
The American Dream? Capitalism, Literalism, and Their Role in Evangelical Apocalypticism

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¹The supreme values in whose service man should live, especially when they were very hard on him and exacted a high price—these social values were erected over man to strengthen their voice, as if they were commands of God, as “reality,” as the “true” world, as a hope and future world. Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems “meaningless”—but that is only a transitional stage. —*Friedrich Nietzsche. Will to Power 7.*

This is a project about value. Values surround every individual in daily life in numerous forms. Democratic values, capitalist values, and religious values flood the daily media to the delight or disdain of particular individuals. However, many of these values can oppose each other as individual beliefs conflict surrounding society. This is no more evident in the patriotism often expressed by Evangelicals and disdain at the removal of “God” from State offices. Even more subtle are the values put forth by a capitalist State which infiltrate the concrete value systems of religious people. At the turn of the millennium, capitalist structures, such as Hollywood with its production of “blockbuster” movies, found the apocalyptic theme valuable, as did Evangelicals. With barely a missed-breath in the Y2K New Years’ celebrations, the value of apocalypticism dwindled for Hollywood, but American Evangelicals have steadily increased its value for religious and political purposes.

The goal of this paper is to show how a capitalist culture affects this new rise in apocalypticism. Using the *Left Behind* Series, I will first show how Christianity has fused with the capitalist market producing a commodity that carries a certain moral message reacting against American society on an ethical level. At this point, it will be imperative to introduce Deleuze and Guattari's theories developed in *Anti-Oedipus* to explain relationships between ethics and economy. Using the paradigms of the despot and the capital society, I will show that Evangelicals live under a spiritualized "despotic" paradigm while engaging in a capital society. This disjunction between the spiritualized despotic paradigm expressed through literalism and engagement in a capital society produces a vicious circle of "spiritual consumerism" which ultimately leads to frustration and dissatisfaction, which can express itself in the form of apocalypticism.

The most recent flavor of apocalypticism seen in America comes in the popular Evangelical book series *Left Behind*. In this series Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins take dispensational premillennial theology and spin a tale of characters that missed the rapture of the Church. The main characters, after a religious conversion to Evangelical Christianity, battle the Antichrist and work to survive in a catastrophic world filled with plagues, chaos, and carnage reminiscent of the Egyptian exodus myth. John Nelson Darby formulated this particular form of dispensational theology in the 1860's in England and Cyrus Scofield popularized the theology in his 1909 reference Bible which contained detailed notes relating specific scripture passages to end-time events discussed by Darby. Several questions arise from this brief history. If dispensational premillennialism has been around for so long, why is it so popular now, almost 150 years later? Fundamentalists have always found the theology popular, but besides Hal Lindsey's *Late, Great Planet Earth*, the theology has found little light in the cultural marketplace. If we were theologians, we could wrangle over proper interpretation of biblical passages in light of historical events. This certainly has its own value, but for the present question at hand, there is a method that cuts deeper to the issue at hand. Why do American Evangelicals want this return of Christ which brings all this turmoil upon the earth and "unbelievers"? This question, in my

opinion, is the more pressing and interesting and the answer lies not within a hermeneutical approach to the Bible, but rather with an examination of American capitalistic culture; a culture, against which few would argue, resonates deeply with the patriotism and lifestyle of the majority of Evangelicals.

With any project of this sort, one must define the category of American Evangelicals. Peter Williams designates American Evangelicals as Christians who emphasize three distinct aspects: a conversion experience, a desire to proselytize others, and a reliance on the Bible as sole authority (Williams, 376-77). Although this definition is adequate for the task at hand, it is helpful to elaborate their belief in the Bible as authority. Their interpretation of the Bible is literal, meaning that they interpret the events recorded in the pages of scripture as historical fact. Thus, Adam and Eve, Noah, and David were real human beings whose actions God inspired certain authors to record in holy writ. The same is true for the book of Revelation, where the Antichrist, the whore of Babylon, and the heavenly judgments will be as real as any historical event.

