

Writing Fundamentalism

Edited by

Axel Stähler and Klaus Stierstorfer

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

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## INTRODUCTION

AXEL STÄHLER  
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AND

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Now, as I before hinted, I have no objection to any person's religion, be it what it may, so long as that person does not kill or insult any other person, because that other person don't believe it also.

But when a man's religion becomes really frantic; when it is a positive torment to him; and, in fine, makes this earth of ours an uncomfortable inn to lodge in; then I think it high time to take that individual aside and argue the point with him.

—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*<sup>1</sup>

Fundamentalism has emerged as one of the most pressing concerns of our time. Recent acts of terrorism, and sometimes even the "War on Terror," are being attributed to fundamentalist "ideologies." Similarly, though perhaps less dramatically, fundamentalism has become an issue in political, cultural and social debates both globally and locally. Indeed, the spectre of fundamentalism seems to raise its head in all walks of life. And more often than not that head is perceived to be ugly: for in spite of, or maybe even because of, its ubiquity, discussions of this multifaceted phenomenon are fraught with misconceptions and generalizations. Originating in fear (of loss of faith), fundamentalism generates fear and intolerance, thus creating a vicious circle of insecurity and deep angst. Not only does it widen the rift between those considered to be fundamentalists and those who are not, but it extends to and polarizes other groups "tainted" by association.

<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 89.

## CHAPTER TEN

### FUNDAMENTALIST FICTION: MAZEWAY RESYNTHESIS AND THE WRITERS OF THE APOCALYPSE

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At waterton there was (in the view of diverse witnesses) a great combate betweene a mouse & a snake, & after a longe fight, the mouse prevayled & killed the snake: the Paster of Boston mr willson a veyre sincere holy man hearinge of it, gave this Interpretation, that, the snake was the devill, the mouse was a poore contemptible people which God had brought hether, which should overcome Sathan here & disposesse him of his kingdome.

—John Winthrop<sup>1</sup>

With the meek triumphing over the embodiment of absolute Evil, as predestined in God's plan of the world's salvation and as illustrated in John Winthrop's diary of July 1632 by the fabulous deliverance of the mouse and the exegetic explication of the wondrous occurrence, at the very beginning of American literary history a narrative is articulated which in multiple ways has persisted in American cultural production to the present day. Possibly the most graphic yet certainly the most remunerative example of the persistence of this narrative in the recent past and the present are the so-called *Left Behind* novels of Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Their phenomenal success can be measured since the publication in 1995 of the first of altogether 16 volumes (including three prequels) in more than 70 million copies sold and in the creation of a marketing empire of paraphernalia – among them, initially perhaps somewhat surprising, also a computer game which lures potential buyers with the promise that they

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<sup>1</sup> John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop. 1630–1649*, ed. Richard S. Dunn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1996) 72.

may engage in a war of apocalyptic dimension and which is praised by its inventor, Troy Lyndon, predictably enough as “a good versus evil story” and by Mark Taylor, President of Tyndale House Publishers, as a “classic battle between good and evil.”<sup>2</sup>

Both the story of the mouse and the snake as well as the *Left Behind* novels and computer game appear to correspond to a mental disposition towards the creation of cosmic binaries in deference to God’s plan of predestined salvation which seems to inform the Puritanical tradition.<sup>3</sup> It is rather tempting to assume that there is indeed such a mental disposition, especially in America, and for the sake of the argument I will base the following deliberations on this assumption – if with a certain hesitation and some trepidation.

The persistence of this mental disposition seems to be evident in many areas of private and public life in contemporary America, not least in much of its cultural production. It is also manifest in what, perchance, may appropriately – if, perhaps, paradoxically – be called fictional fundamentalist literature or fundamentalist fiction which, in turn, contributes to its perpetuation and further development. Indeed, fundamentalist fiction, as I would define it, seems to be a phenomenon closely associated with the Anglo-American evangelical movement and thus an “essentially” Anglo-American and, at least in the more recent past, possibly even a specifically American phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> And although, as Richard G. Kyle notes, the

<sup>2</sup> Mark Taylor and Troy Lyndon, *Left Behind Series – The Official Left Behind Series Site*, Tyndale House Publishers, 15 June 2006 and 19 June 2006, <[http://www.leftbehind.com/05\\_news/viewNews.asp?pageid=1285&channelID=17](http://www.leftbehind.com/05_news/viewNews.asp?pageid=1285&channelID=17)> (accessed 6 January 2009).

<sup>3</sup> For a similar suggestion see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925*, 2nd ed. (1980; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 211.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Marsden’s chapter on “Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon” (*Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 221–228) in which he outlines the common roots of English and American evangelical fundamentalist movements as well as, more importantly, their increasing differences (222). For a discussion of the contrary argument, identifying Protestant fundamentalism because of its undemocratic character as un-American, see Dennis E. Owen, Kenneth D. Wald and Samuel S. Hill, “Authoritarian or Authority-Minded? The Cognitive Commitments of Fundamentalists and the Christian Right,” *Religion and American Culture* 1 (1991) 73–100.

“fundamentalist defeat” in the 1920s may have impelled evangelicals temporarily to separate from culture, by the late twentieth century

there existed little appreciable difference between the evangelical subculture and mainstream American culture. Gone were the days when evangelicals opposed much of the popular culture. For all of their denunciation of sex and violence in society and in the media, evangelicals flourish at the most superficial levels of America’s affluent and celebrity-driven popular culture.<sup>5</sup>

It may not be a coincidence, then, that since the last decade of the twentieth century there has been an as yet unabated proliferation of “fundamentalist fiction” which – if measured by the success of its sales figures – must be considered to be among the best-selling genres of all time, reaching a readership far beyond the compass of the properly “fundamentalist” community. The *Left Behind* novels may be the best known examples internationally of this proliferation, but Peter and Paul Lalonde’s *Apocalypse* series, for instance, or the popular novels by Joel C. Rosenberg, Stephen M. Yulish and Jonathan Cash as well as a plethora of lesser known texts benefit from the same predilections of what is predominantly an American readership, among them Paul Bortolazzo’s *The Coming of the Son of Man*, the latest in his *Watchmen Trilogy*, Kristen Wisen’s *The Appearing* or Joy Ross’s *Tribulation Road* and Peter Maury’s *The Rapture Generation* – all published in 2007.

While fundamentalism is not, as George M. Marsden emphasized in his influential study on *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, “a strictly American phenomenon,”<sup>6</sup> one may ask whether fundamentalist fiction of an even remotely comparable intensity has originated in any other culture or religion. The Jewish tradition, although it brought forth the narrative and pluralistic exegetical tradition articulated in the diversity of texts forming the Aggadah, has evidently generated nothing analogous; nor have modern religious-nationalistic and, arguably, fundamentalist factions

<sup>5</sup> Richard G. Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity* (New Brunswick, NJ/London: Transaction Publishers, 2006) 269.

<sup>6</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 227. See also the more recent publications of the *Fundamentalism Project*, edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, which provide a comparative survey of various fundamentalisms.

in Israel like the *Gush Emunim* inspired any notable fictional literature of a fundamentalist character.<sup>7</sup> In Islam, often carelessly associated with fundamentalism, the sacralized status of writing<sup>8</sup> and the authority of the Qu'ran seem to have precluded any such development. And while fiction writing as such is permissible in Islamic thought and may even be considered beneficial as a tool of teaching and guidance,<sup>9</sup> I am not aware of any recent fictional texts which might be identified as overtly fundamentalist fiction. There is, of course, some danger of terminological confusion here. Notions that Islam, owing to its conception of the Qu'ran as not only divinely inspired but dictated, is inherently a "fundamentalist" religion<sup>10</sup> would suggest that any fictional literature based on, and disseminating, these tenets with the aim of teaching and guidance might then also be considered fundamentalist.

These are deep waters, indeed, and I fear that neither my faith in the viability of my method, nor my scant knowledge of Islamic or, for that matter, Hindu literature and so forth, would be able to carry me across these waters. Thus, while proposing that there is indeed an area of comparative study here that is certainly worthwhile to be explored, and inviting a closer collaboration, I would like to emphasize that my own focus in

<sup>7</sup> Although they have inspired various, mostly satirical, literary responses, see, for instance, Tova Reich's novel *The Jewish War* (1995) and Axel Stähler, "The 'Aesthetics' of Fundamentalism in Recent Jewish Fiction in English," in *Fundamentalism and Literature*, eds Catherine Pessa-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 43–77.

<sup>8</sup> Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996) 2.

<sup>9</sup> Asked, whether "writing Islamic based fictional stories which are meant for da'wah, islaahi and creating awareness among the Ummah, especially the youth, by using the imagination, [is] sinful in Islam? In other words is it sinful to imagine words, ideas and situations? And what's the difference between folklore and this kind of modern writings?," Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid gave the following *fatwa*: "Praise be to Allaah. If it is made perfectly clear that this did not really happen, and that the story is being told just to give an example, then there is nothing wrong with that, but one should be careful to ensure that the style, contents and goal are beneficial and that the story helps to explain something about Islam and serves as a effective means of teaching and guiding people. We ask Allaah to grant you strength," <<http://islamqa.com/in dex.php? ref=4505&In=eng&txt=fiction>> (accessed 20 January 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism: The Search for Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 5.

this chapter is limited to Christian fundamentalist fiction mainly in an American context. With these limitations in mind, I mean to advance a more comprehensive understanding of American fundamentalist fiction by delineating some of the forms it may take, by discussing a number of the narratological and theological dilemmas inherent in it and by exploring some of the ways in which it interacts with its respective socio-cultural and political production and reception contexts. To this purpose I will first suggest as suitable for the identification and description of fundamentalist fiction in America a matrix of ten distinctive characteristics. In a second step, I will correlate the interplay of these characteristics with the socio-historical phenomenon of Christian fundamentalism in America against the background of a genotypical pattern of mythopoeia. In a third and final step, I will discuss the specified characteristics of fundamentalist fiction in more detail with particular focus on fundamentalist conceptions of "the text."

