.

It was in the vacuum of exile that the Jewish people began to feel a need for salvation. Prior to this time, their sacred covenant was embodied in the glory of the Temple and the Davidic king. Their closeness to God was felt with every breath, and exercised in every ritual. But after those bonds were cut, the Jews were left without any tangible connection to their God. Not only did they seek some way to reaffirm their divine connection, they also sought a force to battle the oppressive force that held them captive. It is understandable that they would feel powerless and forsaken, and seek some higher power to act on their behalf, and likewise expect the return of a Davidic king (a belief based in part, among numerous other passages, in 1 Kings 2:4 where God tells David that “there shall not fail you a successor on the throne”) and the restoration of the temple to reestablish their favored place with God.⁸

It was in this context that the first apocalyptic writing in the Jewish canon emerged, a text that would establish a precedent of speculation and expectation about the events at the end of the world. The Book of Ezekiel,⁹ written during the time of the Babylonian exile, deftly expresses the salvational need of the beleaguered Israelites. One encounters in chapter 37 a strong hope that Israel will be resurrected from its current condition, likened as a pile of dry bones, by the return of a Davidic king.¹⁰ But the author of the text goes a step beyond merely articulating his people’s messianic expectation; he also incorporates the novel notions of cosmic righteousness and ultimate judgment wrought upon the wicked.¹¹

These themes prove to be fundamental to Jewish and Christian apocalypticism. The emphasis is no longer simply on the return of the Davidic king, but has adopted an eschatological flavor in its anticipation of heavenly intervention and final judgment for those who would oppress ‘the chosen people’. This addition represents an internal struggle on the part of the writer and his cohorts—people struggling to come to terms with why such a hard fate had befallen them. Their entire religious and social system revolved around the belief that they were God’s chosen people,¹² and in time the logical rationalization of the hardship

⁸ Hanson, 70-73.

⁹ See specifically chapters 37 through 39.

¹⁰ A hope drawn from 1 Kings 11:11-13.

¹¹ See Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39.

¹² J.H. Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects,” in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, Ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 12. Kings 11:11-13 and 2 Kings 2:4, above, are only two examples of the plethora of Old Testament scripture that clearly express the Jews’ favored place in the eyes of their God. Many other examples (specifically the Covenants of Abraham and Moses) can be found in Genesis, chapters 16 through 23 and in Exodus chapters 19 through 24.

morphed from feelings of abandonment to a belief that their faith was being tested. By employing the themes of cosmic righteousness and ultimate destruction of the wicked, the writer of Ezekiel (and nearly every Jewish apocalyptic writer after him) was not merely responding to a time of crisis and oppression with imaginative expressions sadness and rage; he was conveying, essentially, the message that God was still just and wise and on the side of Israel, and that despite these hardships, the Jews would be ultimately rewarded—and their enemies ultimately punished—if they kept their faith in God and abided by his mandates. Hence nearly all Jewish apocalypses can be understood as messages of encouragement, hope, and faith in times of great oppression.¹³

These ideas, first laid down in Ezekiel, were built upon by a of string writers facing successive social and political hardships. The Jews faced a long series of oppression under foreign powers, from the Babylonians to the Seleucids to the Romans. All of these eras produced distinct apocalypses, each one reincorporating the already extant material with novel extrapolations. Perhaps foremost amongst these extrapolations was a departure from messianic expectation through the creation of heavenly intercessor in the book of Daniel. The writer of Daniel, facing the crisis posed by the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, also sought to bring hope to his cohorts in a time of great persecution.¹⁴ Though influenced by the pattern of messianic expectation and the need for salvation established in Ezekiel, the writer of Daniel added a new element by referring directly to a heavenly intercessor: “I saw one like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship...and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.”¹⁵

The messianic overtones are undeniable, expressing both a return to tradition and a desire to be saved from the suffering inflicted by foreign kings, but the use of the term ‘son of man’ is a distinct and crucial departure from the tradition of messianic expectation. Though messianic expectation would never be conclusively agreed upon within the Jewish faith,¹⁶ the depiction in Daniel of the ‘messiah’ coming down from heaven—equipped with divine powers—created a new expectation of salvation coming directly from God. By surrounding him

¹³ John J. Collins, *The apocalyptic imagination: an introduction to Jewish apocalyptic literature*, The biblical resource series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 41-42.

¹⁴ Paul Niskanen, “Daniel’s Portrait of Antiochus IV: Echoes of a Persian King,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2004): 378.

¹⁵ Daniel 7:13-14

¹⁶ Charlesworth, 13-14.

with vivid cosmological imagery, the writer gives the salvific figure a shape, providing a focal point of salvation—a tangible character that could be looked to in times of need, expressed not only as a heavenly hero but also as a symbol of Israel's return to God's favor.¹⁷ In these apocalyptic circles, no longer would salvation come from a mortal human returning to the throne of Israel; it would come in the form of a heavenly warrior dispatched by God at the end of days to set right all the wrongs.¹⁸ This eschatological pondering was a natural result of seeking hope and solace in a time of intense oppression, when feelings of divine abandonment led some Israelites to the idea that the current suffering was part of God's plan and that salvation must be coming soon.¹⁹

These Jewish apocalypses were absolutely instrumental in the formation of Christian apocalypticism.²⁰ Early Christians²¹—faced with the death of their leader, dissatisfied with the larger Jewish community, and struggling to define themselves—found them in a difficult predicament and consequently looked back to Daniel and the other extant apocalypses to find hope and direction in a time of turmoil.²² Though it is relatively uncertain as to whether references to the coming of the Son of Man in the synoptic gospels refer directly to the return of Jesus Christ, and even more uncertain as to whether Jesus declared himself as such,²³ the correlation between the term (loaded with eschatological weight) and Jesus' return certainly became a mainstay of later interpretation. Some scholars argue that Jesus may have not perceived himself to be the Messiah at all,²⁴ but that rather he was an eschatological prophet employing the imagery

¹⁷ M. Black, "The Messianism in the Parables of Enoch: Their Date and Contributions to Christological Origins," in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 147.

¹⁸ J.C. VanderKam, "Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71," in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, Ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 192.

¹⁹ This is directly related to the theme of many 'historical apocalypses.' These apocalypses presented a systemized and ordered view of history, schematically depicting the history of the world as completely controlled by the will of God. All of the preceding history was interpreted as building towards a turning point, where afterwards God would impart his final judgment and the righteous would be saved. Generally the writer saw his contemporary times at or just before that turning point, thus providing hope by trying to show that the suffering was not in vain (on the contrary, it had been forever planned by God) and that redemption was coming soon.

²⁰ B.L. Mack, "The Christ and Jewish Wisdom," in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 221.

²¹ Who, we must remember, were Jews at the time of Christ.

²² J.D.G. Dunn, "Messianic Ideas and Their Influence on the Jesus of History," in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 369.

²³ D.H. Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," in *The Messiah: developments in earliest Judaism and Christianity: 1st Symposium on Judaism and Christian origins: Papers*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 451; See also Dunn, 377.

²⁴ Charlesworth, 6-12.

and narrative of Daniel. With this interpretation, put forth by A. Yarbro Collins, Jesus is not himself the Son of Man, the Messiah come to earth, but rather a prophet who *speaks* about the *coming* of the Son of Man, turning to the established eschatological tradition in a time of crisis. But, as Collins notes, “if Jesus had already associated his activity and teaching with the heavenly figure in Dan 7:13, it is more understandable that some of his followers would have identified the two after Jesus’ death.”²⁵ If this theory is valid, it can be asserted that Jesus’ followers adapted the eschatological Son of Man imagery to fit their needs in their time of crisis, creating a soteriological²⁶ solution to the problems of a crucified leader, ostracism, struggles for identity, and persecution. This solution, however, has since become removed from its cultural and temporal moorings, moving away from a response to social issues and venturing into the realm of unquestioned dogma. In other words, the depiction of Jesus’ imminent return (based upon the existing eschatological framework of the Son of Man) was originally employed to give hope to a beleaguered group—but over time, as that group grew in strength, the original function was lost while the imagery and the belief remained, becoming crystallized, not as a product of its time and location, but as a prophecy handed down from God to the chosen.