Before one can examine the relationship between capitalism and apocalypticism, one must first diagnose the culture in which these apocalyptic tendencies have become popular. The so-called "postmodern" philosophers offer a number of helpful observations as they take into account the effects of capitalism, pop culture, the media, and their influence on human ideals. Modern philosophy taught the individual experienced alienation and existential angst in the face of culture. Frederic Jameson suggests that such diagnoses are no longer relevant and fragmentation now replaces alienation as a description of the individual. He describes alienation as a problem of expression where the individual attempts to express his/her subjectivity, but in doing so experiences isolation from the greater culture surrounding him/her. Postmodern culture eliminates this dilemma and creates another one in its place. Jameson states, "As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centered subject may also mean not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to

do the feeling" (Jameson, 15). Postmodern culture promises deliverance from the existential angst experienced at the end of modernism, but in its place, capitalist society sucks the individual into a numbing trance where easily accessible pop novels and reproduction posters replace "distinctive" artistic experiences. Society's replacement of the original and distinctive with the kitsch and reproduced anaesthetizes the individual to the point of ignorance and apathy.

Deleuze and Guattari's explanation of desire makes understanding this fragmentation possible. Again, the vast majority of modern philosophers and psychologists analyzed desire as that experience in the face of lack. One desired some object when s/he was lacking that particular object. However, desire is more complicated than that. First, desire is productive and does not lack – it is not tied to any particular object necessarily. They state, "Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing..." (Deleuze and Guattari, 26). Second, human beings experience multiple desires simultaneously, and often, experience multiple conflicting desires simultaneously. But desires are not inherent in the individual, instead according to Deleuze and Guattari, society and other external influencing factors create and shape desire. "Desire and its object are one and the same thing." Without a subject, there is no self to speak of, and if one attempts to speak of the self, which self of conflicting desires is s/he going to speak? Thus, instead of one coherent self that experiences alienation and angst, humanity is left with fragments of the individual, i.e. fragmentation.

The Commodification of Religion and Politics

The religious sphere is not exempt from this diagnosis of fragmentation and numbness, as it has fused together the religious message with consumer products. Religion, in particular Evangelical Christianity, is for sale and commodified no differently than anything else in the popular culture marketplace. R. Laurence Moore points out that starting in the 1950's:

Religion accepted its responsibility to provide entertainment but at the same time acknowledged that entertainment could be delivered in various ways and by various sponsors. For many Americans the spiritual help available in churches or in movie houses or on television or at a businessman's prayer breakfast tended to become equivalent." ...From one perspective, however, it was becoming hard to view religion as something distinct from popular culture (Moore, 241).

Moore traces the development of Christian attitudes toward leisure activities in America from the Puritans to Evangelical Christians. The Puritans saw entertainment as something "worldly," as something immoral; however, in the twentieth century, with the technologies of mass communication, conservative Evangelicals used these communicative forms as a means of influencing American values. Consumer culture has so blended the means and the message as to make them virtually inseparable. Will Herberg remarked, "It is only too evident that the religiousness characteristic of America today is very often a religiousness without religion, a religiousness with almost any kind of content or none, a way of sociability or 'belonging' rather than a way of reorienting life to God" (Herbert, quoted in Moore, 243). This sociability has evolved in mainstream Evangelicalism into its own separate society, a "Christian" society which is still primarily dependent upon the marketplace, producing a "spiritual consumerism."