Initially, however, some lines need to be drawn to demarcate the scope of the term "fundamentalism" with respect to both its meaning and the temporal frame applied to it. After all, "fundamentalism" (the term, if not necessarily the phenomenon) is an invention of the early twentieth century. Although by now readily employed in various contexts, and more often than not used somewhat haphazardly, the term initially referred to a religious movement that originated in late nineteenth-century British and American Protestantism.<sup>11</sup> In it conservative evangelical Christians gathered who sought to affirm the fundamentals of their belief in the face of what they perceived to be the threat of liberal tendencies associated with modernity and modernism.<sup>12</sup> Five of these fundamentals – the inerrancy of Holy Writ, the Virgin birth and the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection of Jesus and, finally, the authenticity of the miracles, for which was later substituted premillennialism, or the doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus Christ – were laid

<sup>11</sup> On the history of Christian fundamentalism see, for instance, Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age* (1989; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995) 40.

down in 1910 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>13</sup> As is well known, between 1910 and 1915 a series of widely circulated tracts, published as *The Fundamentals. A Testimony to the Truth* and achieving a print-run of about three million copies, was issued in altogether twelve volumes. Funded by the Californian oil moguls Lyman and Milton Stewart, they were distributed for free and contributed considerably to the dissemination of these beliefs.<sup>14</sup> With the foundation of the *World's Christian Fundamentals Association* in 1919 the movement finally created for itself a platform for public action<sup>15</sup> and in the following year the term of "fundamentalists" was coined by Curtis Lee Laws in the Baptist paper *Watchman Examiner* in praise of those "who still cling to the great Fundamentals and who mean to do battle royal for [them]."<sup>16</sup>

Given the focus of this chapter on the production of a particular strain of Christian American fiction which I propose to call fundamentalist, the term fundamentalism and its derivatives will be used here in Laws' sense rather than in the proliferation of *signifiées* it has been subjected to mainly since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. It is not, however, the objective of this chapter to reiterate the history of Christian fundamentalism in America. Much work has been done on this subject and surveys are provided, for instance, by Ernest R. Sandeen (1970) or George M. Marsden (1980) and, more recently, by the publications of the *Fundamentalism Project* or studies like Charles Strozier's *Apocalypse* (1994), Joel A. Carpenter's *Revive Us Again* (1997) and Philip Melling's *Fundamentalism in*

<sup>13</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 117. The exclusivity of these five fundamentals has been challenged, for other possible demarcations see Douglas A. Sweeney, "The Essential Evangelicalism Dialectic: The Historiography of the Early Neo-Evangelical Movement and the Observer-Participant Dilemma," *Church History* 60 (1991) 70–84.

<sup>14</sup> For their doctrinal import, see Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 118–123 and J. D. Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). *The Fundamentals* are still available in reprints of the edition of 1917 and online, prepared by Rev. Shaun Aisbitt, at <<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/6528/fundcont.htm>> (accessed 4 February 2009).

<sup>15</sup> William Clyde Wilcox, *God's Warriors: The Christian Right in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 3.

<sup>16</sup> Curtis Lee Laws, "Convention Side Lights," *Watchman-Examiner* 8 (1 July 1920) 834.

*America* (1999). For the present purpose it will suffice to chart quite briefly some of the landmarks of this historical development: the decline, following its auspicious beginnings early in the twentieth century, of fundamentalism after the disastrous so-called "Monkey Trial" at Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925; its resurgence in the climate of the Red Scare of the 1950s and 1960s and again in the 1970s; the establishment of the Moral Majority and the New Christian Right in the 1980s and, after the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001, its most recent resurgence in the face of Islamic terrorist violence directed at the United States.

Although there are a number of critical studies focusing on particular fundamentalist texts, especially the *Left Behind* novels, designated by Kevin L. Cope as "very likely the most influential body of work in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century prose,"<sup>17</sup> fundamentalist fiction as a literary phenomenon in a larger context has not yet received much scholarly attention. Instead, more thought has been given to literary negotiations of fundamentalisms in the work, most notoriously perhaps, of Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Margaret Atwood or Jeanette Winter-son. In American literature, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor or Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn have engaged with Christian and Philip Roth, Tova Reich or Melvin Jules Bukiet with Jewish fundamentalism. More recently, John Updike sketched in *Terrorist* (2006) the spiritual development of an American-Arab Islamist (would-be) suicide bomber, and with Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, inspired obviously by Albert Camus's *La Chute* (1956), appeared a provocative yet subtle self-reflection from the perspective of the eponymous Islamist fundamentalist. Even so, none of these texts by American writers<sup>18</sup> – although they rely on socio-economic, political and cultural developments which are interrelated with specific constructions of an "American imaginary" – are paradigmatic of formative tendencies in American literature, or are so only in part

<sup>17</sup> Kevin L. Cope, "Never Better than Late: The *Left Behind* Series and the Incongruities of Fundamentalist Idealisms," in *Fundamentalism and Literature*, eds Catherine Pessa-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 183.

<sup>18</sup> Hamid, though of Pakistani origin and since 2006 of dual Pakistani-British nationality, is included here because he had been living for some years in America when he wrote *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which was published in March 2007 simultaneously in the UK and in the USA.

or, at any rate, not yet. The case is different with those fictional texts I would like to designate as "fundamentalist" for the purposes of this chapter. I suggest that they can be classified according to formal-aesthetic criteria and their thematic preoccupations and can be described as being created by and simultaneously perpetuating and modifying specific mental dispositions current in American culture, politics and literature.

Naturally, not all Christian fiction, of which there exists a broad spectrum, can be labelled as fundamentalist. However, the demarcation of both is not in every case entirely unambiguous. In the following, I submit for discussion a matrix of altogether ten characteristics which seems to me to be a useful basis for a typology of what may, conceivably, be identified as fundamentalist fiction. To avoid any misconceptions, it should perhaps be made quite clear at this junction that the fundamentalist character of fiction is not to be deduced from the convictions and beliefs of its author, although in some cases the authors themselves may achieve a certain iconicity which imbues their works with a more thickly layered aura of the "fundamentalist imaginary" and indeed, as Frédéric Regard shows in his contribution to this volume (chapter one), fundamentalist notions of authorship have certainly contributed to the resurrection of "the author" – with a vengeance.

To begin with, (i) it is important to note that fundamentalist fiction – like the resurgence of fundamentalist attitudes, as a part of which it can be seen – appears to emerge in response of a crisis experience. Secondly (ii), with respect to its form, the principal feature of fundamentalist fiction is its parasitical character. The four following characteristics, which may be called socio-psychological, are closely interwoven. They manifest themselves predominantly in the thematic concerns of fundamentalist fiction and its mostly dichotomous and teleological structure: (iii) a paranoid tendency, (iv) the concept of a demonic enemy, (v) an apocalyptic frame of reference, and (vi) a marked missionary zeal. The remaining four features are of a poetological kind with most of them pertaining to the relation of text, "reality" and representation: (vii) the claim to verity and actuality which rests on the authority of Holy Writ, tempered by (viii) multiple literality and (ix) isotopia, both of which seem to be evidence of a metonymic approach rather than a metaphorical one, a tension which is significant with respect to the tenth and final feature (x). This is problematical in

that it is subject to qualitative change over time and thus raises the question of the temporal dimension of what may usefully be defined as fundamentalist fiction. It refers to the relation of the text to an allegorical hermeneutics and is, at least with respect to fundamentalist fiction of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, characterized mostly negatively by its seeming absence – for "modern" fictional fundamentalist literature is (outwardly) emphatically non-allegoric, although surreptitiously it frequently employs the allegoric mode.

As has already been suggested, the ten features are closely interrelated and should not, therefore, be analyzed in isolation but only in recognition of their interdependence and mutual affinity.

The phenomenon of fundamentalism is frequently interpreted as a distinctly anti-modern response to liberal tendencies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>19</sup> According to this reasoning, to talk about fundamentalist fiction before the twentieth century would then be a contradiction in terms. Klaus Stierstorfer has recently suggested that fundamentalism "is a reaction against modernism" and that "its relationship to modernity as a whole" can therefore be described as "symbiotic" or "parasitic."<sup>20</sup> As early as 1997, the psychologist Stephen Frosh, if in the totally different context of family therapy, compared postmodernism and fundamentalism. Both, although inherently incompatible, support, as he argues, "an emotional response" to "the crisis of rationality, to the despair of modernity."<sup>21</sup> A caution against the adoption of a too facile binarism has been given by Robert Wuthnow and Matthew P. Lawson.<sup>22</sup> They suggest that fundamentalism "does not simply respond to modernity; it caricatures modernity, redefining it in a way that heightens the contrast between its evils and the good life provided by a belief in Christ." Indeed, stressing its "creativity

<sup>19</sup> For a critical discussion see Robert Wuthnow and Matthew P. Lawson, "Sources of Christian Fundamentalism in the United States," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, eds Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 21–22.

<sup>20</sup> Klaus Stierstorfer, "Tariq Ali and Recent Negotiations of Fundamentalism," in *Fundamentalism and Literature*, eds Catherine Pessio-Miquel and Klaus Stierstorfer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 148.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Frosh, "Fundamentalism, Gender and Family Therapy," *Journal of Family Therapy* 19 (1997) 420.

<sup>22</sup> Wuthnow and Lawson, "Sources of Christian Fundamentalism," 41.



and vitality," they conceive of fundamentalism as "a form of cultural criticism."<sup>23</sup> More recently, the historian Roger Griffin has applied Peter L. Berger's notion of the "sacred canopy" and Anthony Wallace's theory of "mazeway resynthesis" to the formulation of a "maximalist ideal type of modernism"<sup>24</sup> which, intriguingly, accommodates at least a partial affinity also between fundamentalism and modernism. And although Griffin asserts in his earlier study on *Modernism and Fascism* (2007) that the "radicalization of religious politics into anti-liberal creeds is not socio-political modernism" as defined and explored by him because the "operational premise of 'religious fundamentalism' is that the historical link with the sacred tradition or 'base' [...] of society has *not* yet been severed or irrevocably damaged,"<sup>25</sup> it emerges that there are genotypical similarities in the crisis response to modernity of both modernism and fundamentalism in that both display archetypal patterns of human mythopoeia.

Fundamentalist criticism of modernity may then possibly be considered the symptom of a much more complex phenomenon which, in turn, interacts with what appear to be ultimately narratological, or "literary," notions. For one, fundamentalism's stance against modernity is obviously to be considered the response to the experience of a crisis, occasioned by the real or perceived challenge to the *longue durée* of the "fundamentals." In addition, it is, after all, an attitude that is predominantly, if not solely, determined by the menacing potential of cultural change and is not, as response to a crisis, particular to fundamentalist groups, nor "fundamentally" different in nature from other responses to the experience of an existential crisis.

However, within the bounds of the archetypal pattern of human mythopoeia as response to the experience of a crisis and a form of cultural criticism, fundamentalisms seem to exhibit a number of significant similarities which set them apart from other movements. Thus, the sociologist Martin Riesebrodt, assuming that fundamentalist movements share common features and "emerge under the impact of rather similar processes of social

<sup>23</sup> Wuthnow and Lawson, "Sources of Christian Fundamentalism," 42.

<sup>24</sup> Roger Griffin, "Modernity, Modernism, and Fascism. A 'Mazeway Resynthesis,'" *Modernism/Modernity* 15.1 (2008) 14.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 346.

transformation,"<sup>26</sup> proposes to conceptualize "fundamentalism as a specific type of religious revival movement which reacts to social changes perceived as a dramatic crisis." In such movements, he suggests, "people attempt to restructure their life-worlds cognitively, emotionally, and practically, reinvent their social identities, and regain a sense of dignity, honor, and respect." In fundamentalism such goals are achieved "in ways which are different from other types of religious revival movements,"<sup>27</sup> most significantly because fundamentalists

claim to restore social institutions according to the letter and the law of the ancient community. With regard to the past, their approach can be called "mythical," referring to a timeless, unchangeable, fixed eternal truth. With regard to the present and (near) future, their view is often eschatological and chiliastic. Their ethic is primarily an ethic of law which tends to be rather rigid because of the concreteness of legal regulations.<sup>28</sup>

With his theory of "mazeway resynthesis," the anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace (1956) has given a convincing explanation of the genotypical structure of this crisis response. In conjunction with sociologist Peter L. Berger's notion of the "sacred canopy" (1967), it seems to go a long way of accounting for the emergence and inner workings of fundamentalisms. Wallace developed his theory in the context of his research on revitalization movements. The "mazeway," as defined by Wallace, is "nature, society, culture, personality, and body image, as seen by one person."<sup>29</sup> The individual needs to maintain this mental image "in order to act in ways which reduce stress at all levels of the system."<sup>30</sup> Stress occurs when "some part, or the whole, of the social organism is threatened with more or less serious damage"<sup>31</sup> or when the perception of reality and the "mazeway" are no longer congruent. The individual or, as the case may be, a particular collective is then faced with the choice of either maintaining the current mazeway at the cost of suffering the mounting stress or of

<sup>26</sup> Martin Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion," *Numen* 47 (2000) 270.

