THE NEW RELIGIOUS RIGHT VS THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS: THE THRILL OF VICTORY AND THE AGONY OF DEFEAT

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> *"Many decisions made in this decade will determine the future of our children and grandchildren. Generations to come will be affected by what happens in these ten years..."*
>
> —Beverly LaHaye, President of Concerned Women for America

> *"[We fight] a conflict that will have profound implications for future generations"*
>
> —James Dobson, President of Focus on the Family

> *"We are engaged in a great spiritual war which will determine the future of our society. There is so much —so very, very much—at stake"*
>
> —Donald Wildmon, President of American Family Association

Many critics have argued that contemporary American society is wracked by controversies that will significantly shape its future. In *Beyond the Culture Wars*, Gerald Graff writes that society "is becoming so shell-shocked by cultural conflict and disagreement that it would rather escape from the battle than confront it and work things out" (viii). James D. Hunter agrees that the "culture wars" "will have enormous consequences for the evolution of American public culture" (307). Both the "shell-shocked" quality of society and the "enormous consequences" highlighted by the critics above have been evident over the last seven years in the controversy swirling around art funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

The NEA debates illustrate the growing tensions within contemporary American society between the sacred and the secular, the church and the state, the margins and the mainstream, and the private and the public. Gary Bauer, founder of the Family Research Council, a New Religious Right (NRR) public policy group, reflects the breadth of the NEA controversy when he argues that "The debate over funding the National Endowment for the Arts shows signs of turning from a mere Beltway skirmish into one of the cultural fault-lines of our society" ("NEA: The Non-Issue" 4). Richard Bolton, editor of *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts*, agrees with Bauer's diagnosis:

> *On the surface, this controversy may seem like much ado about nothing—a partisan clash over a tiny bit of the federal budget, a brouhaha of muddled arguments and confusing legislation. Nothing could be more mistaken. The clash over government funding was much more than an argument over art; it was a debate over competing social agendas and concepts of morality, a clash over both the present and future condition of American society.(3)*

While the Bauer and Bolton fall on opposite sides of the political fence, both agree that the NEA-debates will have tremendous repercussions for the "future" state of American society.

This paper focuses on the New Religious Right's projections of the "future" as it argues over the NEA.[1] More specifically, this study will analyze the apocalyptic rhetoric of three prominent NRR organizations who are in the vanguard of the anti-NEA movement, the American Family Association (AFA), Concerned Women for America (CWA), and Focus on the Family/Family Research Council (FOF/FRC).[2] The focus of critique will be the direct mail (monthly magazines, form letters, and ACTION MEMOS) and news releases generated from these groups during the height of the NEA conflict, between Andre Serrano's "Piss Christ" (August 1989) and NEA chairman John Frohnmayer's resignation (February 1992).

Although the groups I studied function within the NRR, the features of the NRR vary according to the particular group. Hunter explains the danger of treating any one group as a monolithic entity:

> *There are no modern manifestos declaring a coherent system of programs and goals. What actually exists in public discussions The New Religious Right was galvanized into action after a series of Supreme Court decisions, ranging from a 1962 ban on prayer in the public schools, the Engel decision, to* Roe vs. Wade *in 1973. These decisions confirmed "suspicions that the highest court in the land was engaged in a Kulturkampf against established mores" (Wills 117). Coupled with the cultural revolution of the late 1960s —feminism, the pill, sexual liberation, gay rights, etc.—these decisions led conservative Christians to believe that their "terrain" was being overrun by "pagans."*

In response to the seeming secularization of American society, conservative Christians in the 1970s, began, ... to see the benefits of being a more active participant in the public arena from which they had retreated; they had begun to feel threatened by secular humanism not just as a deceiver stealing individual souls but as an aggressive institutional

opponent, encroaching on the territory they had created. They were ready to fight back (Ammerman 4).

The displacement caused by changing social structures was the common link that are, very often, nothing more than jumbled accumulations of pronouncements, accusations, appeals, and partisan analyses. It would be foolish to deny the complexity of the divisions, the subtleties and ambivalent moral commitments in the hearts and minds of ordinary Americans. (107)

Because of these differences, one cannot assert that all NRR groups or all NRR followers abide by the apocalyptic principles of the three groups studied. The "family resemblances" among NRR groups, however, allow one to assert qualified generalizations.