So we come to understand that the original function of the apocalypse *as a literary genre* was to find hope and solace in the face of great oppression. We also see the shift that took place with the Christian adaptation, wherein the literary device became a theological hinging-point. In part because of this shift, but also due to the mere passage of time and continuous reinterpretation of rather obscure passages, modern apocalyptic belief has become entirely dissociated from its original function. The original impetus was to give inspiration and hope through the use of these images, but now the images have taken on a life of their own. They are no longer a means to an end, but an end in and of themselves. The images and descriptions of ultimate judgment are no longer employed to alleviate the feelings of hopeless and despair in the face of blind oppression, but rather are held as prophetic and inevitable truths direct from the mouth of God.²⁷

Nowhere is this more evident than in the most extreme form of apocalyptic belief among modern American Protestant Christians: dispensationalism. Created by John Darby, an Englishman preaching towards the middle of the

²⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and eschatology in Jewish and Christian apocalypticism*. Supplements to the journal for the study of Judaism, v. 50b (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 155.

²⁶ Within Christian theology, soteriology [which is derived from the Greek *sōtērion* (salvation)] is the doctrine of salvation as effected by divine agency (Jesus).

²⁷ Paul Boyer, 87.

nineteenth-century in both the British Isles and America, dispensationalism is a particularly fatalistic and deterministic brand of Christian apocalypticism. Espousing a premillennialist²⁸ philosophy, dispensationalism places special emphasis not only on anticipation of the coming end but also on direct prophecy interpretation.²⁹ The name itself comes from the notion that God divided time into certain *dispensations*, or epochs, and that the world is now nearing the end of the final dispensation. These dispensations were written before the world began, and are completely unalterable. Every event in history has followed exactly as it was *dispensed* by God at the beginning of time. By believing in such a rigid and logical scheme of history, followers of dispensationalism turn to prophecy with a certain fervency and faith absent in most other forms of eschatology. Because history is so rigidly preordained by God, the sequence of events at the end of time must be equally as rigid—and if they are rigid and foreordained, then they are knowable ahead of time. All one needs to know of the events are certain clues, clues which drip from the pages of the Bible. Hence, a dispensationalist need only turn to the prophecies of the Bible to decode current events so that he or she might figure out when the end of the world is at hand.³⁰

This form of belief clearly draws much of its conceptual strength from the Jewish historical apocalypses, but as aforementioned, the impetus and function has drastically changed. A dispensationalist, believing these apocalyptic texts to be the decodable word of God,³¹ looks to them as absolute literal truth instead of inspirational allegories. Consequently, the understanding of the imagery employed by these ancient apocalypses has also completely changed. Much of the imagery and symbolism present in both Christian and Jewish apocalypses was originally designed to be allegorical or representative of the contemporary political and social turmoil in which they were written. In Ezekiel, the prophecy of Gog of Magog (a dastardly king from the north whose attack of Israel would precipitate the coming of the end times) was an allegory for the Babylonians.³² In

²⁸ Premillennialism is a branch of Christian eschatology that concerns itself primarily on speculation about the exact time of Christ's return. It is a mainstay in all Christian theology that Christ will return to earth and establish his kingdom, one that will last a thousand years (the Millennium). Premillennialism holds that Christ will return before the Millennium and actively establish it, whereas postmillennialism hold that the establishment of Christ's kingdom is the mission of the faithful on earth, and that Christ's return will happen after the Millennium.

²⁹ Boyer, 87-88.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ It should be noted that only a small number of dispensational thinkers actively turn to any apocalypse beyond Revelation. These thinkers, however, represent a 'core' of preachers, televangelists, theologians, radio hosts and writers who not only actively interpret from a wide range of apocalyptic material but whom, more importantly, disseminate these beliefs to their congregation and to the general public. Many everyday dispensationalists acquire their beliefs not through their own study but from this small core of thinkers (see Boyer chaps. 4-9.)

³² Boyer, 154-155.

Daniel, the depiction of the four beasts represented the successive oppressors of the Jews: the Babylonians, the Medians, the Persians, and finally the Seleucids.³³ Moreover, some scholars believe that the depiction of ‘one like the son of man’ descending from the clouds was an amalgam of near eastern symbolism, possibly alluding to the archangel Michael or to other some other heavenly character that would provide meaning and context to the piece.³⁴ Both of these elements of Daniel would be of the utmost influence upon the writer of the Book of Revelation, who would incorporate both the symbolism of the beast and of the son of man.

Much of the dispensational scheme is built upon the imagery and prophetic narrative laid out in Revelation; indeed, it has become a ‘roadmap’ to the events surrounding the end of time. All of the key elements of dispensationalist belief—the Rapture of the faithful, the mark of the beast, the Tribulation, the battle of Armageddon—are drawn from the Book of Revelation.³⁵ However, this distilling of prophetic information is taken literally, completely denying any acknowledgment of ancient allegory based upon historical conflict and oppression. For instance, the so-called ‘mark of the beast’ 666—which originally refers to the Roman Emperor Nero, who was oppressing the Early Christians at the time Revelation was written³⁶—is now interpreted by modern dispensationalists as a moniker for the Antichrist, a crucial player in their scheme of final events. Much time and energy is spent in dispensational circles trying to discern who exactly the Antichrist is and when exactly he will appear.³⁷ This speculation is important, in their eyes, because the arrival of Antichrist will immediately follow the Rapture, where the faithful will be taken up to heaven. Therefore, in the dispensational worldview, by following the clues and signs laid down in Revelation, a believer may be able to foretell the ascension of the Antichrist and thus be better prepared for the impending Rapture. The ancient imagery has thus become entirely distorted from its original purpose, being warped into a literal interpretation that supposedly prophesizes ultimate personal salvation.³⁸

³³ Collins, 94-95.

³⁴ Thomas B. Slater, “One Like the Son of Man in First-Century Judaism,” *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 184-185; See also Helge S. Kvanvig, *Roots of apocalyptic: the Mesopotamian background of the Enoch figure and of the Son of Man* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirker Verlag, 1998), 442; 496; 536-540.

³⁵ Boyer, 36-45; 257-261.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 272-279.

³⁸ A scenario that perfectly illustrates the person’s individual anxieties (in this case anxieties about salvation endemic to evangelical Christians) being extended onto speculation about the end of the world.

However, for as much as the function of the texts and the understanding of their imagery have changed, one aspect of modern apocalyptic belief has remained unchanged: that of the insider/outsider dynamic. It takes no great stretch of imagination to understand that many apocalyptic circles throughout history have felt alienated and distanced from the greater society. Indeed, it is the very nature of the belief, for one must be deeply dissatisfied with contemporary circumstances to eagerly desire the destruction of the world. This dissatisfaction and willful separation creates in the minds of the apocalypticists a special sense of superiority, a sense that they hold divine knowledge that is withheld from the masses and given only to an elect few. Naturally, these elect few are the members of the apocalyptic circle. They believe that they are the bearers of truth in a world of deception. But with this 'sacred' and secret knowledge comes the necessity to guard it, giving rise to an intense distrust of anyone who is 'outside' of the circle and who is thus unworthy to be privy to the secret knowledge. History provides numerous examples of these insular, distrustful apocalyptic communities, ranging from the notorious Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 2nd century BCE³⁹ to the Branch Davidians that perished in the government raid in Waco, Texas in 1993.

Vital to the development of the insider/outsider dynamic is the concept of purity. Purity is absolutely crucial to apocalyptic circles because it provides visible boundaries through which one can discern who is an 'insider' and who is an 'outsider.' Mary Douglas has proposed that purity is innately bound to the concept of boundaries, arguing that construction of external boundaries, such as the boundaries of a group or society, are an extension of an innate human preoccupation with the boundaries of the body.⁴⁰ The most universal human fear is that of the unknown, and margins serve as a boundary between the known (safe) and the unknown (dangerous); people innately fear that which is unknown to them, that which is outside of their boundaries, be it in terms of community or body.

To go so far as to state the obvious, things are most vulnerable at their boundaries. As the first line of defense, these boundaries are at risk; anything that crosses the boundary has potential for doing harm. In terms of the body, a knife or arrow that crosses the boundary of the skin will do great harm to the flesh and organs. Rape is an act of power because it entails a harmful violation of a boundary. Even food that enters the body can be poisonous or can be choked

³⁹ Collins, 144-147.

⁴⁰ Mary Douglas, "External Boundaries," in *Anthropological theory: an introductory history*, eds. R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warms (New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2002). 526-535.

upon. Conversely, anything that exits the body is also imbued with a harmful power. Phlegm and feces may spread disease, and blood, as the vital fluid, harms the body when it crosses the margin of the skin and flows out. Anything that enters or exits the body—anything that crosses the margin of the body—is dangerous and powerful, with the capacity to harm. These preoccupations with bodily margins in turn become symbolic for the concern over group or societal margins.⁴¹ Concerns over purity are a natural outgrowth of this preoccupation with boundaries. That which is ‘inside’ is seen as pure, whereas anything ‘outside’ is seen as impure. What is inside must be kept inside to retain purity, while any outside element must not be allowed to cross the boundary and thus compromise that purity.