<sup>27</sup> Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion," 271.

<sup>28</sup> Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion," 272.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956) 266.

<sup>30</sup> Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 266.

<sup>31</sup> Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 265.

altering the mazeway.<sup>32</sup> The latter choice leads to a process of mazeway resynthesis which, according to Wallace, goes through five partially overlapping stages, from a steady state through a period of individual stress, a period of cultural distortion and a period of revitalization to a new steady state.<sup>33</sup> The notion of any "steady state" is something of which recent theories of identity formation have made us thoroughly suspicious but, if taking the term to refer to an ideal type and acknowledging the processual and, indeed, intermittent nature of stress and coping mechanisms,<sup>34</sup> Wallace's model still seems to have some relevance.

Most significant in relation to fundamentalist fiction is the period of revitalization in which occur, as Wallace has it, "the functions of mazeway reformulation, communication, organization, adaptation, cultural transformation, and routinization."<sup>35</sup> Fiction, by providing a vehicle for their articulation and dissemination, assumes a crucial role in the implementation of these functions. Furthermore, by developing recognizable and accessible forms which meet and subtly (re-)shape the horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*) of the group members – and, in fact, carrying their meaning beyond the pale in what Wallace terms "missionary fervor"<sup>36</sup> – fiction appears to take on an essential function in what amounts (even if, as Griffin maintains, the historical links may not yet have been severed) to a constant process of mazeway reformulation that is provoked and fuelled by the onslaught of cultural change in the external world, a "spirited" attempt to entrench the *nomos*.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> A similar process is described by Reinder Ruard Ganzevoort in his study on "Crisis Experience and the Development of Belief and Unbelief," in *Belief and Unbelief: Psychological Perspectives*, eds Jozef Corveleyn and Dirk Hutsebaut (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994) 23, although he does not refer to either Wallace or Berger.

<sup>33</sup> Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 268.

<sup>34</sup> This has already been noted by Julian R. Taplin, "Crisis Theory, Critique and Reformulation," *Community Mental Health Journal* 7 (1971) 13–23. See also Ganzevoort, "Crisis Experience," 22.

<sup>35</sup> Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 268.

<sup>36</sup> Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 277.

<sup>37</sup> While Wallace, who is not himself interested in fiction but in the hallucinatory experiences and dreams of charismatic prophet figures, emphasizes that mazeway reformulation normally seems to occur "in its initial form in the mind of a single person rather than to grow directly out of group deliberations" ("Revitalization Movements," 270), it is, in the case of fundamentalist fiction,

*Nomos* is a term suggested by the sociologist Peter L. Berger to embrace all human efforts of world-building.<sup>38</sup> It refers to the ordering activity of the human mind, both individual and collective, to give human existence and experience meaning. What Wallace designates as "mazeway disintegration"<sup>39</sup> comes very close to what Berger terms "nomic disruption" or, with reference to Emile Durkheim, "anomy."<sup>40</sup> Like "mazeway resynthesis," the remedy to "mazeway disintegration," these terms are important because they point to archetypal patterns of human mythopoeia which seem to have a bearing also on the emergence not only of fundamentalisms but especially their centeredness on texts and, indeed, also the place of fictional literature in Christian fundamentalism – even though other fundamentalisms may employ other vehicles of mythopoeia.

"Every socially constructed *nomos*," Berger insists, "must face the constant possibility of its collapse into anomy."<sup>41</sup> When the *nomos* – an inherently narrative construct which as a "sacred canopy" provides a "shield against terror"<sup>42</sup> in order "to stave off the nightmare world of anomy"<sup>43</sup> – is challenged or ultimately disrupted, this crisis requires either a "mazeway resynthesis" which, again, is inherently a narrative activity or the insistence on, or re-inscription of, the imperilled *nomos*. But this, given the

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rather the reiteration of archetypal patterns set by the *propheta* figure or figures and the reference to the *nomos* which invests these figures with their authority to which may be attributed its significance as an agent of mazeway resynthesis. Thomas M. Doyle has suggested that the popularity of fundamentalist fiction may be explained with the apparent craving of society at large for *prophetae*, although being "too sceptical to tolerate them except in fiction" and considers "whether these premillennialist apocalyptic fiction are acting as partial surrogates for the personal interaction and commitment in millennial mass movements, which other than perhaps the unfocused miscellany of million people marches are noteworthy for their absence thus far in the 2000–2001 time period," see "Competing Fictions: The Uses of Christian Apocalyptic Imagery in Contemporary Popular Fictional Works," *Journal of Millennial Studies* 1 (2001) 46.

<sup>38</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967; New York: Anchor Books, 1990) 19.

<sup>39</sup> Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 269.

<sup>40</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 23.

<sup>42</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 24.

continuous, if variable, pressure to react to outside influences, is in effect also a progressive resynthesis.<sup>44</sup> It becomes clear, then, why and how, as stated by Winfried Fluck, novels, as communicative acts, constitute attempts of structuring the "world." Fiction "becomes necessary when the perception of certain aspects of reality is no longer shared or has become problematic or contested. This need arises from the fact that received social constructs are always – although to varying degrees – outrun by experience."<sup>45</sup>

Fundamentalist fiction, as an attempt at structuring and coping, is both the "necessary" product and the articulation of such a crisis experience. Most prominent among its triggers is perhaps the challenge to the literal meaning of the Bible as an articulation of the *nomos* – as suggested, for instance, by historical-critical hermeneutics and thus by the genesis of a "new" historical understanding of both the text and the world which urgently requires a maze-way resynthesis.

A direct reflection on this crisis experience may be found, for instance, in Sydney Watson's novel *Scarlet and Purple*. In this (as I would argue) "fundamentalist" novel, published in 1913, contemporary articles from newspapers and theological journals are quoted in which this paradigm change found its expression.<sup>46</sup> Utterly disgusted with this development, one of the characters in the novel criticizes that it was considered possible now, "with a perfect consistency, to unite an acceptance of the Bible as a *guide of conduct* with a willingness to recognize the results of *free* textual

<sup>44</sup> With respect to the supposedly reactionary nature of fundamentalism as a response to modernity and even, as Lawrence, *Defenders of God*, 40 suggests, as the antinomy of modernism, the archetypal pattern circumscribed by maze-way resynthesis offers a new perspective on fundamentalism.

<sup>45</sup> Winfried Fluck, "Literature as Symbolic Action," *Amerikastudien* 23 (1983) 367. Frederick A. Kreuziger has pointed out the relevance of Berger's conception of the "sacred canopy" for science fiction, *The Religion of Science Fiction* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986) 1; with particular reference to the apocalyptic aspect of much science fiction, he also examines its function as mythopoeic, Frederick A. Kreuziger, *Apocalypse and Science Fiction: A Dialectic of Religious and Secular Soteriologies* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 43–46.

<sup>46</sup> Sydney Watson, *Scarlet and Purple: A Story of Souls and Signs* (1913; Edinburgh: B. McCall Barbour, 1974) 145.

criticism."<sup>47</sup> He then goes on to denounce this hermeneutical practice as the work of Antichrist:

In this later development of his hellish scheme to frustrate Christ and Christ's purposes, he [i.e. the *Anti-christ*] has got hold of the ministers and teachers – 'Down-Gradeism' it was called at first, then the 'Higher Criticism' and now the 'New Theology'. He inoculated the writers of Theological works; these the Theological professors absorbed; then the Professors taught *The Lie* to their students; the students became ministers and taught it to their peoples. A few of the elder, unstable, unsaved members accepted the Lie, a large part of the younger ones accepted it, and now their children, the youth, and young manhood and young womanhood of the present day tell you flatly that the Bible is exploded, it is a trick of priests of by-gone days to keep the people's souls in bondage; that there is no hereafter, that this life is all there is, and that they are bound to have as good a time as they can while they are here.<sup>48</sup>

Of course, Watson is an English writer, but he is nonetheless to be considered in many ways as the founder also of "modern" American fundamentalist fiction, because his novels, dealing with the rapture of the Church at the End of Times, in effect seem to have initiated a new literary concern. However, Watson himself was obviously influenced by another writer of his day: Arguably the first "modern" novel of this kind was written, alas, by a Catholic, and, again, an Englishman. But then, Robert Hugh Benson, the youngest son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, was at least a "lapsed" Anglican.

In 1907, after his conversion in 1903, he published his novel *Lord of the World*. Very likely the result "of the convulsive throes of spiritual conversion"<sup>49</sup> which may have been the personal consequence Benson drew from his perception of a wider spiritual crisis, the early science fiction novel conveys the dystopian vision of a future saturated with the achievements of modernity at the expense of all moral and spiritual values. It is, in this respect, not unlike other late Victorian and Edwardian novels of its kind – H. G. Wells and his "scientific romances" come to mind. But the denouement of the novel offers an unexpected solution: the passing of

<sup>47</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 145.

<sup>48</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 146.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Pearce, "R. H. Benson: Unsung Genius," <<http://www.catholicauthors.com/benson.html>> (accessed 6 January 2009).

“this world,” “and the glory of it,” with the Apocalypse and the radiance of the divine glory of the Second Coming.<sup>50</sup> One may indeed wonder whether it was not precisely the proliferation of radically different modes of explanation in the new popular genres, decisively separated from the biblical narrative,<sup>51</sup> as in Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) or – with regard to its apocalyptic resonance even more pertinent – *The Time Machine* (1895) which provoked the literary rejoinder and made it almost necessary for writers like Benson or Watson to choose the very same literary ground to offer their “battle royal.”

While this new literary form or even genre, if such it is, was subsequently transplanted to America where it soon flourished and has found its most recent climax in the *Left Behind* novels, in Britain it seems to have declined after Frederick A. Tatford’s 1971 laborious attempt of a reworking of Watson’s text “with a somewhat more modern setting.”<sup>52</sup>

Intriguingly, Tatford’s *The Clock Strikes* was advertised as science fiction. Watson’s *Scarlet and Purple*, like the other two volumes of his trilogy, *In the Twinkling of an Eye* (c. 1910) and *The Mark of the Beast* (1911), largely adheres to the form of the adventure novel. In fact, there seem to be no specific literary forms exclusive to fundamentalist fiction in evidence. Rather, fundamentalist fiction appears to be predominantly “parasitical” in that it appropriates for its own purposes established forms of, mostly popular, literary genres – for instance, as in the cases of Benson, Watson and Tatford, that of the adventure novel and of science fic-

<sup>50</sup> Robert Hugh Benson, *Lord of the World* (1907; Falls Church, VA: Once and Future Books, 2005) 281.