Evangelicals have created an identical consumer market of religious goods, mimicking the greater pop culture of American society. In 1987, Evangelical pop music sales records topped 300 million dollars, or eight percent of the music market at large. In Christian bookstores, one can purchase not only "Christian" self-help books pertaining to law, medicine, or sex, but also t-shirts with clever Christian messages, coffee mugs with Bible verses on them, decorative vases and figurines. All this in addition to a plethora of tailor-made Bibles, which one can choose between bonded or genuine leather, hardcover or softcover, men's, women's, or teen's devotional Bibles, which leads Wayne Elzey to remark, "[m]odern Bibles are compromises. They hitch a state-of-the-art technology to a state-of-the-heart theology" (Elzey, 1734). This "spiritual consumerism" has had two main consequences. First, it has alienated Evangelicals into

their own society which mimics the popular culture at large. Moore concludes:

A sizable portion of the Protestant Evangelical community has made its peace with commercial culture by deciding to become a 'bigger road side attraction.' If that requires arranging church services to accommodate nightclubs atop space needles, or equipping churches with skating rinks and bowling alleys, then so be it. The promoters of Christian commercial culture in Orange County, California, wisely decided to publish its own Yellow Pages. That was the only easy way to distinguish the Christian product from the competition (Moore, 255).

The need for a Christian Yellow Pages implies that Evangelicals are looking to financially support other Evangelicals. Their products and services are in some way superior to the products and services provided by unbelievers. Second, it has equated/commodified the Christian message to the purchase of goods. Evangelicals still value prayer, fasting, and church attendance, but a capitalist society values the number of Christian music cds one owns and the quantity of Christian books filling one's shelves. Both now measure "spirituality." The *Left Behind* Series is one of the latest commodities on the Christian market, now boasting over fifty million copies sold in the entire series. Yet the simple availability of the series does not answer the question of its popularity, but rather, the message of the books resonates on at least two surfaces with Evangelicals: mainly conservative politics and the concept of transcendence.

The creation of the Moral Majority in the 1980's along with the political ideas accompanying Reagan's presidency (Lahaye was instrumental in both) is the prime example of these ideas which have carried over into the nineties and the new millennium. This odd mix of dispensationalism and politics causes Moore to remark, "The political activism of fundamentalists and Pentecostals has struck some observers as an anomaly. They asked: are not most of them premillennialists who see the near approach of the Rapture followed in seven years by Armageddon? Why should they care who governs the mass of mortals who are doomed to extinction?" (ibid, 250). He concludes, "Strong belief energizes people. With respect to the politics of the 1980's, signs that the world had entered

the 'end times' brought various enemies into sharp focus for Protestant fundamentalists. Politics was a way of holy revenge that separated those who knew why Christ was coming again from those who did not" (ibid). In the *Left Behind* series, politics is still a separating factor, but it is not a separation between those who know *why* Christ is coming again from those who are ignorant, but rather a separation between those for whom Christ is coming again and those who will be left behind. This designation is subtle, yet vital to the function and interest of the series as a whole. Bruce Barnes, one of the primary characters in the first few books, was an assistant pastor at an Evangelical church who misses the Rapture. He remarks that he was not a "real" Christian, but merely attended church where his occupation was the pastor. Instead of going to visit parishioners, he would go golfing, and shirk other pastoral duties. Although this character is not politicized directly, it is clear through reading the books that "real" Christians are those who are pro-life, anti-Catholic, oppose gay rights, and throughout Lahaye's non-fiction writings, those who oppose "secular humanism" and recognize it as "evil." Lahaye demonstrates this distinction in his book, *Are We Living in the End Times?*. According to Lahaye, one of the sure signs concerning the end of the world is the apostasy within the Christian Church. This "apostasy" simulates the leftist politics Lahaye deplores. In his own words:

Relationships between socialistic politics and theological apostasy have been consistent. The early modernists rejected the basic teachings of Christianity, such as the virgin birth of Christ, His deity, His sinlessness, and many other essential doctrines. Since that left them no spiritual message for the people, they came up with the social gospel. This has been the one consistent chord of the apostate movement in America and has thrust its adherents into the forefront of the social revolution. Today most liberal denominations are aligned with liberal social causes, while theological conservatives tend to align themselves with conservative government policy. In fact, today's vicious attack on moral absolutes has not been led merely by secular humanists but has been advocated by liberal ministers of many mainline denominations and leaders of the National Council of Churches. Some of the religious leaders who are most aggressively pushing homosexuality are apostates on the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, the deity of Christ, and the inerrancy of Scripture. An apostate in theology will hardly adhere to the moral directives of the Scriptures! (Lahaye and Jenkins, 76-77).