The boundaries emphasized by purity, and the associated insider/outsider dynamic, form the very core of apocalyptic belief. It is this core that has led so many apocalyptic groups to remove themselves from society, seeking to express their purity through withdrawal in order to legitimize their procession of secret and divine knowledge about the end of the world. By removing themselves from society and all its iniquity, these apocalyptic ‘insiders’ are seeking not only to prove that they hold a secret and powerful knowledge denied to the wicked, but prove also their purity and therefore their worthiness to possess this knowledge. Bound with this notion of purity and worthiness is the expectation of salvation: because they have been bestowed this secret knowledge and have remained pure in spite of the sinfulness of the world, they are certain to be saved from imminent destruction. They will be judged as the righteous.

And yet for as endemic as seclusion is among apocalyptic groups throughout history, modern dispensational Christians in the United States are engaged in activity that, *at first glance*, appears to be quite to the contrary. As opposed to being small, isolated, and insular, the vast host of dispensational believers in the United States is growing increasingly vocal and increasingly active. They seem bent on sharing their ‘secret knowledge,’ in this case the dispensational interpretation of Biblical prophecy. A single search on an internet search engine will yield thousands of websites dedicated spreading the dispensational scheme, detailing the impending end and the suffering that awaits nonbelievers if they do not accept Jesus immediately.⁴² That the Left Behind series, a fictionalized

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See the following websites: www.raptureready.com; www.raptureletters.com; www.tribulationforces.com; www.harpazo.net/when.html; www.rapturesolution.com; www.whatsaiththescripture.com; www.rapturechrist.com www.rr-bb.com; www.countdown.org; www.tribulation.com; www.godandscience.org/doctrine/tribulation.html.

account of the Rapture and Tribulation based entirely on a dispensational framework, has already sold over 60 million copies with more and more sold each day is further testament.⁴³

Despite these outspoken activities the fact is that, at their core, dispensational Christians retain a strong insider/outsider dynamic. The notion of purity is still intensely strong, although it has morphed to be expressed not through seclusion but through activism and engagement with the world. Dispensational Christians in the United States are identical in nearly every way to the classic, insular apocalyptic group—except that they are a large group of individuals actively seeking to swell their numbers, and that they seek to engage in the world as opposed to withdraw from it. For as counterintuitive as this seems, it makes perfect sense when one considers that dispensationalism is, and has been, popular almost exclusively among the evangelical denominations.⁴⁴ It is the very nature of evangelical Christianity to be outspoken and proactive; to ‘evangelize’ by its very definition means to ‘spread the good word.’ Therefore an evangelical Christian with an apocalyptic worldview finds his or herself with a deep tension: how to retain purity (usually done through withdrawal and seclusion) while simultaneously preaching and proselytizing? The answer for many is an intricate synthesis: an insider/outsider interpretation of salvation.

And there can be no doubt that among evangelical American Christians the preoccupation is on salvation. Whereas all Christian denominations preach salvation, there is a particular emphasis within the evangelical Protestant camps upon personal salvation through Jesus Christ. These ‘born-again’ Christians believe that through complete acceptance of Christ one attains salvation through a spiritual rebirth. This conversion or affirmation of belief is literally the cornerstone of their faith—and, in many ways, is a right of purity. It is a step across the threshold that divides the outside world from the world of Christian faith. Those who are ‘inside’ are pure and primed for God’s salvation.⁴⁵ Those who are ‘outside’ are doomed to damnation. This evangelical, insider/outsider notion of salvation meshes seamlessly with dispensational belief.⁴⁶ Those who

⁴³ Leftbehind.com, “Left Behind Series Featured on Upcoming *60 Minutes*,” <http://www.leftbehind.com/channelnews.asp?pageid=929&channelID=17>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁴⁴ Boyer, 89.

⁴⁵ It is with this statement that a discerning reader might raise an eyebrow. The purity of those inside the faith is largely theoretical and idealized, as illustrated most notoriously by the actions of Jerry Falwell and other evangelical leaders who have fallen into scandal. This is only one of the deep tensions that underlie dispensational belief; the others will be discussed at greater length later on.

⁴⁶ It should be noted at this point that by no means does this entail that all evangelical Christians adhere to dispensational ideology. On the contrary, there are certainly a great number of evangelical Christians

are inside are privy to the secret knowledge provided by the prophecies in Bible and will therefore, because of their purity, be whisked away to salvation in the Rapture. Those who are outside, however, will miss the Rapture and will be subject to all the pain and torture of the Tribulation.⁴⁷

This combination of evangelicalism, salvation and dispensationalism creates a powerful sense of righteousness and a strong differentiation between those who are 'inside' and those who are 'outside,' allowing active engagement in the world while simultaneously maintaining spiritual purity. And, consequently, this combination engenders a natural and nearly unavoidable disposition to conservatism. Going back to a notion of purity, we must consider what form purity takes for a modern evangelical Christian. The dividing line is much more than mere theological belief; it has become, and perhaps always has been, entangled in social issues. Evangelical Christians demarcate their boundaries, those who are 'inside' and who are 'outside,' not only by faith but by a rigid code of morality. Though this morality is rooted in the Bible, it takes shape in the social arena. The opposition to gay marriage, abortion, Darwinism, and the division of church and state are all stances on social issues that serve as boundary-markers.

Dispensationalism is seamless with this system of belief. Those who will miss out on the Rapture are the sinners, which in the world of conservative evangelicalism are homosexuals and their supporters, abortive mothers, their supporters and facilitators, atheists, and—indicative of how the conservative social and political agenda has become synonymous with Christian righteousness—liberals,⁴⁸ to name the most obvious. Though it is impossible to definitively say whether their conservatism predisposes them to dispensational thought, or whether dispensational thought somehow leads them to conservative beliefs, there is an undeniable connection between the two.

At the same time, however, there is a deep tension between conservatism and dispensationalism—one that is largely ignored by those who hold these beliefs. On the one hand, conservatism seeks to oppose those things that are perceived as degrading forces acting harmfully upon society. Yet on the other hand, in some

who have beliefs concerning the end times that are completely independent of dispensationalism and prophecy. Even within the circles of Dispensational believers, there is a large periphery of people who, in all likelihood, give very little thought to the ideology but enthusiastically swallow the ideas being pushed by a small core of diehard believers.

⁴⁷ Boyer, 88. The websites listed in footnote 39 will provide the same.

⁴⁸ Ann H. Coulter, *Godless: The church of liberalism* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006). See especially Chapter 1.

sense dispensationalism actually is *eager* to see these degrading forces at work, because they are sign that the end is near and ultimate salvation is close at hand.⁴⁹ The tension is deepened by the fact that one tenet (at least ideally) of Christian purity is charity and compassion, and consequently that purity might be jeopardized if one were to eagerly greet the amplification of suffering in the world as a sign of impending salvation. But regardless of the difficulties posed by such a belief, these tensions only seem to exist in scholarly observation and not in the people who hold them.

We therefore see that political and social conservatism, dispensationalism, and evangelical Christianity are intricately interrelated, each building upon and buttressing one another. And this potent combination is having a profound effect. The large bloc of evangelical Christian voters was instrumental in both the 2000 and 2004 elections, ardently and vociferously supporting a conservative government that is in tune with their social and moral agendas. Though these agendas tend to take center stage, there is another trend growing within the conservative evangelical camp that looks to matters beyond social ills. There are a considerable number of conservative evangelicals, whose motivation for engaging the government is rooted in apocalyptic expectation, hoping to somehow influence American foreign policy so that it might assist in fulfilling dispensational Biblical prophecy.⁵⁰ There are evangelical organizations in place whose sole purpose is to actively pursue courses of action⁵¹—through collective prayer, lobbying, and letter writing—that will assist in the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.⁵² And this is much more than a grassroots phenomenon; it reaches into the very top level of our current administration. When asked in a recent interview with Deborah Caldwell about the role of an independent Israel and its significance to evangelical prophecy, Richard Land, president of Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the public policy entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, and member of the U.S Commission on International Religious Freedom,⁵³ and close friend to President Bush, stated:

⁴⁹ Boyer, 299.

⁵⁰ Deborah Caldwell, “Why Christians Must Keep Israel Strong,” www.beliefnet.com/story/106/story_10687_1.html, (accessed February 8, 2009). See also Dina Kraft, “Evangelical Christians rally en masse for the Jewish state,” October 4, 2004, http://jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=14576&intcategoryid=1, (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁵¹ Largely concerning that the State of Israel remains independent and in the hands of the Jews, which, according to dispensational prophecy, is a prerequisite for the Rapture.