After first surveying the relevant literature on apocalypticism, this critique will show that the works of critics of war rhetoric are useful in examining the apocalyptic genre of the NRR's rhetoric. While these critics have isolated the optimistic "promise of victory" as a powerful appeal during war, this study will show that their theory is incomplete because they overlook the use of pessimism to motivate "the troops." In sum, this critique builds on past studies of apocalyptic and pro-war rhetoric by examining the persuasive campaign of the New Religious Right against the National Endowment for the Arts as the NRR exploits both the promise of victory and the threat of defeat.

Apocalypticism Considered

Numerous rhetorical critics have explained the power and scope of the NRR's rhetoric by arguing that it is part of a genre of apocalyptic rhetoric. In his book *Arguing the Apocalypse*, O'Leary asserts that apocalyptic rhetoric is "discourse that reveals or makes manifest a vision of ultimate destiny, rendering immediate to human audiences the ultimate End of the cosmos in the Last Judgment" (5-6). This "ultimate destiny," in Brummett's words "is a mode of thought and discourse that empowers its audience to live in a time of disorientation and disorder by revealing to them a fundamental plan within the cosmos" (*Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric* 9). Echoing both O'Leary and Brummett, Ronald Reid contends that the doctrine of apocalypticism's persuasive appeal "resides in giving people who are discontented with their present and fearful of their future an explanation of their 'dark days' and reassurance of a better tomorrow" ("Apocalypticism and Typology" 238). The apocalyptic genre is rooted in an understanding of what today is, and what tomorrow will be. In other words, many critics of apocalyptic rhetoric find its persuasiveness in its ability to salve discontent and fear with reassurance—today may be bad, but tomorrow will ultimately be better; if not on earth, than at least in heaven.

Although the early critics of apocalypticism did little to distinguish between types of apocalyptic rhetoric, later critics use difference as their starting point. In evangelical Christianity, two major types of apocalyptic beliefs are advanced—premillennialism and postmillennialism. While both types of millennialism have a rhetorical trajectory that ends in optimism, "utopia," or a "new beginning" (Mixon and Hopkins 247), as both believe that Christ will ultimately be victorious in the "Last Days," they differ significantly in respect to chronology, means, ends on earth and emphasis. Chronologically, premillennialists believe that before Christ returns, "great tribulations" will occur, and an "anti-Christ will work great evil on the world" (Ritter 1). When Christ returns "there will be a cosmic clash—a struggle between Christ and the anti-Christ. In short, Christians must endure Armageddon before the ultimate victory of Christ and the arrival of the millennium" (Ritter 1). For these believers, "divine intervention" is emphasized over "human action" (O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* 85).

Postmillennialists order the end differently. The key chronological distinction between pre and postmillennialism is that in the latter, Christ returns after the millennial kingdom is established. In this eschatology, "the exact nature of Armageddon remains vague. There is less need to dwell on the final end-times (whatever they might be), as the focus of interest is on the coming millennium" (Ritter 2). Thus, postmillennialists "can be more vague about history's plan since we are only gradually entering the millennium and the actual apocalypse may be many centuries away" (Brummett, "Happy Ending" 3). For these believers, wars are not a sign of the end, for life on this earth will gradually improve: "Indeed, one of the central concerns in post-millennial rhetoric concerns how Christian believers can promote the millennium-hasten the coming of heaven on earth through improving the society or the individual" (Ritter 2). The result for the postmillennialist is that "the idea of progress is essential:" "history will gradually improve as it works toward a perfection" (Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic* 64). For these believers, humans can bring about "progressive change and improvement" in the world (O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* 84).

The above chronologies combined with the agency of change result in a dramatic difference in emphasis between pre and postmillennialism. Premillennialists, stressing God's omnipotence and control over earthly affairs, tend to be more passive. Postmillennialists, emphasizing humanity's free will and ability to effect change, tend to be more active. For premillennialists, the condition of the world will only worsen, thus they tend to withdraw from political activity. For postmillennialists, since the world can improve, the more active they are, the faster the Kingdom will be established. In sum, appeals to premillennialism are typically pessimistic, or in Burke's words "tragic." And appeals to postmillennialism are typically optimistic, or for Burke, "comic" (O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* 12, 84, 85, 178). [3]