<sup>51</sup> As Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge/Malden, MA: Polity, 2005) 34 argues, “Wells crystallized the possibilities of the scientific romance form inside an evolutionary paradigm.” He further shows that in the 1890s, “the new scientific romance could exploit an essentially religious eschatology for its *fin de siècle* visions” (230). Wells’s non-fictional *Anticipations* (1902), forecasting the condition of England in the year 2000, documents with respect to the use of genre a move in the opposite direction.

<sup>52</sup> Crawford Gribben, “Rapture Fiction and the Changing Evangelical Tradition,” *Literature and Theology* 18 (2004) 7. Ironically, while Tatford’s novel is all but forgotten today, various reprints of Watson’s texts are still available.

tion, or of the thriller or the spy novel – then to inscribe into them its own concerns.<sup>53</sup>

The attraction of such genres for the writers of fundamentalist fiction is owing without doubt not least precisely to their popularity and, considering the fact that they are dealing in crises, their capacity to accommodate the fundamentalist world-view. Indeed, this is a strategy which – certainly in the case of the *Left Behind* novels – “paid” very well both in terms of the dissemination of their “ideology” and of financial gain. Fundamentalist fiction makes use of the popularity of its host genres and media – among them computer games, film, and comics – by meeting the expectations they are meant to satisfy and “leeching” onto their mazeway. However, at the same time they confront these expectations with a specifically fundamentalist horizon of expectations and set about to reformulate the maze-way. Without intending to speculate further about the frequently escapist character of these genres and of the significance of this trait in the context of fundamentalist fiction, it appears to be no less important that the host genres of fundamentalist fiction are frequently based on the dichotomy of good and evil which – in accordance with the horizon of expectations of

<sup>53</sup> Blurbs are rather instructive in this respect. James H. Hunter’s *Thine Is the Kingdom* (1951; London/Edinburgh: Oliphants, 1952) was praised as: “Dark mystery, delightful romance, evil intrigue, and sparkling adventure combine to make this a story destined to be one of the truly great Christian novels of the century. [...] The influence of a Mighty God in the lives of strong men who live dangerously and love heroically is most vividly presented.” Sydney Watson’s rapture novels of c. 1910–1913 were extolled in their 1970s reprints (Edinburgh: B. McCall Barbour) as: “Romance, adventure, thrills – these all await you in this fast-moving story.” Frederick A. Tatford’s *The Clock Strikes* (London: Lakeland, 1971) was acclaimed as “Science fiction with a thrilling message for today!” Frank E. Peretti’s *This Present Darkness* (1986; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995) was likened at the same time to C. S. Lewis’s classic tale of Wormwood’s exploits and contemporary thrillers: “Not since *The Screwtape Letters* has there been a novel with so much insight into spiritual warfare and the necessity of prayer. Fast-moving, riveting reading ranking with the best thrillers on the bookshelf.” Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins’s *Left Behind* novels were commended as “apocalyptic thrillers” (see, for instance, *Left Behind. A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995]) and Joel C. Rosenberg’s *The Last Jihad* (2002; Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2005) was eulogised as “a provocative, conservative political thriller [...] a high-speed, heart-pounding, edge of your seat roller-coaster ride into the heart of darkness.”

the reader – is usually decided in favour of the good, thus righting the fictionally re-enacted disruption of the *nomos*.

At best, the genre recently designated by Crawford Gribben (2004) as *rapture fiction*, of which Watson's novels are early examples, may be considered to be a literary form that is particular to fundamentalist fiction. In the late 1930s, Forrest Loman Oilar seems to have introduced the genre to America with his *Be Thou Prepared, for Jesus Is Coming* (1937). Other novels of note to follow were Ernest Anglely's *Raptured*, which appeared in 1950, and Salem Kirban's *666*, privately published in 1970. It will hardly be surprising that in the wake of the enormous success of the *Left Behind* novels various other authors concentrated their efforts on the same subject in the early years of the new millennium – some recently published examples have already been mentioned, others might include Tim Stevenson's *The Bema. A Story About the Judgment Seat of Christ* (2001) and Dennis Gilmour's *The Unveiling* (2004) or Steven M. Yulish's *Invasion: Israel* (2005).

Yet the genre of *rapture fiction*, to which Watson's novels belong no less than Tatford's or those by Oilar, Anglely and Kirban as well as the *Left Behind* novels by LaHaye and Jenkins, is also open. It too incorporates other genres no less parasitically, or perhaps better: symbiotically. And here too the content – the events surrounding the rapture of the Church and the time of tribulation after the appearance of the Antichrist as it had been prophesied in the first letter of St Paul's to the Thessalonians<sup>54</sup> – is placed into a "fundamentalistically" determined explicatory context which is mostly governed by a literal understanding of the Bible and thus opens up a new horizon of expectations.

It needs to be emphasized that it is the conception of what constitutes the text and thus an intrinsically "literary" category which in a particular way not only determines fundamentalist perception of reality but which, conversely, in many different ways exerts its influence on this reality. It does so not least by means of fiction which, in turn, as Fluck argues in an-

<sup>54</sup> "16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; KJV)

other context, as a strategy of coping with an experience of the world which has become problematical, at the same time always has the character of a blueprint and is in its orientation towards the symbolic transformation of correlated experiences target- and action-oriented.<sup>55</sup> As historians of mentalities suggest, the action potential of the collective unconscious is sedimented in the cultural production of a given cultural community. The analysis of cultural production along the lines of the history of mentalities thus allows conclusions precisely as to this collective unconscious and, more particularly, also as to the processes of change to which it is subject.

The centrality of the "fundamentalist" conception of the text and its being threatened by the crisis of modernity may then possibly explain the change from an allegorical hermeneutics to a literal one. Thus it might be argued that before the literal meaning of Holy Writ was threatened, or even negated, there was no need to reject the allegorical mode. For the allegorical mode was then still anchored to literal reality and, finally, was itself no more than an unambiguous illustration of the word. Medieval conceptions of the fourfold sense of scripture encapsulate this way of thinking perfectly. As Gerhard Ebeling has shown, as a complement to the *sensus historicus* or *literalis*

the distinction of the three spiritual dimensions of interpretation [i.e. the *sensus allegoricus*, the *sensus tropologicus* and the *sensus anagogicus*] must be understood as an effort to stop, through regulation by church dogma, the danger of an allegorical fantasy which would digress into the heretical. For only what is in the scope of church dogma can be a legitimate goal of the fourfold sense of Scripture.<sup>56</sup>

However, as soon as the literal sense, or even its co-existence with other approaches to the text, is challenged, it must become an essential purpose of fundamentalism, not least through fiction, to insist on the word and its authenticity so as to re-establish it.<sup>57</sup> The "one" cannot be replaced or

<sup>55</sup> Winfried Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit: Der Amerikanische Realismus, 1865–1990* (München: Fink, 1992) 12.

<sup>56</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, "The New Hermeneutics and the Early Luther," trans. Mrs. James Carse, *Theology Today* 21 (1964) 39.

<sup>57</sup> As is suggested by James Simpson's investigation into the ambiguities inherent in constructions of the literal sense in chapter seven, this ultimately futile at-

signified by any other, but in a metonymic sense it can be integral part of a larger truth.

Fundamentalist fiction of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries illustrates the literal reading of the Biblical plan of redemption. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684), without doubt one of the most influential texts of the Protestant tradition in the Anglophone world, and itself possibly an example of earlier fundamentalist fiction, is for this very reason not a model for "modern" fundamentalist fiction although it is explicitly mentioned in not a few of these texts.<sup>58</sup> It cannot be such a model because, owing to its allegorical alienation, it is, to modern fundamentalists "merely" a symbol. More recent fundamentalist fiction, in contrast, insists precisely on the immediacy of the divine plan of salvation in the temporal, spatial and corporeal dimensions.

This becomes evident in the features of isotopia and multiple literality. The latter term has been suggested by Kevin L. Cope, who with reference to the *Left Behind* novels has shown that a particular feature of their conception of Holy Writ is that it is "multiply literal."<sup>59</sup> Cope understands this to mean not a qualification of the literal meaning of the Scriptures but its expansion: "they affirm that the events mentioned in obscure passages in prophetic books [...] have literal and tangible components both in historical, biblical times and in the present, as well as in the apocalyptic worlds to come."<sup>60</sup> This allows the authors to switch easily from one level of time to another without deviating "from their fundamentalist commitment to the exact meaning of holy writ."<sup>61</sup> Isotopia I understand to refer to a spatial "system of coordinates" that is compatible with the literal, respectively multiply literal understanding of the text. Fundamentalist fiction hardly ever is set in invented worlds but is invariably bound to geographical coordinates consistent or compatible with Holy Writ. For this reason, as soon as science fiction or fantasy novels depart from the geographical or temporal coordinates consistent with the Biblical narrative, they can no longer be

tempt at disambiguation is not merely a "modern" phenomenon but is, in fact, constitutive of the evangelical, and Protestant, approach to Scripture.

<sup>58</sup> See for instance Sydney Watson, *The Mark of the Beast* (c. 1911; Edinburgh: B. McCall Barbour, 1977) 5 and Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Cope, "Never Better than Late," 184.

<sup>60</sup> Cope, "Never Better than Late," 184.

<sup>61</sup> Cope, "Never Better than Late," 185.

fundamentalist although they certainly can depict fundamentalist phenomena<sup>62</sup> and although fundamentalist fiction frequently "parasitically" makes use of elements of these genres, which may be owing to their frequently apocalyptic character.

An example of the "anti-allegorical" stance of fundamentalist fiction which at the same time may serve to discover some of the conundrums inherent in this literature is Frank E. Peretti's novel *This Present Darkness* (1986). The text, which takes its title from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians 6:12, insists time and again on the existence in reality of demons, although for the most part they appear to be invisible to humans.<sup>63</sup> In Peretti's novel, their struggle with the angels is no psychomachia. Instead it is a battle which is understood to ensue in the real world and which is narrated in the style and language of heroic epics, or rather a strange mixture of that of fantasy novels and comics. Thus, in what appears to be an almost Tolkienesque episode in Peretti's novel,<sup>64</sup> tempered with the clipped dialogue of the comic and what in effect seems to be a verbalisation of the comics' visual component in a highly visual style, the leader of the heavenly host rallies his companions against the demons:

Tal drew his sword and held it high. The others did the same and a forest of shining blades appeared, held aloft in strong arms.

"Rafar," Tal said in a low, musing voice, "we meet again."

Then, in the voice of a Captain of the Host: "For the saints of God and for the Lamb!"

"For the saints of God and for the Lamb!" they echoed.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> See for instance Paul Park's *Starbridge Chronicles: Soldiers of Paradise* (1987), *Sugar Rain* (1989) and *The Cult of Loving Kindness* (1991) or Sheri S. Tepper's *Marjorie Westriding Trilogy: Grass* (1989), *Raising the Stones* (1990) and *Sideshow* (1992).

<sup>63</sup> "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12; KJV)

<sup>64</sup> It seems hardly a coincidence that Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 259 too, refers to Tolkien, saying that "a Christian view of history is clarified if one considers reality as more or less like the world portrayed in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien."

<sup>65</sup> Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, 48.