⁵² International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, “Comforting the nation of Israel,” <http://www.icej.org>, (accessed February 8, 2009); See also Christian Action for Israel, <http://www.christianactionforisrael.org/>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁵³ Land was appointed by Senator Bill Frist to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in 2002.

I think it is a sign of the end-times... Yes, we're one step closer to the endtimes than we were before Israel came back into the land, because my understanding of biblical prophecy is that Israel is established in the land at the time that the events of the Second Coming take place.⁵⁴

In a 2004 interview with PBS's *Frontline*, Land said that "there's no question this is the most receptive White House to our concerns and to our perspective of any White House that I've dealt with, and I've dealt with every White House from Reagan on."⁵⁵ Though by no means should it be assumed that President Bush, his administration, or U.S. foreign policy is conclusively influenced by dispensational belief, it is nevertheless very telling that someone as involved in high-level government as Richard Land should publicly make such bold declarations. When presented with the fullness of the situation, one wonders at the possibility of ancient and anachronistic prophecies directly influencing contemporary world politics. As allegories they are intriguing and awe-inspiring, full of frightening and powerful images. As literal interpretation, they have the power to indelibly reshape the worldview of those who believe; and those who believe seem to be gaining more and more influence within the American government. So we are obliged to ask: why is this happening? What is it about American culture that makes such a situation even possible? To answer these questions, we must look outside of the United States and try to get a perspective on the matter. We must look to a country similar enough to be used as a test case, to discern whether dispensational belief and conservative politics produce a similar result in multiple nations, or just in America. So we look to Australia.

The Land Down Under

We look to Australia for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that Australia and America share remarkable cultural and social commonalities. Both share a colonial past and strong cultural foundations built upon British influence. Both are English-speaking, prosperous, first-world countries. Both countries have strong Christian backgrounds.⁵⁶ Both countries share a frontier history, colored by settlers, gold rushes, and shameful conduct towards indigenous peoples. Today, both countries are equally inundated with a consumer-driven media culture, watch the same television programming, and eat the same kind of food.⁵⁷ But beyond this laundry list of similarities, which only grazes the surface, there are other factors that draw our attention.

⁵⁴ Caldwell, "Why Christians Must Keep Israel Strong".

⁵⁵ *Frontline*, "Interview Alan Jacobs," PBS.org, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁵⁶ Though both contemporarily support a wide variety of immigrant faiths, the foundational religion of both countries is undeniably Christianity.

⁵⁷ Based upon author's observations.

Recently, Australia has seen a shift towards conservative politics within its government. Conservative social agendas have become a rallying cry for a right-wing government that has successfully held power for ten years in a traditionally progressive country.⁵⁸ Moreover, there has been increasing speculation that this conservative government is mingling faith and politics more than any other government before it.⁵⁹ In his 1975 inaugural address, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser mentioned God once and made no mention of family. In his 1996 inaugural address, John Howard, current Prime Minister, made 134 references to family and “numerous references to God and Christian principles.”⁶⁰ This induction of faith-based politics has strong parallels with what is happening in the United States—George W. Bush in his inaugural address stated that “we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in our image.”⁶¹ When Howard said at a later date that “we [US and Australia] share the same values” and that “the values are very important,”⁶² one can assume that on some level he was referring to Christian values of family and God shared by both governments. When the cultural similarities and the emergent intermingling of faith and government are taken into consideration, Australia becomes the ideal place to ask our questions. Here we have a right-wing government incorporating religion into its politics, much as is happening in the United States. So now we must look to discover if apocalyptic thought is a motivating factor among Australian Christian’s involvement in politics.

In order to answer that question, first let us consider the deeper connection at work between the two countries. A leading Australian social analyst states that early in the country’s history it was commonplace to view Australia as a “little” America. There was a desire to follow America, since it was seen as a role model for all the other British colonies both before and after the American Revolution.⁶³ Though this emulation, which began in the mid 19th century, soon lost its imperative quality as Australian culture started to coalesce into something uniquely Australian and its citizens no longer felt the need to seek definition from without, it nevertheless established a precedent of affection and

⁵⁸ ABC Newsonline, “Tribunal to hear anti-gay election pamphlet case,” June 13, 2006, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/items/200606/1661498.htm> (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁵⁹ Amanda Lohrey, “Putting faith in politics,” *The Age*, June 17, 2006.

⁶⁰ Michael Millett, “Howard has Faith in God Squad,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 16, 2002, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/08/15/1029113981482.html>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

⁶¹ Robert Garran, *True believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American alliance* (Crowns Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2004), 36.

⁶² Garran, 105.

⁶³ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity, 1688-1980*, *The Australian experience*, no. 3 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 50.

cooperation between the two countries. Australia, though confident in its own unique culture, still had tendency to turn towards comparison, whereby the American standard was held as the model and could be used as a measuring stick for Australian success.⁶⁴

With this in mind it is hardly surprising that Australia has long been a close ally to the United States. In World War II, the Australians turned to the United States for protection against the seemingly interminable advance of the Japanese through the Pacific. Robert Menzies, Australian Prime Minister during the War, organized his foreign policy based upon his confidence that the U.S. would protect them from any Pacific threat,⁶⁵ a confidence which illustrated the naturally close relations between the two nations. While certainly the U.S. protection of Australia was largely strategic, undoubtedly there was a certain emotional involvement as well; the Americans were protecting people like themselves: white, English-speaking Christians. More recently, and much more relevantly, Australia has been a staunch U.S. ally in the “war on terror” and the associated military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, with Howard declaring that the terrorist attacks of September 11th “were done to us as much as they were done to our American friends.”⁶⁶ Though this support may be viewed as a mere continuation of a long history of friendship, it is also indicative of the shift towards conservative politics in Australian politics and the close relationship between the Bush and Howard governments.

In recent years the Australian political system has lurched to the right, moving away from a long tradition of more moderate politics. Led by Prime Minister John Howard, the Liberal Party has enjoyed control of the Australian government since the 1996 elections. Though named the Liberal party, the party itself represents the right-wing of Australian politics, created in the 1940s by Robert Menzies to oppose the left-wing Labor party’s control of power.⁶⁷ Though right-wing politics have always been the mainstay of Liberal party doctrine,⁶⁸ this current Liberal party government has embraced conservatism to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 49-52.

⁶⁵ Garran, 89.

⁶⁶ Ibid.; Grant Halloway, “Australian Prime Minister Wins Third Term,” November 11, 2001, cnn.com.

⁶⁷ Andrew Moore, *The right road?: a history of right-wing politics in Australia*. Australian retrospectives (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

⁶⁸ Richard Hall, Paul Boreham, and Geoffrey Stokes, *The politics of Australian society: political issues for the new century* (French’s Forest, NSW: Pearson Education, 2004), 22.

a new degree; John Howard has on several occasions boasted that he is “the most conservative Prime Minister in Australian history.”⁶⁹

Many in Australia feel that this sudden shift is closely related to an emulation of conservative ideology developed in the Reagan era and perfected in the George W. Bush era.⁷⁰ Though the aforementioned cultural proximity leads many to believe this, and while certainly there are very close relations between the Howard and Bush governments, one cannot assume that the shift towards right-wing politics in Australia is based solely on emulation of the United States. The move towards conservatism within Australian politics, though decidedly significant considering Australia’s history of liberal progressivism, is equally attributable to a small but persistent right-wing minority. This minority—though in some instances more extreme or disillusioned fringe elements of the minority have drifted into moments of radicalism⁷¹—generally represents the wealthy, upper crust.⁷² Some scholars view this as a continuation of a trend established in the years after the abolition of the penal colony, where a large group of wealthy landowners initially resisted the shift towards democracy and other liberal social changes for the sake of their prosperity and various holdings, turning instead to right-wing conservative ideology.⁷³

Though the Liberal party has been in power for many years since its creation in the 1940s,⁷⁴ no Liberal government has so thoroughly embraced conservative right-wing politics as the current one. There has always been a certain ebb and flow of right-wing influence upon the Liberal party, and even during times of influence the right-wing elements tended to be removed from the mainstream,⁷⁵ but at present Howard and his current government hold positions that are much more in tune with the right-wing minority than any previous Liberal government. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser attests that Howard’s government is a direct “departure from the original Liberal party as founded by Robert Menzies.”⁷⁶ Whereas before Liberal governments were somewhat moderated in their conservatism by the more liberal sentiments of the middle-

⁶⁹ James Rupp, “Immigration and Multiculturalism,” *Howard’s second and third governments: Australian Commonwealth administration 1998-2004*, Eds. Chris Aulich and Roger Wettanhall (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 74.