Since most NRR groups lean towards premillennialism, the main question critics of these groups address is how the NRR can be politically active yet cling to an eschatology that induces passivity and pessimism.[4] In other words, how do premillennialist rhetors of the NRR attend to the tension between divinely mandated pre-destination and humanly expedient political work? Daniels, Jensen and Lichtenstein explore this tension with their question: "How can the movement embrace a pessimistic doctrine of God-willed world decline while optimistically advocating political action? " The answer they find is rooted in an examination of the relationship between Biblical law and Biblical gospel (248). Since Christians are commanded (law) to spread the "good news" (gospel), "[a]ctivism is viewed as a means to establish a climate for world evangelization" (260). Ritter suggests that "the losing struggle is redemptive; it purifies your faith and makes you eligible for God's kingdom in the next life" (9).

Although pessimistic in tone, premillennialism is optimistic regarding heavenly rewards and the promise of an ultimate utopia. O'Leary and McFarland explore the predestination/human will tension through an examination of Pat Robertson's presidential campaign — a campaign that "constructs an idiosyncratic synthesis of the premillennial and postmillennial visions and shifts the emphasis to revival and repentance." By edging towards postmillennialism, Robertson, a former premillennialist, tactically moves towards a rationale for human work to effect change. Wedded to

revival and repentance, this move allows Robertson to transcend his former theologically induced passivity (434-435, 442, 446).

While Robertson shifted over time from a premillennialist to a postmillennialist eschatology, the three NRR groups I studied, AFA, CWA, FOF/FRC, exploit both eschatological appeals simultaneously. Although these groups are careful to avoid explicit discussions of eschatology for fear of polarizing constituents who fall into more than one end-time camp (and some, like their conservative Roman Catholic and Jewish supporters who fall into no end-time camp), both eschatological orientations seep into their rhetoric. By grafting a metaphor of war, which entails the potential of victory to be persuasive, onto a premillennialist eschatology, which necessitates certain earthly defeat in order to be theologically sound, the NRR utilizes both optimism (postmillennialism) and pessimism (premillennialism) to chart out the future. By looking at how the NRR utilizes both appeals, we will see the power of using two different, contradictory, yet symbiotic projections of the future.[5]

The Rhetoric of War

Since apocalypticism is often co-joined with war, for "wars are a sign of the end" (Brummet, *Contemporary Apocalyptic* 58), and since the NRR believes that it is engaged in a "Culture War," its duel apocalyptic appeals can best be understood by surveying work on the metaphor of war. Reid argues that by studying the rhetoric of pro-war appeals, rhetorical critics "might help answer the much studied, but still unsatisfactorily-answered, question of why people willingly support some wars but are unwilling to support others" ("New England" 260). While Reid refers to physical wars, the "Culture War" engaged in by the NRR echoes literal warfare as "[t]he end to which these hostilities tend is the domination of one culture and moral ethos over all others" (Hunter 42). In his article "The Second Great Civil War," James Dobson writes that:

> *Nothing short of a great Civil War of Values rages today throughout North America. Two sides with vastly differing and incompatible world views are locked in a bitter conflict that permeates every level of society. Bloody battles are being fought on a thousand fronts, both inside and outside government. Open any daily newspaper and you'll find accounts of the latest Gettysburg, Waterloo, Normandy, or Stalingrad. Instead of fighting for territory or military conquest, however, the struggle now is for the hearts and minds of the people. It is a war over ideas. (15)*

The NRR's self-conscious use of "civil war" and "world war" analogies heightens the stakes of each individual battle and clearly delineates the existence of a "moral" and "immoral" side. Analogous to the first American Civil War, the NRR believes that the second American "Civil War" pits freedom against the right to enslave, and has at stake the unity of the country. If "freedom" loses the second "Civil War," the NRR believes that "The suffering, persecution, and pain ... will be immeasurable" (Wildmon, *The Home Invaders* 181-2). Analogous to WWII, the NRR believes that it is the "new Jew":

> *When leaders in society aim their guns toward a specific group of people whom they consider—and want others to consider-scum, that propaganda soon turns into reality. If Hitler taught us anything, surely it was that.... The "work of art" by Andrea (sic) Serrano was not the beginning. It will not be the end. Maybe, before the physical persecution of Christians begins, we will gain the courage to stand against such bigotry. I hope so. (Wildmon, "We Must Accept" 2)*

The NRR believes that the "physical persecution of Christians is a real possibility" (Wildmon, "We Must Accept" 2). Although certainly metaphoric, the analogies exploited by the NRR invite a comparison between figurative and literal warfare.