Of great importance in Peretti's novel – just like twenty years later in Lyndon's computer game – is the "prayer cover" of the true believers on which the angels' strength relies. Prayer thus allows that reality be influenced directly and a mediating instance between predestination and free will is thus introduced.

This points to a conundrum of fundamentalist fiction, both narratological and theological, which affects especially those texts which not only have an apocalyptic frame of reference, like Peretti's, but are manifestly apocalyptic, like the rapture novel or, for instance, Joel C. Rosenberg's thriller *The Last Jihad* (2002) or, some five decades earlier, James H. Hunter's romantic spy novel *Thine Is the Kingdom* (1951): How is it possible to characterize the individual, in view of the predestined nature of the apocalyptic events, as an independent agent of either good or evil? Another conundrum is inherent in fundamentalist fiction with respect to its "parasitical" character: In which ways can the different horizons of expectations be reconciled with each other, associated as they are on the one hand with the host genre and on the other hand with a vision of the End of Times that is not open to individual interpretation. Peretti's solution to the first problem was prayer. In other novels it is frequently conversion and, once again, prayer. The solution to the second problem is, with the exception of rapture novels, often achieved by deferring the apocalyptic moment which facilitates a "happy ending:" The powers of darkness can be thwarted, if only for a short period of time. This allows, not least, the further serialization – in Peretti's case, for instance, with *Piercing the Darkness* (1989) and in Rosenberg's with *The Last Days* (2003).

Finally, perhaps the most significant of all, there is a third conundrum: How does the fictional relate to the truth of prophesied history and the authority of the Bible? Here, Cope's notion of multiple literality will be of help. Indeed, similar conceptions are articulated in many examples of preliminary matter explaining – and justifying – fundamentalist fiction. Already in 1911, Watson, in the foreword to his *The Mark of the Beast*, attempted to forestall any denigrations of the legitimacy of his chosen medium:

The use of the fictional style for the presentment of sacred subjects is ever a moot-point with some people. Yet every parable, allegory, etc. (not excepting Bunyan's Master-piece) is *fictional* form. So that the moot-point

really becomes one of *degree* and not of *principle* – if Bunyan, Milton, and Dante, be allowed to be right.<sup>66</sup>

In his foreword to Peter and Paul Lalonde's *Apocalypse*, initially produced as straight-to-video film<sup>67</sup> in 1998 and later in the same year also released as novel, the popular televangelist Jack van Impe addresses the very question of fictional representation of ultimate – and biblically revealed – truths. In contrast to Watson van Impe no longer feels the need to align the fictional text with the classics of religious writing – Bunyan, Milton and Dante – and to derive its validation from their authority. "Make no mistake," he admonishes the reader:

This novel is indeed a work of fiction. But just barely. The fact that these events haven't happened yet makes it fiction. But unlike other novels and stories you may read, something very unique can be said about *Apocalypse*. It is a book about the future based on Bible truths that will soon occur globally.<sup>68</sup>

Fiction is accorded special significance here because the events it describes are considered to be true in the light of biblical prophecy – the concept of multiple literality in action. Its validation is, furthermore, drawn not only from its derivative textual authority but also from its emotive, and consequently missionary, appeal, the latter also an argument made already by Watson.<sup>69</sup>

In an interview with Brooke Gladstone, Jerry Jenkins mentioned the explicatory function of fundamentalist fiction. Asked about his use of the Book of Revelations, whether he was "just riffing on its themes" or "directly putting them into modern language," the (co-)author of the *Left Behind* novels stated:

It's a little bit of the latter. If it's not in symbolic or figurative language, just as a matter of exercise, we take it as literally as possible, and that

<sup>66</sup> Watson, *The Mark of the Beast*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Directed by Peter Gerretsen. Novel and film have since been turned into a series, the initial novel and film being followed by *Revelation* (1999), *Tribulation* (2000) and *Judgment* (2001).

<sup>68</sup> Peter and Paul Lalonde, *Apocalypse* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998) vii.

<sup>69</sup> Watson, *The Mark of the Beast*, 5–6.

seems to have been what makes this series a phenomenon, that people tend to understand difficult Biblical passages they didn't understand before because they were trying to understand them allegorically, and if you do that, you could probably get 200 different interpretations.<sup>70</sup>

His intention thus is to disambiguate mystifying passages of the Bible by conceptualizing them in straightforward narrative prose, an indication obviously also as to the literary claims of his fundamentalist fiction. It evidently does not primarily aspire to aesthetic achievement but to missionary reach, a point also made by van Impe<sup>71</sup> and pithily asserted by Jenkins when he describes himself and Tim LaHaye as "sales people for the Gospel."<sup>72</sup>

Hal Lindsey, author of the hugely popular non-fiction "account" of the apocalypse, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), turned to fiction with his 1996 novel *Blood Moon* expressly because he wanted to surmount the skepticism of those to whom his "rational" explanations of the End of Times did not appeal:

In my non-fiction works, I have described how some of these "macro-events" might take place in our lifetime. But in the genre of fiction, I am able to tell the story through a series of "micro-events" – little stories about people struggling for survival and salvation through the most turbulent and tumultuous period in human history. The big story, then, is told through the eyes of those fictional characters.<sup>73</sup>

From both Lindsey's conception of macro- and micro-events and van Impe's insistence on the fictional rendering of imminent future events, it may be deduced that there is – in the minds of its creators and, presumably, its target audience – a metonymic quality to fundamentalist fiction. David Ketterer argues that apocalyptic writing in America is to be seen as

<sup>70</sup> Brooke Gladstone, "Kingdom Come," interview with Jerry Jenkins. *On the Media* (26 April 2007), <<http://www.onthemedial.org/transcripts/2007/04/06/04>> (accessed 21 January 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Jack van Impe, "Foreword," in Peter and Paul Lalonde, *Apocalypse*, ix.

<sup>72</sup> Jillette Penn and Teller, "End of the World" [TV series], *Bullshit!* Episode #1-04, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> Hal Lindsey, *Blood Moon* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front Publishing, 1996) 4.

part of a larger "literary dialectic," as a "literature of ideas,"<sup>74</sup> and in contrast to mimetic literature or tales of the fantastic it is, for him, a genre that

*is concerned with the creation of other worlds which exist, on the literal level, in a credible relationship (whether on the basis of rational extrapolation and analogy or of religious belief) with the 'real' world, thereby causing a metaphorical destruction of that 'real' world in the reader's head.*<sup>75</sup>

In recent fundamentalist fiction which, as I have argued, is characterized by an apocalyptic frame of reference, the destruction of the "real" world in the reader's head is less metaphorical than rather metonymic, a distinction which is based on the significance of the text and its validation through its revelatory provenance which is ultimately guaranteed by biblical authority.

Paradoxically, in spite of its seemingly non-allegoric stance, the demons, supposedly existing in reality,<sup>76</sup> are described in Peretti's *This Present Darkness* according to the pattern of allegorical personifications. They are recognizable through their attributes; and their attributes are even more or less explicitly explained:

He approached two hulking forms in the middle of some debate, and from their massive, spine-covered arms and poisonous words he could tell they were demons who specialized in hate – planting, aggravating, and spreading it, using their crushing arms and venomous quills to constrict and poison the love out of anyone.<sup>77</sup>

"Murder" is described similarly recognizable as a personification: "his talons still dripping with blood."<sup>78</sup> Other demons, too, are named in the way of personifications, Complacency, for instance, and Deception or Lust, and so forth. In addition, the demons in Peretti's novel exhale sulphurous va-

<sup>74</sup> David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974) 8, 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> In Watson's *The Mark of the Beast*, 86 demons are also 'real': "She glanced frightenedly round, then with her finger raised, she whispered: 'The very air seems full of spies here, as it was at Babylon.'" <sup>77</sup> Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, 48.

<sup>78</sup> Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, 49.



pours, and their eyes glow eerily yellow in the darkness they spread around themselves;<sup>79</sup> one of them, "half humanoid, half animal, totally demon," is compared to a Gothic gargoyle.<sup>80</sup> Thus, with a certain "Pre-Raphaelite" air, reference is made to a pre-"modern" time in which the knowledge of the corporeal presence of evil in the world had not yet been lost to humankind.

In Peretti's novel, Evil in the world is not only embodied in reality by demons, it is also manifest in economic and religious tendencies towards globalization which seek to infiltrate America from the outside and thus provoke the perception of a crisis in an atmosphere of moral degeneration. The thriller's plot is simple enough and paradigmatic of fundamentalist fiction: Omni Corporation, led by demons and aiming at the establishment of a universal consciousness, attempts to take over the perfectly ordinary small American college town of Ashton through a large-scale offensive. Yet the heavenly host succeed in mobilizing a spiritual defence by rallying a precious few stand-fast believers. By them they are provided with the necessary "prayer cover" to destroy the demonic hordes in an apocalyptic scenario which, in turn, also leads to the victory of Good over Evil on the "human" level.

Fundamentalist fiction, as is quite clear in Peretti's novel, seems to be primarily the response to the, if perhaps only imagined, experience of a crisis and is intended to promote self-assurance and the insistence on the maze-way. Characteristic features are an apocalyptic frame of reference as well as a tendency towards paranoia and, resulting from this, the concept of a demonic enemy. Strongly criticized in 1957 for his "anachronistic" transfer of psychoanalytic theories and concepts, in his study on millenarian sects of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, Norman Cohn had interpreted the concept of a cosmic enemy, as it is sketched also in Peretti's text, as a form of paranoia:

The megalomaniac view of oneself as the elect, wholly good, abominably persecuted yet assured of ultimate triumph; the attribution of gigantic and demonic powers to the adversary; the refusal to accept the ineluctable limitations and imperfections of human existence, such as transience, dis-sension, conflict, fallibility whether intellectual or moral; the obsession

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, 48.

<sup>80</sup> Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, 36.

with inerrable prophecies – these attitudes are symptoms which together constitute the unmistakable syndrome of paranoia. But a paranoid delusion does not cease to be so because it is shared by so many individuals, nor yet because those individuals have real and ample grounds for regarding themselves as victims of oppression.<sup>81</sup>

With reference among others to Cohn, in 1964 the undifferentiated world-view of a "classic battle between good and evil" – as it was still invoked in 2006 by Troy Lyndon and Mark Taylor, the creator of the computer game *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* and the President of Tyndale House Publishers, respectively – had been associated by the historian Richard Hofstadter with paranoia and identified as the idiosyncratic style of American politics. Certainly, Hofstadter's assessment has not remained unchallenged, not least because it endorses a similar polarization, but his characterization of the paranoid as well as of the concept of the enemy construed by the paranoid are unquestionably instructive with a view to perceptions of the fundamentalist mentality and its situation in the American context. Just like the frequently argued conception of the currency of an "apocalyptic imagination" in American literature,<sup>82</sup> it may possibly contribute to an explanation of the success of fundamentalist fiction in America:

The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of conspiracy in apocalyptic terms – he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization. [...] Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, what is necessary is not compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish. Since the enemy is thought of as being totally evil and totally unappeasable, he must be totally eliminated.<sup>83</sup>

The paranoid, Hofstadter argues, perceives his surroundings in an apocalyptic pattern, according to absolute categories of Good and Evil between which no reconciliation can be achieved. The apocalyptic imagination, as

<sup>81</sup> Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957) 309. In response to the objection that modern psychoanalytic conceptions should not be applied to the study of the Middle Ages, Cohn deleted this passage from the revised edition of his study, published by Oxford University Press in 1980.