⁷⁰ Author interview with Peter Nagle.

⁷¹ Such as the fascist New Guards of the 1930s, the White Australia policy (which promoted immigration from White Europeans), and the One Nation movement of the 90s (in which Pauline Hanson, endorsed by the Liberal Party, led a political campaign against multiculturalism and immigration).

⁷² Moore, 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁷⁴ 1947-1972; 1975-1983; 1996-present.

⁷⁵ Moore, 2.

⁷⁶ Author correspondence with Malcolm Fraser.

class, the current government has managed to gain control of the middle, pushing the left-wing Labor party further to left. The ‘mainstream’ has shifted to the right in Australia, much as it has in the U.S.⁷⁷

In many ways this shift was a result of growing fear and uneasiness among the middle class. It has been the tactic of many right-wing governments to construct a worldview that presents “the public” or “the state” imperiled by some outside entity.⁷⁸ Beginning in the 90s, Australia was faced with several dilemmas, including an economic downturn and increasing reliance on Asia. There was a great deal of concern among middle-class people, who felt that their livelihood was threatened by forces outside of Australia. Howard capitalized on these fears, securing the position as Prime Minister on the back of a wave of dissatisfaction over Keating’s⁷⁹ emphasis on unity with Asia, proposing a new era of Australian economic strength and independence.⁸⁰ Howard also built upon the fears of the middle class by forcefully opposing immigration, stating his intentions to retain jobs and prosperity for Australians and not for foreigners.⁸¹ This rhetoric was the first move in the right’s takeover of the Australian middle-class. September 11th also provided Howard an opportunity; building on post-9/11 fears Howard ran for and won his second term as Prime Minister under the slogan “Putting Australia’s Interests First—Certainty Leadership Strength.”⁸² Around this time Howard also secured more popularity and more power—and thus more freedom to move further to the right—by turning away a boatful of Indonesian refugees, a move popular due to wariness over the influx of Asian immigrants and resentment from the 2002 Bali bombings in Indonesia in which 88 Australians were killed.⁸³

These fear-based power plays are indicative of the strongly oppositional nature of conservative ideology;⁸⁴ the very nature of trying to ‘conserve’ is to oppose whatever elements are seen as degrading. For instance, the Liberal party at its birth was remarked to be “more anti-Labor than pro-anything-else.”⁸⁵ While on the one hand this oppositional, conservative stance taken by the Howard government can be viewed as a continuation (albeit a rather divergent one) of Liberal party doctrine, it is, on the other hand, intimately connected to a strong

⁷⁷ Judith Brett, “Relaxed and Comfortable: The Liberal Party’s Australia,” *Quarterly Essay* 19 (2005): 22.

⁷⁸ Moore, 3.

⁷⁹ Labor Prime Minister, 1991-1996.

⁸⁰ Garran, 50.

⁸¹ Rupp, 174.

⁸² David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark victory* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2003), 174.

⁸³ Marr, 175-176.

⁸⁴ Moore, 4.

⁸⁵ Borcham, 22.

faith-based morality. Though it is unclear whether Howard and his government's motivation to appeal to Christian morality is born from genuine devotion or from an attempt to garner votes, it is undeniable that this government is embracing that morality, illustrated by its strong opposition to acts such as gay marriage.⁸⁶ Indeed, many pundits believe that the Howard government is using God and Christian morality as a way to facilitate the 'resurrection of the political right' in Australia.⁸⁷ As we have seen, conservatism and Christian morality go hand-in-hand.

For as much attention has been given to Howard's government's relationship with Christianity, this merger is not unprecedented in Australian history. In fact, Australian political history is dotted with various forms of Christian activism and influence. One of the first—and certainly one of the most consequential—exchanges between conservative Christianity and politics emerged in another time of fear and uncertainty. Born out of the anti-communist fears of the 1950s and 60s, 'The Movement' was a right-wing Catholic organization spearheaded by B.A. Santamaria. Santamaria, protégé of the famed conservative Archbishop Mannix, had embraced right-wing ideology from the time of his youth. In 1934 he wrote a sizable dissertation on the nature of fascism, concluding that "fascism arose as a national movement against socialism to replace incompetent government."⁸⁸ Though this is not to say that he openly endorsed fascist views, it is nevertheless clear that Santamaria accepted fascism as an acceptable alternative to what he saw as the catastrophic failures of socialism and communism.⁸⁹ It is very telling that Santamaria would have these thoughts in 1934, just as Australia was still in the throes of the Depression. During this period, upwards of one-third of all Australians lost their jobs and the entire nation was gripped with widespread poverty, loss of homes, and fragmented families. This environment engendered among many working-class Australians a sense that the capitalist system was flawed, and that a feasible alternative could be found in socialism.⁹⁰

Santamaria was a university student during this era, and he witnessed the Labor party (which at that time was the dominant party in Australia) move more and more towards socialism. Acutely aware of the failings of capitalism, but also instilled with an inherent distrust of socialism, Santamaria instead opted for a

⁸⁶ ABC Newsonline, "Tribunal to hear anti-gay election pamphlet case".

⁸⁷ Marion Maddox, *God under Howard: the rise of the religious right in Australian politics* (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 260.

⁸⁸ Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or conspiracy?: Catholics and the anti-communist struggle in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), 16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

form of “totalitarian Catholicism,” a system in which a person’s whole life and personality must be developed in a Catholic way.⁹¹ Though this belief was the impassioned idealism of a young university student, it nevertheless demonstrates Santamaria’s inclination to see religion as instrumental in the political sphere. By the 1950s, Santamaria and his Movement had become an instrumental force in Australian politics. Propelled by anti-socialist sentiment and a strong Catholic morality, the Movement sought to expunge the Labor party of all communist elements, identifying them as “impediments” to the Catholic ideal.⁹² After all, the Labor party was made up, primarily, of working-class Catholics of Irish decent, and Santamaria’s movement wanted their political party to reflect Catholicism, not communism.⁹³ The actions undertaken by Santamaria and the Movement precipitated what has become known as The Great Split in the Labor party.

In 1954, the Labor party split into two entities, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) and the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The DLP’s split from the ALP was a direct result of the Movement’s involvement within the party. Under the banner of anti-communism, Santamaria and the DLP ardently opposed the ALP and their so-called “communist” sympathies. In the 1960s, the DLP launched “Operation Roadblock,” a program designed to (and ultimately successful in)⁹⁴ keeping the ALP out of power until it purged its communist sympathies.⁹⁵ Though their influence waned in the early 70s, the Movement continued on, defending family values in the 70s and the “Australian Way of Life” in the 80s; it is still battling unions today.⁹⁶ The Movement certainly represents one of conservative Christianity’s largest direct forays into politics.

Though it too represents another direct foray of Christianity into politics, the current alliance between Howard’s Liberal government and right-wing Christianity differs significantly from that of Santamaria and the Movement. Whereas today most Christian involvement is in the Liberal party, in the past practically all of the Christian involvement in politics centered on the Labor party. The main players were the Catholics, who generally consisted of poor working-class families that naturally fell into allegiance with Labor.⁹⁷ But as

⁹¹ Ibid., 17.

⁹² Moore, 98.

⁹³ Duncan, 17.

⁹⁴ The labor party did not gain power until 1972 under Gough Whitlam (and even his Prime Ministership was shortlived, 1972-1975)

⁹⁵ Moore, 98.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 99.

⁹⁷ Author interview with Peter Nagle, June 23, 2006.

Labor moved more and more to the left, the party's stances on controversial social issues began to disharmonize with the values held by the conservative Christian elements within the party. Eventually party ties had to be broken and conservative Christianity found its new champion in John Howard and the Liberal party, with its increasingly right-wing approach and openness to Christian values.⁹⁸

While it is undeniable that conservative Christians have switched sides and now embrace the Liberal party, it remains unclear as to exactly how much influence they have over the party. Although the government's rhetoric is geared toward appealing to Christian values and morality, there are many who wonder how much of it is a purely instrumental stance for the purpose of garnering votes; or superficial fear-mongering as opposed to deep-seated convictions. As more and more analysts look at the situation, the more it becomes evident that the current government is using this Christian rhetoric to revitalize and strengthen their power so that they might continue their mad-dash to the right.⁹⁹ Whereas Santamaria was certainly acting from a place of conviction, it would appear that Howard and his government are talking about faith but hungering after a conservative economic agenda. It appears that the market is Howard's God.¹⁰⁰ And upon closer inspection, it becomes plainly evident that few of the current major Christian connections to Howard's government appear to have much direct influence.