Although Wildmon, LaHaye, and Dobson face different exigencies than Lincoln, Churchill, and FDR, Burke suggests that physical and moral conflict can be compared as they utilize similar terminologies. He writes that two screens in conflict must come to terms—and the most fitting way to do so narratively is in terms of a contest. In some respects, a sheerly physical combat is not 'perfect' for all conditions.... But we are here concerned with principles, or 'firsts,'—and terms for physical combat are prior in our imagination (in our experience) to terms for moral combat. (*Language* 402-3)

Because terms for physical combat are "prior" in our imagination, they are often-times used as terms for moral combat. Burke further argues that "morals are fists" as "[m]ilitaristic patterns are fundamental to our 'virtue,' even the word itself coming from a word which the Latins applied to their warriors" (*Philosophy* 256). Although it would be naive to assume a one-to-one correlation between writing letters and shooting a cannon, "pro-war rhetoric" does provide a useful screen for the rhetorical critic of the "Culture Wars."

Optimism vs. Pessimism: Victory vs. Defeat

Using Harold D. Lasswell's germinal work, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, Reid delineates the characteristics of pro-war persuasive appeals that "transcend the specific circumstances in which particular spokesmen and their audiences find themselves" ("New England" 260). According to Reid, Lasswell "isolated three categories of appeals, which he calls 'war guilt,' 'satanism,' and the 'illusion of victory'" ("New England" 260). War guilt refers to laying blame for the cause of the war on the "other side" (Lasswell 47); satanism refers to the "insolence and depravity of the enemy" (Lasswell 77); and the illusion of victory refers to a nation's "conviction that it has a fighting chance to win" (Lasswell 102). The third of these appeals serves as the focus of this study. [6]

According to critics of war rhetoric, the belief in ultimate victory is "indispensable" to pro-war advocates, "if discouragement is not to sap determination and to precipitate internal friction and strife" (Lasswell 113). Burke articulates this "illusion of victory" in "War and Cultural Life":

> *War, when fought under conditions of totality, obviously requires the enlistment of art, of hortatory or admonitory rhetoric, of information presented in ways that cushion the discouragements of defeats or intensify the encouragement of victories. (406)*

From the French War of the 1750s through the Cold War, other critics agree with Burke's and Lasswell's description of a rhetoric of unequivocal victory. Reid suggests that pro-war rhetoric can only function if optimism is maintained through promises of a future victory: "Although history provides a few examples of zealots who are willing to martyr themselves in a lost cause" a fighting nation needs the "illusion of victory." People who are persuaded that "the prospects for victory are good" display an "amazing" willingness to fight ("New England" 272, 284).

The World Wars brought similar optimistic appeals. German quotes Lloyd George in WWI as he asserts: "They think we cannot beat them. It will not be easy. It will be a long job. It will be a terrible war. But in the end we shall march through terror to triumph" (111). The optimistic illusion provides a hope for the future—one in which "our side" triumphs over "their side." Critiquing pro-war appeals during WW II, William Rickert lodges his analysis of Churchill's rhetoric in Northrop Frye's romantic mode, whose end echoes the optimism of the above critics: After a "perilous journey" and "crucial struggle" the "exaltation of the hero" occurs. According to Rickert, this mode "always promised the eventual achievement of the light: even the darkest times were not without expectations that the light of a new day would ultimately shine on the worthy adventures" (112). In Churchill's words "the day of freedom will surely dawn" (107) as "we shall come through these dark and dangerous valleys into a sunlight broader and more genial and more lasting than mankind has ever known" (111).

The confidence found in the romantic mode is also reflected in the work of Carson and Hollihan. Carson, analyzing the Declaration of War of Franklin D. Roosevelt, asserts that the only goals mentioned by FDR were the "immediate ones" of "defense and ultimate victory" (31). Hollihan states that a major task of The Committee on Public Information was to "[convince] the enemy that America was such a powerful force that their best alternative was surrender" (243). A major part of this task was telling Americans "not to tell their neighbors pessimistic stories that might discourage them" (249). For both the external enemy and the internal public, optimism was key to the rhetoric of the war machine.