The political concern carries a tone of despair as Lahaye sees the majority of American education and politics taken over by secular humanism which seeks to eradicate Christianity. Thus, although the specifics are political and cultural ideas, the general motivation underlying them is a belief that Christian values are being oppressed in America; a belief which is not only held by Lahaye, but the overwhelming majority of Evangelicals (Smith, 70).

One of the primary reasons for Lahaye's political rhetoric is his belief that current political events are the fulfillment of a literal interpretation of biblical prophecy. In his *The Beginning of the End*, Lahaye remarks that the sheer number of biblical prophecies being fulfilled today indicate that the end of the world is at hand (Lahaye, *Beginning*, 31). The major sign that has thrown the world into its last days is the fulfillment of a prophecy recorded in Matthew 24:7, which states, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in various places." This event, according to Lahaye is World War I. Lahaye analyzes this verse stating that such an event must meet four requirements: a war that covers the entire world, famine, disease, and earthquake). Breezing through Western history, he debunks other historical events as possible fulfillments of this prophecy and shows how World War I and its aftermath meet all of these four requirements. The other major historical/political event that fulfilled a prophecy concerning the world's end was the establishment of Israel as a recognized nation (ibid, 43-50).

The fulfillment of these apocalyptic prophecies exceed beyond historical events into social and philosophical movements. Lahaye interprets James 5:1 as a sign of the end. "Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is, of you, kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," is fulfilled by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and constant labor disputes in the United States. Not only historical events, but the influence of particular philosophies also represents the coming of the end. In his own words, "Of one thing I am certain—the same devilish power that produced French skepticism, German rationalism, Nietzscheism, Communism, socialism, and many other intellectual evils

produced religious apostasy,” and this apostasy is a sign of the end, the fulfillment of II Thes. 2:3 (ibid, 99).

To claim Lahaye is the sole voice, or even the dominant voice within Evangelical Christianity would be far from the truth. The diversity of Evangelical beliefs regarding politics and culture makes any of his political and social claims difficult to apply across the board. Certainly, there are Evangelicals who hold conservative political ideals, but Christian Smith points out that there is no “one” Evangelical voice and that Evangelical parishioners often differ significantly in their political ideologies from their Evangelical leaders. Although individual perspectives vary greatly among Evangelicals, what Smith fails to recognize is the underlying commonalities prevalent among the group. The overwhelming commonality is the belief that America was/is a “Christian” nation built upon the Christian faith of its founding fathers.ⁱⁱ Because of the perceived oppression of Evangelicals stemming from American society’s moral degradation, any connection between the “Christian” origins of the country’s founding and signs of the apocalypse will resonate with mainstream Evangelicals. Differences abound, but there are underlying similarities which appeal to the majority living in an American society. Thus, one must analyze those similarities which exist in American society.

The Disjunction of the Despotic and Capital

Deleuze and Guattari establish three economic paradigms that have operated throughout history: the savage, the despotic, and the capitalistic. For sake of function and space, I will specifically address only the despotic and the capitalistic; although all the paradigms function on the relationships of debt. The general law of the despotic society is that everything is owed to the despot. Deleuze and Guattari state in reference to the State, “Money—the circulation of money—is means for rendering the debt infinite” (Deleuze and Guattari, 197). The despot is the owner of the land and its resources, thus rendering those who work the land constantly indebted to the despot. This debt transcends mere economic relationships, however. Deleuze and Guattari add, “There is always monotheism on the horizon of despotism: the debt becomes a debt of existence, a debt of existence of the subjects

themselves" (ibid). One cannot think of this debt solely as economic; it is economic primarily, but carries over into all areas of life. In comparison with the savage society, Eugene Holland states:

The figure of the despot thus replaces the earth as the socius and original ground of all lineages, in direct filiation with what is characteristically a monotheistic deity, and supplements the networks of savage alliance with a new alliance from above that links him not with this or that specific family or clan, but with his subject-peoples as a whole, and as an undifferentiated mass (Holland, 75).