One of the most visible of these connections between Christianity and politics is the Family First party. Founded in 2002, the Family First party is dedicated to the preservation of family and a wholesome way of life.¹⁰¹ Though careful to avoid any religious references in their official documents, it is well-known that the Family First party represents a camp of conservative Christians dedicated to defending their values against abortion, gay marriage, and pre-marital sex.¹⁰² After winning a seat in parliament in 2004, many people began to consider the possibility that Family First might grow into a potent political force, one that could apply pressure and get its initiatives enacted. But Family First has been unable to make any other headway or affect any substantial influence. In fact, it

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ The Religion Report, "Amanda Lohrey on Religion and Australian politics," June 21, 2006, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2006/1668182.htm#>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Maddox, 25.

¹⁰¹ Family First, "Who We Are," <http://www.familyfirst.org.au/howweare.php>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

¹⁰² ABC Alice Springs, "Family First: a Christian party?" October 13, 2004, <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2004/10/13/1501890.htm>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

would appear as if the Liberal party and its coalition partner, the National Party,¹⁰³ simply use Family First as a bartering chip, an extra vote with which to press their agenda.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as one analyst describes it, the senatorial presence of Family First is more of a token nod to Christians than an actual political force:

The coalition's outright Senate majority after July 2005 relegates minor parties even further into the margins. The significant point about Family First's rise is that it shows how much more acceptable religious politics has become after three years in Howard's government.¹⁰⁵

Another rather substantial player in the Christian political scene is the newly emergent Hillsong Church. Loud and flashy, this Pentecostal church has exploded in recent years, suddenly boasting a large devoted congregation of upwards of 80,000 people, greatly outstripping the declining growth rates of the mainstream Catholic and Anglican churches.¹⁰⁶ Hillsong has become so popular and renowned that Peter Costello, John Howard's Treasurer and the next in line to be Prime Minister, addressed a congregation of over 23,000 gathered in a Sydney sports arena in 2005,¹⁰⁷ the same Peter Costello who said that all of Australia's problems could be solved by returning to the Ten Commandments.¹⁰⁸ Although Hillsong expresses no clear political agenda, clearly the government is taking special notice of this group whose supporters, like those in many evangelical denominations, tend to be conservative. But Hillsong church, even though it is one of the fastest growing churches in Australia, still only boasts 3 percent of the total Christian population in Australia.¹⁰⁹ The overwhelming majority still belong to the Catholic and Anglican churches, making it unlikely for Hillsong to assert any solid political muscle despite heavy courtship from the likes of Peter Costello.

¹⁰³ A small, conservative party representing farmers and country populations.

¹⁰⁴ The Religion Report, "Amanda Lohrey on Religion and Australian politics".

¹⁰⁵ Maddox, 74.

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Price and Matthew Benns, "Hillsong's True Believers," *The Sun-Herald*, November 7, 2004, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/11/06/1099547435083.html>, (accessed February 8, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "Costello addresses Hillsong congregation," July 4, 2005, <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1406779.htm>, (accessed February 8, 2009)..

¹⁰⁸ Marion Maddox, "Step to the right as the brethren gather force," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 14, 2005, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2005/09/13/1126377310179.html>, (accessed February 9, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, "1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 2005," <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats>, (accessed February 11, 2009).

With nearly fifty percent of the Australian population belonging to the mainstream Catholic and Anglican churches, it is easy to understand that if any church would have political clout, it would be these. Moreover, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney is one of the most conservative in the world, adopting a strong evangelical approach to social interaction.¹¹⁰ This conservative predisposition makes for an easy alliance with Howard's government, and despite waning attendance these two mainstream churches still dominate the political lobby.¹¹¹ Interestingly, these lobbies tend to shy away from the social issues that grip Protestant and non-denominational evangelical groups. Though Catholics and Anglicans share the same strong sense of Christian values, their lobbies have only engaged in securing socializing benefits such as subsidies and tax exemption for their schools.¹¹² This relationship proves to be symbiotic: the Liberal party is willing to foot the bill because of the incredible amount of constituents afforded by these mainstream churches, support that had previously been given to the Labor party.

Though the government tends to be outspoken about its opposition to social issues like gay marriage and abortion, this rhetoric appears to be simply aimed at building support as opposed to anything along the lines of direct action; clearly it has no problem supporting the Catholic and Anglican churches so long as their lobbies stay away from those controversial social issues. Only once has the government enacted a decision about a controversial social issue based upon the influence of a religious lobby. In 1996, the government gave into a campaign to overturn a bill that permitted voluntary euthanasia in the semi-autonomous Northern Territories.¹¹³ The bill received extensive debate both within and outside of government, with people falling on both sides of the issue. Twenty-one out of fifty-six senators mentioned God while arguing their opinions on the matter.¹¹⁴ When the bill was finally overturned, there were those who felt that the religious lobby had unduly pressured the government, emphasizing the beliefs of the few over those of the many.¹¹⁵

That success aside, there have been few other instances of successful political initiatives undertaken by the Christian lobby. There is a particularly sensational

¹¹⁰ *Growing up without God: Our horizon for evangelizing and disciplining young Australians* (Sydney: Anglican Press Australia, 1997), 18.

¹¹¹ Author interview with Chris McGillion, June 22, 2006.

¹¹² Amanda Lohrey, "Putting Faith in Politics".

¹¹³ Maddox, 53; see also "Fight to Die," *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 27, 1996; and "The Day Australians Found Their Voice," *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 29, 1997

¹¹⁴ Maddox, 55.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

takeover being staged by an extreme right-wing element of the New South Wales Liberal party, but its connections to religion are slim at best. Though spearheaded by David Clark, an ultraconservative Catholic and member of Opus Dei, the factional warfare between his far-right-wing “Uglies” and the “Moderates” of the NSW Liberal Party is attributable much more to designs of power than any sort of religious motivation.¹¹⁶

Beyond these marginal instances, the conservative Christianity has had little other successful influence over Howard’s government, despite all the rhetoric that would lead one to believe otherwise. The intermingling of faith and politics that at first appears so entrenched is really very superficial. It is a heated topic in Australia largely because of the past history of strongly secular government, but when boiled down it appears that conservative Christians have little power beyond controversy brewing.¹¹⁷ And for all of the government’s declared faith, many are beginning to recognize that it “cynically uses religion and religious groups to further their agenda when it suits them, and is then dismissive of these religious groups when it doesn’t.”¹¹⁸ So at first glance it would appear that Australia and the United States share a great deal of similarity, but upon closer inspection one sees that situation in Australia is really quite different. Christians do not have the same political muscle as they do in the United States. And, most importantly for our question, *there is absolutely no trace of any apocalyptic motivation.*

In every instance, Christian involvement in Australian politics seems to be utterly devoid of any apocalyptic or dispensational motivation. The idea perplexed everyone to whom it was posed; it seemed to be absent entirely from the Australian mindset.¹¹⁹ Though we will address cultural factors for this lack of apocalypticism later, first let us address the theological reasons why Australian Christian political activism is lacking it. First and foremost is the role of Catholic and Anglican influence. These two mainstream faiths both subscribe to a postmillennial theology, one which places the emphasis not on Christ’s bodily return but on the duty of all Christians to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth through charity and good works. As one Anglican minister told me, “the kingdom will be established through faith, not destruction of the world.” He added that “the kingdom of God already operating among us” and that “the

¹¹⁶ Author interview with Ann Davies, June 21, 2006

¹¹⁷ Jill Rowbotham, “Piety not much of a vote winner,” *The Australian*, June 17, 2006

¹¹⁸ The Religion Report, “Amanda Lohrey on Religion and Australian politics”.

¹¹⁹ Author’s observation.

Church ought to be a parable of that.”¹²⁰ This sort of postmillennial thought pays almost no attention to the Book of Revelation, dismissing both prophecy and apocalyptic expectation. This minister also went on to say that he “never considered mixing politics and eschatology” until he encountered conservative Christians in the United States. “We don’t have many dispensationals here,” he said.¹²¹ When he did encounter someone who held an apocalyptic belief, it was usually a rogue student challenging him at the seminary or a small, reclusive group of disaffected people. He added that “even most conservative group I know of doesn’t ever connect politics and apocalypticism.”¹²²

With only 4 percent of the population belonging to conservative, evangelical faiths, there simply isn’t the foundational support for dispensational belief.¹²³ The only apocalyptic group I encountered, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, was very small and part of a larger international network founded in the United States.¹²⁴ The group is dedicated to the preservation of Israel as an independent state, basing their mission upon an interpretation of biblical prophecy that states Israel must be in the hands of the Jews for Jesus to return. Though the Australian members of ICEJ predominantly come from conservative Pentecostal and Baptist churches and are staunch supporters of Howard’s government, no direct political action was being undertaken to try and influence policy.¹²⁵ It appears that this group is a dizzying minority among Australian Christians, and even so its beliefs are not as extreme as its counterparts in the United States.