<sup>82</sup> See e.g. Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old*, 25.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine* (November 1964) 82.

has been shown for instance by David Ketterer,<sup>84</sup> referring back inter alia to Northrop Frye, Frank Kermode and Ihab Hassan,<sup>85</sup> is at work especially in America and in a segment of American literature, particularly – yet not exclusively – in science fiction. It is important that Ketterer not only reads science fiction too as response to social changes which are perceived to be threatening, “it is an outgrowth and an expression of crisis,”<sup>86</sup> but that he too, in a specifically American context, links the apocalyptic element to paranoia.<sup>87</sup> It is furthermore of significance that history, as Hofstadter has it, is not interpreted by the paranoid “as part of the stream of history,” but rather as the result of intentional intervention: “as the consequences of someone’s will.”<sup>88</sup> The nature of the enemy is thus, according to Hofstadter, clearly delineated: “he is a perfect model of malice, a kind of amoral superman – sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury-loving. Unlike the rest of us, the enemy is not caught in the toils of the vast mechanism of history [...]. He wills, indeed he manufactures, the mechanism of history, or tries to deflect the normal course of history in an evil way. He makes crises.”<sup>89</sup>

The correspondence of the symptoms sketched by Hofstadter, and in conjunction with them by Ketterer’s deliberations on the apocalyptic imagination, with the phenomenon of fundamentalism as it has been described for instance by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby in *Fundamentalism Observed* (1991) is conspicuous. Thus, Marty and Appleby emphasize as essential for fundamentalist groups that they always name, dramatize and mythologize their enemies.<sup>90</sup> Fundamentalism appears to be

<sup>84</sup> Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old*.

<sup>85</sup> See Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), Frank Kermode’s *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) and Ihab Hassan’s *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (1961; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967) and *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>86</sup> Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old*, 24.

<sup>87</sup> Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old*, 261.

<sup>88</sup> Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style,” 85.

<sup>89</sup> Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style,” 85.

<sup>90</sup> Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 820.

a response to real or imagined crises, as has been pointed out for example by Karen Armstrong with reference to Marty and Appleby:

They are embattled forms of spirituality, which have emerged as a response to a perceived crisis. They are engaged in a conflict with enemies whose secularist policies and beliefs seem inimical to religion itself. Fundamentalists do not regard this battle as a conventional political struggle, but experience it as a cosmic war between the forces of good and evil.<sup>91</sup>

To the same pattern adhere, according to Marty and Appleby, also those biblical prophecies which allude to the Antichrist: “[They] provide fundamentalists with a cosmic enemy, imbue fundamentalist boundary-setting and purity-preserving activities with an apocalyptic urgency, and foster a crisis mentality that serves both to intensify missionary efforts and to justify extremism.”<sup>92</sup>

In 1964, Hofstadter concluded that the paranoid’s cosmic concept of the enemy in many respects was to be seen as a projection of the self. For to it are attributed both the ideal and the unacceptable aspects of the self.<sup>93</sup> The prevalence, or at least the valence, of this mental disposition in America is explained by Hofstadter with the experience of religious, ethnic and social conflict.<sup>94</sup> The object of this paranoia, figured in the American context from the very beginning of the Puritan settlement as the Antichrist, as has been shown by Robert C. Fuller (1995), changes with the shifting production contexts of fundamentalist fiction while the underlying pattern of paranoia, apocalyptic world-view and missionary zeal remains unchanged. *Rapture novels*, for instance, have been called by Gribben “acutely sensitive barometers of the changing evangelical condition.”<sup>95</sup> To him, they are useful “as a barometer of cultural and political attitudes within the evangelical movement and as a representation of the changing face of evangelical belief.”<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London: Harper Collins, 2000) xiii.

<sup>92</sup> Marty and Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, 820.

<sup>93</sup> Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style,” 85.

<sup>94</sup> Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style,” 86.

<sup>95</sup> Gribben, “Rapture Fiction,” 79.

<sup>96</sup> Gribben, “Rapture Fiction,” 82.

The same pattern may already be discerned as underlying Winthrop's diary entry quoted at the beginning of this chapter. It anticipates that the little band of the persecuted, led by God into the country, obviously the Puritan group of which Winthrop himself was governor, will be able to overcome Satan's rule. It is not, however, quite clear from the short text and its allegorical interpretation who the corporeal embodiment of Satan might be – historically most plausible, we may take this to be a reference either to rival Puritan groups or the indigenous population of the country. The latter were to be described as tools of Satan only a little later by the theologian and historian Cotton Mather in his history of the American colonies, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702):

Though we know not when or how these Indians first became inhabitants of this mighty continent, yet we may guess that probably the devil decoyed these miserable savages hither in hopes that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would never come here to destroy or disturbe his absolute empire over them.<sup>97</sup>

Indeed, within the framework of Mather's colonial apocalypticism the advent of the saints of God in New England signals the "last conflict" with Antichrist "in the utmost parts of the earth."<sup>98</sup> A similar view was expressed by the revivalist preacher Jonathan Edwards. "It is certain," he asserted, "that the devil did here quietly enjoy his dominion over the poor Indians for many ages."<sup>99</sup>

The paranoid demonizing of the Other and, in conjunction with this, "[the] megalomaniac view of oneself as the elect, wholly good, abominably persecuted yet assured of ultimate triumph," as Cohn put it in 1957 in

<sup>97</sup> Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or the Ecclesiastical History of New England, from Its First Planting in the Year 1620 unit the Year of Our Lord 1698*, ed. Thomas Robbins, 2 vols (1702; Hartford: Andrus, 1853), I, 503.

<sup>98</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II, 579.

<sup>99</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "The Success of Redemption from the Reformation to the Present Time," in *The Works of Jonathan Edward*, rev. and corrected by Edward Hickman, vol. I (1834; Avon: Bath Press, 1995) 600. Even more vicious is a broadside of 1794 explaining *The Indians Pedigree* to be from Satan, see Daniel R. Mandell, "The Indian's Pedigree (1794): Indians, Folklore, and Race in Southern New England," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61.3 (2004) 521–528.

another context,<sup>100</sup> subsequently emerged as a constant of religious and, increasingly, also of political thinking in America.<sup>101</sup> Numerous captivity narratives, allegorical autobiographical narratives of the deliverance of mostly white women from their captivity among the Indians, were the products of this development no less than the Salem witch trials of 1692 or later the identification of the Enlightenment and of Rationalism as manifestations of Antichrist.<sup>102</sup> In the twentieth century especially, as may be explained by the respective social, political and historical contexts, an alleged Jewish world conspiracy, Catholicism, Socialism and, finally, Communism were considered to be four manifestations of Antichrist, partially interwoven with and following upon each other.<sup>103</sup> That the Salem trials found a dramatic reworking in the twentieth century with Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953), implicitly relating the historical events to the more recent "witch trials" of the McCarthy era, may be interpreted as indicative of the persistence of the very same paranoia.

A particular form of fundamentalist crisis experience is the perception of real or imagined systemic restraints. William Blake's famous dictum, "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's," in his prophecy *Jerusalem* (1804–1820),<sup>104</sup> seems to give expression to a deeply rooted unease, or dread, which, as emerges not least in fundamentalist fiction, also agonizes Christian fundamentalists. For it is mainly complex or even global systems which Christian fundamentalists loathingly consider to be manifestations of Antichrist's actions in the world, among them for instance the United Nations, the European Economic Community (EEC) and later the European Union (EU) as well as ecumenical movements or systems of information technology.

That there has been no lack of conceptions of cosmic enemies, of supposed manifestations of the Antichrist, since the Puritan settlement in America, although the changes they have been subject to offer insights

<sup>100</sup> Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 309.

<sup>101</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 71.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 78.

<sup>103</sup> See Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 138–160.

<sup>104</sup> William Blake, "Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion" [1804–1820], in *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (1957; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 629.

also with respect to internal changes in fundamentalist interests and apprehensions, becomes evident for instance when, after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism, it was particularly Islam which was felt to be an external and increasingly also an internal threat and which came into the focus not exclusively, but perhaps most visibly, of fundamentalist paranoia in America. As Fuller anticipated in 1995, when the attacks of 11 September 2001 were yet in the future: "It appears that Muslim fundamentalists are almost certain to remain the *bête noire* of Christian fundamentalists in the next few decades."<sup>105</sup> Conversely, the destruction of the Twin Towers was taken to be a confirmation of the Biblical vision of the End of Times and contributed to a large part to a resurgence of Christian fundamentalism in America and, not least, to the positioning and justification of the "War on Terror" within the paranoid-apocalyptic system of thought.<sup>106</sup> Sales figures of the *Left Behind* novels virtually "exploded" in autumn 2001 with an increase of more than 60 per cent<sup>107</sup> – even though LaHaye himself refused to see any "prophetic significance" in the event.<sup>108</sup>

That the continuous metamorphosis of the apocalyptic "Other," in turn, time and again highlights the disappointment of the apocalyptic anticipation, seems to be of no consequence to either the fundamentalist logic nor to fundamentalist fiction. To the contrary, it rather periodically appears to provide it with new impulses. Indeed, this change offers insights also with respect to internal changes in fundamentalist interests and apprehensions which, not infrequently, are shared by the majority as is suggested by the enormous success of some fundamentalist fiction.

Herbert W. Armstrong predicted in his 1956 non-fictional pamphlet, *1975 in Prophecy!*, that 19 years hence the nuclear apocalypse was to be triggered by Europe united under the rule of the Antichrist. Hal Lindsey's bestselling *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), another non-fictional text, drew on Armstrong's prophecy but anticipated the nuclear apocalypse to be the result of the Cold War and other developments prophesied in the

<sup>105</sup> Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*, 160.

<sup>106</sup> For a lengthy exposition see Dennis Crump, *Wake Up, Church: The End Is Nigh!* (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> Gribben, "Rapture Fiction," 77.

<sup>108</sup> Neil Jeffrey Kressel, *Bad Faith: The Danger of Religious Extremism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2007) 38. The relevant item, quoted by Kressel from Tim LaHaye's website, is no longer accessible.

Bible. In view of the much less sophisticated distribution and marketing systems of its time, this text was hardly less successful than the *Left Behind* series. Finally, in Lindsey's *The Everlasting Hatred. The Roots of Jihad*, published in 2002, Islam is identified quite clearly as the apocalyptic Other, and in his non-fictional bestseller *Beyond Iraq: The Next Move. Ancient Prophecy and Modern-Day Conspiracy Collide* the preacher Michael D. Evans interprets the second Iraq war unequivocally as being part of God's larger plan of salvation and finally calls for global war (especially against the Islamic countries), to expedite the return of the Messiah.