The despotic society requires that a divorce occurs between economic needs of production and the development of law. Because the state is too large for the despot to govern directly, a written law is decreed for subjects to follow. The written word thus replaces the spoken word from the mouth of the despot. The conclusion, Holland states, is that "In order to make sense of these signifiers of a mysterious written voice that speaks from on high, state subjects must have recourse to interpretation. Writing no longer directly designates valued objects and desire...while allocating them within the savage community; writing now entails wanting to know what an absent Other wants (ibid, 77). This writing of the law also affects the raw desire of the individual. Instead of an individual desiring objects, s/he desires another's desire, the desire of the despot (ibid).

The despotic society allows one to analyze how Evangelicals have attempted, knowingly or unknowingly, to create a despotic form of discourse through biblical literalism. By emphasizing the historical facticity of scripture and the "clear cut" meaning of the words, they have developed a concrete, unquestionable interpretation of the "law." But theologically, Evangelicals do not recognize it as *an* interpretation. They project their interpretation upon the divine despot through terms like "inerrancy," "inspiration," and "God-breathed." Thus, one can take the Bible and decipher the concrete meaning of these "True" events and unchanging moral/social norms. Yet this is not a human activity—it is God who wrote these words and made their meaning evident to humanity. This echoes the Deleuzian relationship of voice and graphism in the despotic state. They state concerning this relationship:

It is the despot who establishes the practice of writing...; it is the imperial formation that makes graphism into a system of writing in the proper sense of the term. Legislation, bureaucracy, accounting, the collection of taxes, the State monopoly, imperial justice, the functionaries' activity, historiography: everything is written in the despot's procession (Deleuze and Guattari, 202).

When writing occurs, a divorce also occurs, in this case, between the despot's voice and the written material, which lends an uncertainty to the actual meaning of the text. Deleuze and Guattari state:

It is perhaps at this juncture that the question, "What does it mean?" begins to be heard, and that problems of exegesis prevail over problems of use and efficacy. The emperor, the good—what did he mean? In place of segments of the chain that are always detachable, a detached partial object on which the whole chain depends; in place of a polyvocal graphism flush with the real, a biunivocalization forming the transcendent dimension that gives rise to linearity (ibid, 206).

The biunivocalization is the bond formed between author and audience. The audience assumes the author has an intended meaning as the writing pertains to the law, which the audience has to decipher through written letters. The author is now transcendent; s/he is the holder of meaning and the owner of truth. Along with the assumption of meaning is the assumption of the audience's ability to attain that meaning; that one can attain the transcendent realm. As far as Evangelicals are concerned, writing, i.e. the Bible, is the biunivocalization between God and humanity through which transcendence can occur. The linearity is that elucidation of scripture via literalism from which the audience follows to the author, God.

A disjunction occurs when the Evangelical maintenance of writing according to a despotic paradigm enters into the economic and social relations of a capital market. Regarding the market, Deleuze and Guattari state: "The capitalist use of language is different in nature; it is realized or becomes concrete within the field of immanence peculiar to capitalism itself, with the appearance of technical means of expression that correspond to the generalized decoding of flows, instead of still referring, in a direct or indirect form, to despotic overcoding" (ibid, 240). Instead of the written word serving the desires of the despot with regard to law and meaning,

language serves the desires of the capital market. In the despotic society, the despot owns everything; thus, any innovation or writing serves the purposes of the despot. In the capital society, innovations come about according to their value in profit. Deleuze and Guattari state, "An innovation is adopted only from the perspective of the rate of profit its investment will offer by lowering the production costs; without this prospect, the capitalist will keep the existing equipment, and stand ready to make a parallel investment" (ibid, 233). This innovation need not be some technical machine or invention, but knowledge, education, and information are just as much a part of capital as human labor (ibid, 234). In the capitalist society, culture forsakes the despot, and the goal is no longer law, but profit.