The simple conclusion is that Australian Christianity and its political intentions are devoid of apocalypticism. Though certainly the role of Anglican and Catholic theology plays a significant role in the omission of dispensational thought, there is a deeper cultural feature that makes the Australian cultural psyche uncultivable ground for apocalypticism.

¹²⁰ Author interview with Colin Dundon, June 30, 2006.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ As mentioned before, dispensationalism is almost exclusive to conservative evangelical denominations.

¹²⁴ www.icej.org

¹²⁵ Author correspondence with Bruce Garbutt, March 13, 2006 and July 5, 2006.

Convicts and Kangaroos, Puritans and Cowboys

America was established as a religious utopia, and was destined to fail;

*Australia was established as a penal colony, and was destined to succeed.*¹²⁶

As far as generalizations go, the saying above is perhaps the most apt in describing, in a single sentence, the complex relationship between the American and Australian cultures. In a direct and succinct fashion it informs us of the very bedrock of the two countries' distinct cultural psyches. Beneath the superficial similarities of the two countries—which might lead the unscrutinizing eye to dismiss Australia as a close and familiar cousin of America—lies an immensely different understanding of the role of the individual and of how a society should interact with the greater world. Though cut from the same British colonial stock, the American and Australian worldviews were indelibly shaped by that one staggering distinction, the one thing that would distinguish the two societies' psyches no matter how similar their cultural past or how comparable their contemporary politics may be. What is that one thing, that one separating factor? One need only look to that gleaming generalization noted above.

But, as many of us are all too well aware, generalizations can be dangerous things. By distilling a complex situation with an even more complex history into one simple and well-packaged summary, one commits the crime of omitting a great number of details and silencing countless voices. Like a blind charge of cavalry generalizations get straight to the point but miss a great deal of particulars. Can we expect a cavalryman to take note of the color of the wildflowers churned beneath his horses' hooves, or the certain charm of the town off in the distance, much less expect him to give deference to those whom he is charging? Likewise generalizations, in their mad dash to concision, overlook much of the subtlety and complexity of their target, culling specifics for a nice, clean, black and white rundown.

That is not to say that generalizations are worthless. Far from it. It has long been engrained in the American cultural folklore that a well timed cavalry charge can save the day (would the Western genre even exist if it weren't for the last-minute, bugle-blaring, bellicosely blue-coated charge of cavalry?). So too can a well timed generalization save an otherwise stagnant piece of scholarly discourse.

¹²⁶ This little saying was related to me in the course of my interviews. No official citation is available, though it can be assumed that it is a relatively well known standard in the expansive pool of Australian witticisms and not necessarily gleaned from a specific source.

And it would appear that the simile extends itself even further—it would not be a stretch to suppose that, like the cavalry charge, generalizations are endemic (dare I say indispensable) to the American ethos.

Indeed, the American fondness for the mythical cavalry charge is born from the same cultural phenomenon that gives birth to a penchant for generalization. Bearing in mind the paradoxical hypocrisy of an American writer employing a generalization to describe how Americans have a tendency to generalize, let us indulge the notion for a moment. Perhaps there is something unique to the American mindset that does indeed lend itself to generalizations, to a certain black-and-white outlook on the world. Something that makes the cavalry charge so epically appealing.¹²⁷ What is a generalization, after all, except a distillation of all of the facts into one streamlined pseudo-truth? What is it beyond a conscious removal of all those contradictory and difficult aspects of a problem in an attempt to turn an otherwise morally and culturally relative situation—one that demands not only wider understanding but also a certain degree of self-reflection—into an easily digestible answer that requires almost no relativity whatsoever? One can easily accept a black-and-white generalization while simultaneously disregarding all the grays that might fall in between.

The original forefathers of America, the Puritans, had no inclination, even from the very beginning, to accept a scale of gray in their mindset. America was to be God's Promised Land.¹²⁸ In the Puritan's world of utopist idealization, there is utopia and dystopia—black and white (or in this case America and Great Britain). Moreover, there was absolutely no *compromise* in their worldview. So unwilling were they to compromise, and so absolutely sure of their righteousness, that they took flight from their homeland to start anew on the other side of the world. Their beliefs were, in many ways, founded upon one great unflinching generalization: that their beliefs and way of life were to be spent in utmost *purity*, and that the lives of all of those *outside* of that purity were contaminated with sin. And hence the proclivity to leap to generalize, to extremes, and to *see things in black and white*, was bred into the American worldview from the outset.

Though the Puritans would eventually be assimilated into the burgeoning mainstream American culture, their beliefs and their attitudes lent an undeniable

¹²⁷ It should be noted that I am by no means claiming that *all* Americans share *exactly* this mindset; rather, I am speaking in broad terms about the receptivity of American culture to certain ideas and worldviews as reflected by icons and symbols.

¹²⁸ Boyer, 68.

flavor to the new society. Their black and white worldview became archetypal, deeply influencing the next great American cultural icon: the Cowboy.¹²⁹ At first glance the Cowboy and the Puritan¹³⁰ seem to be completely disparate and unrelated, but they are in fact the two most fundamental American cultural identities—they form the very pillars upon which the entire American persona stands. While Puritans and Cowboys *seem* to occupy the exact opposite ends of the spectrum, they are in fact one in the same. They are both born out of the same cultural phenomenon, that inherent refusal to compromise or to accept the grays of a situation. Both are equally assured in their righteousness, and are both equally obsessed with bounty—the only difference is that the Puritans sought spiritual bounty, whereas the Cowboys sought material bounty. Though this difference gives the two icons the appearance of being entirely polar opposites, it only obscures the truth that, at their core, they are one in the same.

What belongs to the Cowboy archetype, after all? Wide open spaces, complete freedom, charges of cavalry and vigilante justice, among many others. These iconic ideals prove to be the exact same as those of the Puritans, only redressed in brazen frontier materialism instead of staid and dour spiritualism. Is not the call of wide open spaces the same call the Puritans felt for their promised land? A land of endless bounty, a land of milk and honey? The cry “Go West Young Man!” that sparked the sensation of Manifest Destiny and sent hundreds of thousands of brave pioneers out to make something for themselves is analogous to the call that drove the Puritans across the Atlantic; it is the hope for something better out in the great unknown. It is courage, it is bravery—but it is also underpinned with a certain sense of righteousness and entitlement. In other words, the bold ventures undertaken by both the Puritan and the Cowboy to capture their respective bounties were girded with a belief that their actions were righteous and that they had every right to act and believe the way they did, either out on the plains or in the Promised Land. A sense of freedom mixes freely with this righteousness, an idea so axiological and paramount to the

¹²⁹ This does not refer to the occupation of cowboy, i.e. one who herds horses or performs in rodeos. Rather, it refers to an archetypal symbol, an iconic mindset or worldview associated with the American frontier and Manifest Destiny. I employ the ‘Cowboy’ to demonstrate the reflexive quality of the symbol, one so endemic in American culture that it clearly reflects an aspect of our cultural psyche. Until recently, the Cowboy and the associated ‘Western’ genre was quintessential Americana, distilling and reflecting certain core values back to the American people, values such as righteousness, good vs. evil, justice—values that differ very little from the Puritanical, religious values upon which the United States was also founded. In this way, we see that the ‘Cowboy’ and the ‘Puritan’ are foundational symbols that give shape and direction to the American cultural psyche.

¹³⁰ From here on, the term ‘Puritan’ will be used not to describe the actual Puritan settlers of New England, but rather their archetypal mindset, like the Cowboy.

American psyche: whatever you desire is for the taking, and not only are you free to take it, *you have every right to take it.*

Take for example vigilante justice, one of the classic mainstays of the Cowboy archetype. Nothing is more iconic than a Cowboy taking justice into his own hands. It is his prerogative to exercise almost anarchistic freedom (circumventing the established laws) to see that 'true' justice is fulfilled. Not only does this smack of the Biblical "eye for an eye," it is directly reflective of the Puritan/Cowboy sense of righteous entitlement.

That a Cowboy can (and is expected to) be so confident in his righteousness that he can take justice into his own hands indicates an extreme, deeply-engrained generalization. Vigilante justice is a distillation of a complex situation down into an easily digestible, black and white answer: I'm right, he's wrong; I'm alive, he's dead. Simple as that.