The same development, the continuous metamorphosis of the apocalyptic Other, is manifest also in fundamentalist fiction. In Hunter's *Thine Is the Kingdom*, to quote just a few of the many relevant passages, communism is literally bedevilled:<sup>109</sup>

These communists are killers without mercy. They have nothing human in them, and are without pity or compassion for childhood, youth or age. They are rats, rats of the worst kind. They have sold themselves to the devil. They are the spawn of Satan.<sup>110</sup>

The very existence of communism is discussed in the novel in connection with the theodicy: "Do you know, Colin, I often wonder why God permits such an evil thing as this [i.e. communism] to rise in the world and destroy such multitudes in body and soul." But all doubts are resolved in the novel with the following answer:

Many have wondered that, Jill. But don't blame God. It is man who has created this hell upon earth that goes by the name of communism. I believe that this is the last of the three unclean frogs that came from the mouth of the beast that the Apostle John saw in the Apocalypse. Nazism and Fascism were the other two and they have gone. Communism will go the same way, but not before it has brought the world to the most terrifying blood bath of history. It will affect all nations and will, I believe, bring this present age to an end in a whirlwind of destruction. The horrible thing is that

<sup>109</sup> Intriguingly, the setting of the introductory passage of Hunter's novel is strangely reminiscent of that of the first chapter of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, written in the 1930s and first published in 1966–1967, which at the time would have been available only in underground *samizdat* distribution.

<sup>110</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 43.

there are thousands of people in Canada and the United States who are actively working to bring about that very thing.<sup>111</sup>

The fifth column panic which suffuses the Canadian novel and which intensifies the feeling of a crisis seems to feed off the same paranoia which led to the modern witch hunt of the McCarthyists. Yet in Hunter's novel, although all the portents are observed, the End of Times is deferred. With great assurance one character tells the other that "the sands are fast running out and a horror of great darkness overshadows the world. I believe that peace has been taken from the earth and that the forces of evil are being marshalled for the last great onslaught on the human race." To the guarded question whether war cannot be averted he replies:

I did not say that, but I might answer your question by saying – ultimately, no, immediately, yes, provided we can defeat the enemy within. That is where the gravest danger lies. Our country is like the citadel of Mansoul which could not be shaken had it not been for the townsmen themselves.<sup>112</sup>

The reference to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* shows the usefulness of the allegorical mode, but this is not replicated in Hunter's novel. *Thine Is the Kingdom* rather posits the communist threat from outside and inside as partaking of reality. The deferral of the apocalypse is obviously to be explained with the missionary intent of the novel which augurs the momentary suspension of the approaching doom if people repent and return to Christ:

There is one way of escape for the individual and for the nation from the wrath that is to come, and that is to turn in humble repentance and faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one, and the only way of peace. It is God-made, not man-made, and it has never failed yet.<sup>113</sup>

Though somewhat more surreptitiously, the deferral clearly is also motivated by the author's attempt to accommodate the conventions of the novel's romantic double sub-plot. It allows, or even requires, that the beautiful Russian "girl" be redeemed:

<sup>111</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 43–44.

<sup>112</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 31, see also 176.

<sup>113</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 120.

The one thing that mattered was that the long agony and struggle was ended; the black night of doubt, anguish and despair that had so long eaten at her heart, and which was hidden from the world, was over. The great peace that was here seemed to burn all the dross from her life and fill her heart with an overwhelming joy that shook her frame in an outburst of joyful weeping. It was thus that Olga Yasnalov was snatched as a brand from the burning and passed from death to life.<sup>114</sup>

To cut short the romantic love between the converted Olga and the pious scientist Dr Malcolm Tresham with the Second Coming would seem churlish. Their wedding, and that of Malcolm's brother and his fiancée, therefore bring the novel to an affirmative conclusion. Because love in times of the apocalypse is anything but propitious, the apocalypse has been averted as the conventions of the genre demand – but not without giving their love and its human transitoriness a special meaning. When Olga remarks at the end of the beautiful day that the sunset affects her more powerfully than the sunrise, her husband replies:

There is a pathetic something added to beauty by the knowledge that it is fleeting, and that we are fleeing with it. The sunset, for instance. It is only one of the many symbols that Nature spreads before us for the one who has eyes to see and a mind and heart to read aright. Everything around us is a living witness to great spiritual truths by which we may discern the ways of God with man, and draw comfort and inspiration from them.<sup>115</sup>

The recurring invocation of nature as a sign for spiritual truth<sup>116</sup> may perhaps be read as a specifically Canadian feature which relates to a long tradition of nature writing.<sup>117</sup> In Hunter's novel it is in some ways also reminiscent of the Medieval tradition of the "Book of Nature"<sup>118</sup> as he

<sup>114</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 194.

<sup>115</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 244–245.

<sup>116</sup> See Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 87, 199, 204 and 244.

<sup>117</sup> See, for instance, Margaret Atwood's thematic guide to Canadian literature, *Survival* (1972) and, in turn, Leon Surette's criticism of the "topographic axiom" in "Here Is Us: The Topocentrism of Canadian Literary Criticism," *Canadian Poetry* 10 (1982) 51.

<sup>118</sup> See, for instance, the classical study of Ernst Robert Curtius on *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990) esp. 319–325 and, for a more recent overview, William J. Mills, "Metaphorical Vision: Changes in Western Atti-

draws direct parallels between natural phenomena and Scripture, in this case, Revelation 15:2:

Bathed in the golden glory of the setting sun, Lake Rosseau stretched before him like St. John's apocalyptic vision of a sea of glass mingled with fire. He read again the words in his New Testament, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass having the harps of God." As he read the peace of God suffused his being. [...] The soul of the man rose up to worship wordlessly the great beneficent Maker and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Here, he felt was the pulse of God.<sup>119</sup>

Watson's *Scarlet and Purple* also brings the blissful union of two loving couples. And although at the end of the novel they go their separate ways, one couple living in Japan, the other in England, their expectation is to be re-united through the imminent rapture: "If we do not meet here again, we shall meet in the air."<sup>120</sup> This expectation is not to be understood metaphorically, but literally and *Scarlet and Purple* as well as the other novels in Watson's trilogy is clearly an exercise in mediating this assurance.

*Scarlet and Purple* is, moreover, essentially concerned with the representation of God's plan of salvation in different media, thus metafictionally reflecting also on its literary representation in Watson's novel. At the beginning of the novel the painter Jack Quentin attempts to paint a Crucifixion but despairs when it comes to rendering the Saviour's face. This leads to a re-awakening of his old "Wanderlust" which, in the novel, turns into a symbol of his spiritual quest. Jack, confronted on his journey with various attempts at the representation of the salvation narrative, experiences its progressive interiorization.

In New York he witnesses a screening of Richard G. Hollaman's film adaptation of the *Oberammergau Passion Play* (1897) which was an immediate success when it was first shown in the producer's *Eden Musée* in

tudes to the Environment," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72 (1982) 237-253.

<sup>119</sup> Hunter, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, 87.

<sup>120</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 175.

New York in 1898.<sup>121</sup> Highly acclaimed by high-ranking clerics the film, which was in fact the first commercially produced motion picture, was screened twice a day for more than three months. In Watson's novel it is likewise praised: "As a spectacle, it is a triumph of the cinematograph art"<sup>122</sup> – but: "How dare they exploit the things of God for mere money-making!"<sup>123</sup>

Subsequently, somewhere in New Mexico, Jack witnesses a similar, though communal, re-creation of the Passion which is, however, no longer mediated through an artistic medium. Rather, in a surge of enthusiastic fervour, the actor demands to be nailed to the cross and re-lives, or dies, the Saviour's death: "the crucified man had died in his self-imposed act of religiousness."<sup>124</sup>

Finally, after being told the story of the (fictitious) painter Stenburg, Jack, who is looking to imbue his painting with the same realism as the film,<sup>125</sup> has finally achieved the right frame of mind and is able to finish his painting. Stenburg's Crucifixion in which through the "living faith"<sup>126</sup> of the artist art takes on a realism that shapes reality is credited, in Watson's novel, with having shown Nikolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf, the eighteenth-century founder of the evangelical Moravian Mission, the "dawn of eternal life."<sup>127</sup>

The emotive realism of Jack's own Crucifixion is contrasted with the allegorical nature of the work of the recent heathen (Japanese) convert Tom. His painting, an allegory eponymous with the novel itself whose title is a reference to the Whore of Babylon as described in Revelation 17:4 and

<sup>121</sup> The film was first shown on 28 January 1898 under the title *The Passion Play of Oberammergau*. Director was Henry C. Vincent, Christ was played by Frank Russell. See Charles Musser, "The Eden Musée in 1898: The Exhibitor as Creator," *Film and History* 11 (1981) 75-77 and for the film in its larger context of the passion play in America, including documentary material, Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (1990; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 208-218.

<sup>122</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 34.

<sup>123</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 35.

<sup>124</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 47.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 96.

<sup>126</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 92.

<sup>127</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 95.

with the sub-title "A 20th Century Allegory,"<sup>128</sup> is a scathing attack on contemporary religious practice. The magnificent church interior it represents is profaned by the doctrines propounded in it:

"THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST – A MYTH."  
 "THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST – A FALLACY."  
 "SCIENCE DEMONSTRATES MIRACLES IMPOSSIBLE."  
 "MAN EVOLVED, NOT CREATED."  
 "IMMORTALITY – SPECULATIVE, UNPROVEN."  
 "DOCTRINE OF SIN – A MISNOMER."  
 "NO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, SINCE NO IMMORTALITY."  
 "MAN MUST MAKE HIS OWN MILLENNIUM."  
 "IDEA OF A PERSONAL DEVIL – A FABLE."  
 "THE BIBLE NOT DIVINELY INSPIRED."<sup>129</sup>

Christ, similar to Jesus in Dostoyevsky's parable of "The Grand Inquisitor" (1879–1880), is rejected in the painting's world of modern Christianity and in sadness leaves the magnificent church unnoticed by the "worshippers." It is quite important to note, however, that the allegory does not extend to an explanation of the salvation narrative. It is in effect no more than a tool of criticism which then gives rise to a series of lectures of the artist in which he puts his criticism in plain words which then serve to convince his audience of the imminence of the Second Coming. Between the two paintings – one imbued with the emotive power of the imaginative realism of the Crucifixion scene to convert realism into "reality" and the other leading through its allegorical subject to a "theological" debate – Watson attempts to encompass the creation of faith and quite clearly celebrates the immediacy of the artistic vision as an important tool.

In *Scarlet and Purple*, Watson stopped short of writing the Apocalypse, which he had done already in *In the Twinkling of an Eye*, giving the lovers in his tale of pre-apocalyptic adventure some time to enjoy their earthly love – if with the imminent expectation of the Second Coming. Hunter, too, granted his lovers some romantic reprieve. Jenkins and LaHaye are more daring in their approach and, true to their literal interpretation of the Bible, shun any intimation of the allegorical. In the last of the *Left Behind* novels, *Kingdom Come. The Final Victory* (2007), the aston-

<sup>128</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 137.