Yet the capitalist system is completely self-perpetuating in that there is no creator for whom to produce, thus there must be some other reason for desiring-machines to constantly produce to the point of overabundance. Deleuze and Guattari state:

The apparatus of antiproduction is no longer a transcendent instance that opposes production, limits it, or checks it; on the contrary, it insinuates itself everywhere in the productive machine and becomes firmly wedded to it in order to regulate its productivity and realize surplus value.... This effusion from the apparatus of antiproduction is characteristic of the entire capitalist system; the capitalist effusion is that of antiproduction within production at all levels of the process. On the one hand, it alone is capable of realizing capitalism's supreme goal, *which is to produce lack in the large aggregates, to introduce lack where there is always too much*, by effecting the absorption of overabundant resources (ibid, 235).

Capitalism's brilliance is the ability to produce contradicting flows in society, the ability to turn desire into need. Capitalism is only successful if it is continuously growing, constantly making profit, constantly absorbing its overabundance. Thus, even within an enormous amount of goods, one still feels compelled to buy more. It is not enough to have ice cream; I must have Ben and Jerry's. I cannot only have one kind of Ben and Jerry's, I need five different kinds. Yet in all of this, ice cream is not characteristic of the fulfillment for the instinctual drive of nourishment; it is a dessert, a pleasure. In truth, one desires dessert but needs to eat. The psyche of capitalism

nourishes a sense of lack in the face of abundance. One can never have enough; one must always need more, not because one is truly lacking, but because one perceives him/herself as lacking. Regarding religion, it is not enough that I attend church, pray, and study the Bible. I must buy a book about how to study the Bible. One book is not enough; I must buy another book on prayer. I must buy a mug with a verse about prayer inscribed on it. I must have an entire set of mugs for my family. As Colin Campbell states, "Hence no sooner is one satisfied than another is waiting in line clamoring to be satisfied; when this one is attended to, a third appears, then subsequently a fourth, and so on, apparently without end" (Campbell, 37).

Whereas the despotic regime perpetuated infinite debt to the despot, the capitalistic society perpetuates "infinite" debt owed solely to the market. By maintaining a despotic mindset within a capital market, one pays his/her debt with economic activity rather than adherence to law. One attempts to monetarily pay for his/her existence with capital. With Evangelicals the pathways cross, adherence to God's law translates into participation with the "Christian market," constant purchasing of goods which will enhance one's knowledge of God, which is the essence of "spiritual consumerism." Spiritual consumerism attempts to satisfy the infinite debt owed the despot, but the despot receives no payment while the market grows fat.

Evangelical Economics

The Evangelical discourse allows individuals to participate in capitalism while maintaining a despotic frame of reference. Using psychological terms Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the despotic state produces paranoia whereas the capital system produces schizophrenia.ⁱⁱⁱ One understands paranoia as a designation of an "absolute system of belief where all meaning was permanently fixed and exhaustively defined by a supreme authority...." (Holland, 3). On the other hand; capitalism fosters schizophrenia "because the quantitative calculations of the market replace meaning and belief-systems as the foundation of society" (ibid, 2). When a specific group of people suffer from both economic paranoia and schizophrenia, one of the concluding results is apocalypticism. This is not

to say that there are not other groups who have different responses, but in this particular case, a frustration with society and subsequent perceived oppression result in this way. Evangelicals have taken their despotic mindset and put it into the market, in the form of information, but the market assigns value by profit, not meaning. Thus, what becomes important in the “spiritual market” is not good theology, but what sells. The profitability of the *Left Behind* Series, an apocalyptic message, has been ascribed value (and Truth) by the Evangelical community because of its profitability and record sales amounts.