Also important to the Cowboy archetype is the refusal to compromise, a trait inherited from the Puritan archetype. After all, why is there any reason to compromise when there is so much open space? If there is a quarrel or dispute, and it isn't settled by violence or vigilante justice, one party can simply pack up and move on with every assurance that there are other places to go. American history and folklore has no shortage of families willing to pack up everything and move along for the promise of something better.

Thus we begin to see one aspect (by far the most important aspect for this examination) of the American cultural psyche take shape. It is a reluctance to accept the grays of a situation, the reluctance to compromise or to back down from an established point of view. In other words, it is *the reluctance to be self-critical*. Fundamentally, neither the Puritan nor the Cowboy worldview allows for any self-criticism or moderation. Puritans were incapable of being critical of themselves, because righteousness and self-reflexivity are inherently contradictory. Moreover, moderation had no place in their stern and severe lifestyle; "idle hands are the devil's tools" illustrates an unbending, extreme zeal to attain purity, a zeal that left little room for moderation. As for Cowboys, their sense of righteousness, purpose, and entitlement likely eradicated all self-criticism. Instilled with the fire of Manifest Destiny, the frontiersmen had no reason to be self-critical; they were supposed to be there, the land was theirs for the taking and a moment's hesitation or criticism would only mean somebody else might beat you to the bounty just over the next hill. And certainly moderation never crossed their minds, not with the seemingly endless bounty

the frontier afforded—one would be hard pressed for a clearer example of this extreme lack of moderation than the eradication of the buffalo. And as we have seen, neither is inclined towards compromise; both hold an indelibly black and white outlook on the world, even if they do look in opposite directions.

With the two most crucial pillars of the American cultural psyche espousing this worldview, it is little surprise that dispensationalism was a huge sensation in America when it arrived in the 19th century.¹³¹ Though there are many persuasive theories as to how the social climate of the time made dispensationalism appealing,¹³² there can be no doubt that the Puritan/Cowboy mindset provided amply fertile soil in the minds of many Americans. Indeed, nowhere is this hesitance to be self-critical more clearly illustrated than in the distinctly American zeal for dispensational thought. Dispensationalism by its very nature cannot allow for any self-criticism, any doubt, any shades of gray. It is built solely upon generalizations and black-and-white conclusions. The logic is as follows: If every last little bit of history, past present and future, has been dispensed by God, then everything has been decided and is unchangeable. And if everything is unchangeable, then all is knowable. And if everything is knowable, then a person who knows what has been dispensed *cannot* be wrong. Since all dispensationalists believe that they know what has been dispensed based upon what they interpret from the Bible, this logic leads them to an infallible righteousness in their belief. So infallible is this belief that self-criticism simply cannot coexist with dispensational thought. There can be no shades of gray because God has placed everything exactly as he planned, and certainly no true believer could conceive that there is any indecision or imprecision in God's nature. There can be no moderation or compromise—either you believe and will be saved, or you don't believe and will be damned.

Hence we see that the dispensational mindset and the Puritan/Cowboy mindset not only are compatible, but actually build off one another. It is perfectly logical that America should be the hotbed for dispensational thought for that very reason. And it is quite telling that nowhere else has dispensationalism taken such a firm hold. Even though its creator was British, dispensationalism never took root in England, at least not to the same degree. This was, in large part, because of its proximity to Europe and its affection for the ideas of European diplomacy. The 19th century was time of great diplomacy in Europe. All of the nation-states

¹³¹ Boyer, 87-88.

¹³² Such as an evangelical camp who, embattled with liberal theologians over the divine inspiration of the Bible, were grateful to receive Darby's "strong emphasis on biblical authority and his literal reading of the prophetic text," (Boyer, 88-89).

scrambled to create as many alliances as possible because one simply couldn't escape from one's neighbors. The European continent was simply too small and too diverse, so the countries were compelled to deal with one another. Though this mindset ultimately led to two world wars, it nevertheless did not contain the unwillingness to compromise necessary to foster widespread dispensational thought.¹³³ And as we noted before, there is almost no presence of dispensational thought in Australia. As a British colony it certainly received the seeds at the same time as the United States, but the Australian cultural psyche proved to be nothing but barren soil. And, much like in America, the answer as to why can only be found in the foundational iconic symbols of the Australian psyche: convicts and kangaroos.

For as absurd as it may sound, these two symbols represent an indelible force that has shaped the Australian culture since its inception—and, though one a man and the other a marsupial, they participate with sanguine equality. Both represent an inherent inferiority or reticence built into the very base of the Australian cultural image. Though few would ever think of Australians as 'quiet' or 'modest,' this diffidence is largely subconscious, woven into the cultural fabric from the very outset. Unfortunately, the terms fail us here. Inferiority is too strongly negative, while reticence and diffidence invoke images of timidity and caginess. And, to be sure, Australians are about as open and outspoken as people get. It is, more aptly, a willingness (almost a compulsion) to be self-critical, to accept moderation. It is the ability to recognize the limitations of their beliefs without letting that in any way weaken them. It is a willingness to admit mistakes without sacrificing the strengths of belief, and recognition and acceptance of other points of view.¹³⁴ Because of this, Australians shy away from universal truths and stark black and white proclamations, because they acknowledge the limitation of belief. This self-criticism is a limiting and moderating force acting within Australians. They have no fear of admitting limitations or errors. You can sense it just talking with them for five minutes. It is in their mannerisms, their humor, and their whole outlook.

This inherent self-criticism is a direct product of the Convict/Kangaroo mentality so fundamental to the Australian cultural psyche. From the very beginning, Australian culture has been cast in the shadow of these stereotypical conceptions. As a penal colony, Australia was always deemed inferior and backwards by Britain and other free colonies. Though free settlers would follow

¹³³ America, on the other hand, never found it necessary to engage in diplomacy. The Monroe Doctrine is a clear example of America's inherent unwillingness to compromise.

¹³⁴ Author interview with Colin Dundon.

the first convicts, and the children of convicts were born free and with an independent spirit, Australians could never fully escape the stigma of their penal foundations.¹³⁵ Moreover, Australia was seen as a wild land, a land of oddities. Dozens of bizarre animals and plants were shipped to England, where the spectacular oddities of that strange colony delighted crowds of refined Britons.¹³⁶ Thus Australia was seen as an odd and distant land, full of convicts and kangaroos. Though this conception diminished as the penal colony faded into the past and Australia established itself as a first-rate democracy, it nevertheless had a profound influence upon the Australian cultural psyche. A cultural foundation built upon a conception of one's homeland as a land of oddities and outcasts is bound to be one that has a certain degree of self-criticism and self-awareness. Though not exactly shame or embarrassment, the Australians certainly do not regard themselves as superior; it is rather a subtle self-deprecation and an acceptance of things not perfect. This foundation allows for a large degree of moderation within the Australian cultural psyche. Because they were liberated from the outset of any pressure for perfection, they were also liberated from the stark black-and-white judgments necessary for such belief in such perfection. Simply put, Australians are more open to shades of gray and moderation because the lingering stigma of the kangaroos and convicts instilled in them a self-criticism that is not conducive to bold generalizations. Consequently, this inherent self-criticism is also poisonous to dispensationalism, hence its incredibly low prevalence in the country.

And this brings us back to our original quote. That is precisely why, for all of the similarities between the two countries and the apparent correlations between their two contemporary governments, one finds an almost complete absence of dispensational thought in Australia and an almost over-abundance in the United States. As a penal colony, Australia never had the pressure to succeed and thus never fostered the same zealous superiority and penchant for generalizations that makes such fertile ground for dispensational thought. The United States, founded as a religious utopia, was forged under intense pressure and expectation, so much so that it created a deep sense of righteousness that eliminated traces of self-criticism, thus opening the door for dispensational belief.

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¹³⁵ White, 12-15.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

It would appear that dispensationalism is a uniquely American phenomenon. Although it will take considerably more investigation to uncover whether there are obscure pockets here and there among other cultures, it is plain to see that in the Western world, America is the eminent host to the vast majority of dispensational believers. Australia, one of America's closest cousins, offers a great many parallels, but yet is itself devoid of dispensational thought, leading one to the conclusion that there is something particular in the American cultural psyche that makes dispensational thought so appealing. As we have proposed, this particularity is innately bound to the founding of the United States by religious zealots whose beliefs created an atmosphere of extremism and superiority that gave birth to a strong tendency to generalize and resist any form of compromise. By inherently resisting compromise, the American cultural psyche was simply more primed to accept dispensationalism on a wide scale; certainly both Britain and Australia have a smattering of believers, but nothing like the throngs of Americans who wholeheartedly believe and who actively engage their daily lives based upon dispensational thought. What effect this preponderance of prophecy believers will have upon the American government is unclear, but there can be no doubt that their beliefs are very potent and very deep.