<sup>129</sup> Watson, *Scarlet and Purple*, 137.

ishing leap is made to heavenly bliss after the sacrifice of the lovers' biological lives in the earlier volumes, and then to the Millennial Kingdom. Significantly, their love has taken on another quality:

And strange about Cameron and Chloe's relationship was that they still loved each other, but not romantically. Their entire hearts' desires were on the person of Jesus and worshiping Him for eternity. In the Millennium, they would live and labor together with Kenny and raise him, but as there would be no marrying or giving in marriage, their relationship would be wholly platonic.<sup>130</sup>

Another noteworthy shift, interpreted by Gribben as a "watershed in evangelical opinion,"<sup>131</sup> informs the second of the *Left Behind* novels, *Tribulation Force* (1996), in which the traditional Protestant identification of the Pope with Antichrist is mitigated:

A lot of Catholics were confused, because while they remained [after the Rapture], some had disappeared – including the new pope, who had been installed just a few months before the vanishings. He had stirred up controversy in the church with a new doctrine that seemed to coincide more with the "heresy" of Martin Luther than with the historic orthodoxy they were used to.<sup>132</sup>

The intention may be to avoid a schismatic rift and possibly even – if conditional – to offer reconciliation in the face of a more perilous threat: Islam is now turned more emphatically into the apocalyptic Other. Consequently, in *Glorious Appearing* (2004), the twelfth volume of the *Left Behind* series, non-Christians are condemned in remarkably graphic detail which, again, possesses a certain "Pre-Raphaelite" air reminiscent of the visual short-hand of expressive lines and garish colours with which the comic elicits the emotional or sensual response of the viewer that is vital to its art, as did the description of the demons in Peretti's *This Present Darkness*:<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Kingdom Come. The Final Victory* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007) 13.

<sup>131</sup> Gribben, "Rapture Fiction," 87.

<sup>132</sup> Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Tribulation Force. The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1996) 53.

<sup>133</sup> Cope, "Never Better Than Late," 190–198, refers to this stylistic feature as "spiritual baroque," but it seems to me that it may be indebted as much to the

Jesus merely raised one hand a few inches and a yawning chasm opened in the earth, stretching far and wide enough to swallow all of them. They tumbled in, howling and screeching, but their wailing was soon quashed and all was silent when the earth closed itself again.<sup>134</sup>

With reference to this very passage, *New York Times* editorial writer Nicholas D. Kristof accused LaHaye and Jenkins of perpetuating the same kind of dangerous fundamentalism and bigotry that Americans have criticized Eastern religions, particularly Islam, of disseminating:

If a Muslim were to write an Islamic version of "Glorious Appearing" and publish it in Saudi Arabia, jubilantly describing a massacre of millions of non-Muslims by God, we would have a fit. We have quite properly linked the fundamentalist religious tracts of Islam with the intolerance they nurture, and it's time to remove the notes from our own eyes.<sup>135</sup>

Even more obvious than in the *Left Behind* novels is the shift of the apocalyptic Other – and not only that of Christian fundamentalism – to Islam in Joel C. Rosenberg's *The Last Jihad* (2002). In this thriller, published just before the second Iraq war but set in 2010,<sup>136</sup> political events of the immediate present are woven into an apocalyptic narrative which – given the author's reputation as a pundit on Middle Eastern affairs<sup>137</sup> –

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comic which, in fact, is one of the preferred channels of evangelical and fundamentalist outreach, see, for instance, the comics by Jack Chick, especially his small format comic tracts, or the Truth for Youth comics series.

<sup>134</sup> Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing. The End of Days* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2004) 380.

<sup>135</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, "Jesus and Jihad," *The New York Times*, 17 July 2004 (6 February 2009), <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C06E5D7153AF934A25754C0A9629C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>> (accessed 6 January 2009).

<sup>136</sup> Rosenberg's thriller begins with a terrorist 'air strike' very much like those committed on 11 September 2001, if directed at the American President's motorcade, but the author insists that his novel was written before the destruction of the Twin Towers. For the interpretation by dispensationalists of the Iraq war as an "end time event," see Michael Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire* (London/New York: Tauris, 2004) 67.

<sup>137</sup> Joel C. Rosenberg, "Spiritual Journey," <<http://www.joelrosenberg.com/spiritual.asp>> (accessed 6 January 2009).

tends to confirm the close interrelation of the experience of a crisis and the proliferation of fundamentalist fiction:

Iraq. It's the epicentre of evil in the modern age. It's a breeding ground for terrorism. They've been doing everything they possibly can to buy, build, or steal nukes, not to mention chemical and biological weapons. [...] We hit Baghdad and Tikrit, and the world will know we mean business.<sup>138</sup>

The rhetoric is very much the same as in Hunter's novel, if somewhat more vulgar, and the following exchange evocatively traces the shift of America's apocalyptic Other over the past five decades and confirms the inevitability of its resolve to don the "armour of righteousness:"

"The lesson of Vietnam was never fight a just war – a war against an Evil Empire and its proxies who seek to enslave mankind – unless you intend to win. The lesson of Afghanistan was don't fight a war you have no business winning. And the lesson of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Mr. Secretary, was that a president must never – *never* – flinch from using any and all means necessary to prevent the wholesale slaughter of American citizens and our allies."

"Sir, this is repaying evil for evil. It's becoming the very essence of what we hope to defeat."

"No, no, no – it's not. It's not. It's stopping evil once and for all."<sup>139</sup>

These are the words of the American President in Rosenberg's novel whose final decision is reached under "prayer cover:" "Yet, somehow, he didn't feel plagued by fear. Instead, he could feel the prayers of a billion souls lifting him up, and a peace that seemed to pass all understanding."<sup>140</sup> But this peace of mind has no place on earth: The novel ends with the nuclear destruction of Baghdad, the ancient and renewed Babylon, through American missiles. And although the complete military victory may suggest "closure," the last words of the novel make quite unmistakably clear that this is a misconception: "And yet," in view of the bright fire mushroom over the Mesopotamian plain, "in his heart, MacPherson [the American President] knew it had really just begun."<sup>141</sup> As the reader is well aware, to vanquish evil for good is not possible for humankind in the

<sup>138</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 208.

<sup>139</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 231.

<sup>140</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 293.

<sup>141</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 335.



apocalyptic scenario and once again the final showdown between the forces of Good and Evil is (merely) deferred in Rosenberg's thriller – fittingly the sequel to *The Last Jihad* was published in 2003 as *The Last Days*.

There will always rise another Evil Empire, a term notoriously first applied to the Soviet Union by Ronald Reagan and easily transferred in Rosenberg's novel to Iraq,<sup>142</sup> if only in the imagination of the paranoid. But as the Evil Empire changes so has changed American political self-definition in a process that may be charted alongside the popular success of recent fundamentalist fiction. While still contained within the archetypal pattern of the apocalyptic imagination and the construction of the cosmic enemy, the parameters have changed in that, as Michael Northcott suggests,

the political leadership of America, which once saw itself as the new Zion, is now mostly converted from postmillennialism to premillennialism in its attitude to the Holy Land: instead of rebuilding Zion in America, America is now committed financially and strategically to rebuilding Zion as the State of Israel.<sup>143</sup>

Rosenberg's thriller conspicuously documents this shift. The author, himself "an evangelical Christian from an Orthodox Jewish heritage,"<sup>144</sup> dedicated the novel to his wife, concluding with the well-known formula of yearning from the Pessach Haggadah: "next year in Jerusalem." The portentous formula, smacking in this context of Christian Zionism, the envisaged conversion of the Jews and an apocalyptic future, is taken up in the novel by the American President when he explains his vision to a friend:

We can wipe out terrorism and bring peace and prosperity to the modern Middle East. We can do what people have been thinking about and dreaming about and praying about for five thousand years, Jon. Next year in Jerusalem. Peace in the Middle East.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>142</sup> The first recorded use of the phrase occurred in Reagan's speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, FL, on 8 March 1983.

<sup>143</sup> Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm*, 67.

<sup>144</sup> Joel Rosenberg, "Spiritual Journey."

<sup>145</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 146.

These sentiments are validated in the novel through a converted Israeli Jew who echoes the well-known fundamentalist beliefs:

I've come to believe that there's something supernatural at work here, Jon. Unseen forces are at work – angels and demons, powers of darkness and light – that move quietly and mysteriously, like the wind. You can't see wind. You can't hear it. You can't taste it. But it's real. You can see its effects. And so it is with these unseen forces battling for control in the holy land. They're real. They're alive. They're shaping events here, turning some men into heroes and others into fanatics.<sup>146</sup>

Dying after an Arab terrorist assault, the same Jew "cryptically" avers: "I don't believe God is quite done with us yet," then to explain more fully in words which, in view of the novel's ending, can only be described as highly cynical: "With Israel. With the Jewish people. I think He's got some big plans for us yet. I also think He's got some plans for the Iraqis, as well."<sup>147</sup>

The literary and literalist interpretation of current events through fundamentalist fiction could hardly be more obvious than in this instance. Published at the brink of the second Iraq war, these words resonate a very real threat which, in conjunction with a trite patriotism<sup>148</sup> and coupled with the dehumanization of the Iraqis,<sup>149</sup> seems to be geared towards the unconditional and unquestioning promotion of the "megalomaniac view of oneself as the elect, wholly good, abominably persecuted yet assured of ultimate triumph"<sup>150</sup> – ostensibly in response of the crisis provoked by Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction: the novel's title refers to Saddam Hussein's pet name for the nuclear missile Iraq has assembled and is in the process of launching against America when the successful counter-strike intervenes.

While it seems hardly accurate to say that the fundamentalist leap into fiction is a development only of the last two decades, as has been suggested by Douglas E. Winter, who claims that "the transition of the prophecy genre into fiction was signaled [*sic*] by Pat Robertson's disastrous dis-

<sup>146</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 279.

<sup>147</sup> Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 291.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 196.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Rosenberg, *The Last Jihad*, 170.

<sup>150</sup> Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 309.

aster novel *The End of the Age* (1995) and Lindsey's *Blood Moon* (1996),<sup>151</sup> it is certainly true that fundamentalist fiction has burgeoned especially since the publication of these and a number of similar novels. The magnitude of this success is obviously an indication that recent fundamentalist fiction has hit a nerve. Its appeal seems due, for one thing, to its parasitical use of popular genres and may thus coincide, to some extent, with the ongoing expansion of the print mass market. More importantly, the genres fundamentalist fiction makes use of are well suited to accommodating the cosmic binaries of its paranoid and apocalyptic world view. In fact, the mental disposition towards the creation of these very binaries, mentioned in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter, seems to permit and even to promote its proliferation, making it a part of mainstream popular culture. Stimulated in the latter half of the 1990s by expectations of the approaching millennium and galvanized by the events of and after 11 September 2001 and the hysteria they produced, it may then hardly be surprising that the fundamentalist maze way seems to have garnered interest and thus significance and, to some extent, even validity in a larger context and that, by extension, a widespread lowering of the threshold of acceptance towards fundamentalist fiction, precisely because the majority maze way suddenly and ever so subtly seemed to approach it, saw to its multiplication and has made its sales figures soar. But fundamentalist fiction is not a millennial phenomenon. It gives rather, as I have argued, a particular expression to a genotypical pattern of mythopoeia. As such it can be observed at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century and traced to the present. And as such it may, prior to the near elimination of the literal from the equation of the fourfold sense of Scripture, perhaps also be traced into the past, if in a different mode. To prognosticate its future development would smack of prophecy. But then, there will never be an end to crises – nor to the desperate need to find a way through the maze of human existence.

<sup>151</sup> Douglas E. Winter, "Apocalypse Tomorrow," *The Washington Post*, final edition (12 September 1999), section: *Book World*: 1999, X09.

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