The disjunction occurs when a community values meaning as a mode of transcendence in an immanent market that values profit. Transcendence, in this instance, is completed payment of the infinite debt. For example, in a feudal society, if a vassal was able to pay his debt to the lord and buy his own land, he would then himself be a lord, transcending the economic boundaries under which he was born. Evangelical transcendence is adherence to the absolute ethical norms derived from the discourse of biblical literalism. In terms of the despotic regime, adherence to the ethical norms will repay the infinite debt owed to God. The Evangelical discourse is a means of aiding this piety by selling religious goods. Now one expresses the ethical norms of the Bible by participation in the subculture, the “spiritual economy.” The difficulty is that goods within a capital market are valued according to profit, and not according to meaning. Evangelicals are producing massive amounts of books and music intended to give the consumer knowledge about God, i.e. a means of transcendence. However, this is impossible in a capitalistic society, because there is no transcendent authority giving value to meaning; instead the immanent market ascribes value according to profit. Language is valued only in terms of the profit it produces; meaning as essence no longer has value. Deleuze and Guattari sum up the grim reality by stating:

It is no longer the age of cruelty or the age of terror, but the age of cynicism, accompanied by a strange piety. ...Cynicism is the physical immanence of the social field, and piety is the maintenance of a spiritualized Urstaat; cynicism is capital as the means of extorting surplus labor, but piety is this same capital as God-capital, whence all the forces of labor seem to emanate (Deleuze and Guattari, 225).

The fusion of piety and consumer goods acts as a means of transcendence, but in reality, one is paying an infinite debt to an immanent market and not a transcendent God. The result is the worship of the capitalist goal: the constant circle of abundance and lack. Capitalist beings have no way out; Evangelicals have one way out; in a word, Rapture.

The disjunction of a despotic “attitude” within a capital system will only lead to further frustration and emptiness. This “absolute” discourse is brittle, it cannot bend or flex; only yield Truth, or be proven untrue. Any attempts to prove the paradigm untrue within the greater State/economic system will threaten to undermine the foundation of this Truth, and as such will appear as oppression. Thus, the threat to Evangelicals is not gay-rights groups, secular humanists, or atheists, rather, it is the culture at large, a culture which Evangelicals economically have embraced and desired. Deleuze, following Nietzsche’s example states, “these artists with a look of bronze, creating ‘an oppressive and remorseless machine,’ erecting before any perspective of liberation an ironclad impossibility” (ibid, 199). Such an “ironclad impossibility” must either hold or break. Because American society has turned against the Evangelical discourse of “Christian America,” this “impossibility” appears to be breaking, and consequently turning apocalyptic. The message of apocalypticism is one of social forfeit, and impatience at the opportunity of transcendence, a transcendence which brings the Evangelical not only heavenly promise, but also brings the heathen carnage and torment, in a word, tribulation. The Evangelical apocalypticism expressed by the *Left Behind* series may seem to be a reaction to groups threatening the beliefs of conservative Christian values, but underlying this threat is the stagnation produced by a capital economy. The secular humanists and the government are not oppressing the Evangelical community, even though Evangelicals may certainly perceive oppression as the government removes religious symbols from courtrooms and creates gay-rights laws. Yet Evangelicals are free to practice their religion and proselytize even if they are losing their influence in the political sphere (and that is debatable). If there is no real oppression, and oppression has been the defining factor in other apocalyptic groups, then some other force must be at work.

Apocalypticism, based on the discourse of Evangelical biblical literalism, is a means to break the vicious cycle of abundance and lack. It is the new means of transcendence, a transcendence meant to pay an infinite debt to God, but instead only furthers the boundaries of capitalism.

Notes

ⁱ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Walter Kaufmann, editor. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

ⁱⁱ One must understand that this claim is not intended to discredit the beliefs of the founding fathers themselves, but rather to recognize present-day scholar's interpretation projected onto those historical figures as a means to prove one's own political objectives.

ⁱⁱⁱ The reader must take into account that these psychological terms are not strict diagnoses of individuals within certain economies. It is not the case that everyone living under a capitalist system should be taking medication to combat schizophrenia. Rather, these terms serve as metaphors for the individual's mindset and functioning within these particular economies.

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