The belief in ultimate victory also undergirded rhetoric during much of the Cold War. As McKerrow writes: "The potency of victory as one of the terms constituting the reality known as the Cold War cannot be denied" (2). Similar to the "illusion of victory" of WWI and II, Truman's rhetoric concerning Korea was underscored by what Dennis Brogan has called the "illusion of omnipotence." As McKerrow explains: "Accompanying American desire for total victory was the belief that such victory was continually within our grasp.... Both the victory theme and the belief that it could be achieved interacted to form the social reality of the public." In order to engender this social reality, Truman emphasized the "we shall not fail" theme" as he gave speeches that exuded "confidence and unbridled optimism" to assert that "victory was assured" (3-5). [7]

The optimism of the previous wars is also reflected in critiques of contemporary wars. In "Remembering the Future," Stuckey analyzes Bush's Gulf War rhetoric through the lens of WWII and Vietnam war presidential rhetoric to conclude that Bush "looked to the WW II paradigm as a model for action" (253). While FDR was teleologically optimistic, "victory belonged to the Allied forces" (248), Johnson and Nixon were more pessimistic as they had a "rhetorical lack of purpose; an absence of a vision of victory" (249). As Stuckey notes, "Roosevelt gave the public a fear to run from and a hope to work toward; Johnson and Nixon offered only the fear" (249). The result of this pessimism for Johnson and Nixon was that "[l]acking a vision of victory's rewards, Americans also lacked total commitment to the war" (250). Bush, however, hearkened back to a "vision of the world to come," and therefore, like Roosevelt "[allowed] people to focus on the peaceful and hopeful outcome rather than the painful and bloody process of war" (251).

While most war critics conclude that pro-war rhetors assert that ultimate victory is certain, one could also argue that the fears of defeat could also be a powerful motivating tool. Why should individuals join the fight if victory is "assured"? Could not pessimism be a powerful motivating force? Most war critics marginalize the inverse of their optimistic appeal as they make little mention of how the threat of defeat can act as a mobilizing agent. For example, Jensen writes, even though the enemy is powerful, and "had thrown all of his strength into the struggle ... we could be assured of ultimate victory" (107).

If the NRR's war with NEA-funded artists is similar to the physical war analyzed by Reid, then the NRR should emphasize the potential for victory, rather than the threat of defeat. "Sacred" Christians will triumph over "profane" artists. But the NRR believes it will not necessarily be triumphant, at least on this earth. While war rhetoricians assert the power of the hope of victory, the NRR's metaphoric war with the NEA reflects both the power of the promises of victory and the threats of defeat. With both promises and threats as potential appeals, the NRR has two radically different configurations of the future with which to motivate followers. The postmillennialist appeal leads the NRR to project a utopian vision of its own victory and the corresponding defeat of the "profane." Conversely, a premillennialist appeal leads the NRR to take a fatalistic approach to the enemy's victory and its side's corresponding loss. These responses to the projections of the future result in a managed contradiction between the hope of earthly reward and the need to suffer pain. By looking at the utopian promises of victory, a postmillennialist appeal, and the fatalistic threats of defeat, a premillennialist appeal, I will illuminate the rhetorical symbiosis between "hope" and "fear." Both appeals are used to stir followers, one to an expectant stance, the other to a defensive position. The NRR's attempts to balance the two appeals, however, are challenged by the internal strains between and within each appeal. These strains could deflate the power of both optimism and pessimism—or if managed appropriately, could provide the NRR with power for its appeals. As will be evidenced, the strategic ambiguity of the NRR regarding the "end times" provides an arsenal of rhetorical weapons.

Utopian Hopes for an Ultimate Victory: Postmillennialism Considered

Although the loss of "our side" seems possible and initially probable, some NRR rhetors believe that the NRR can be "victorious." Reflecting the tension between "wins" and "losses," William Armstrong, in FOF's Citizen asserts that "You have to be willing to fight and lose and fight and lose and fight and lose and just keep fighting until you win." Reflecting the hope for victory, Armstrong continues: "Somewhere I heard a saying, which I have adopted as my own: 'There are only two kinds of battles—those that we have won and those that aren't over yet'" (14).

Since few are motivated to fight a hopeless war, the NRR dangles the hope of earthly victory before followers.

Although the NRR believes that it has "surrendered tremendous ground to the enemy" (a premillennialist view) it also reflects a postmillennialist view: "the war is not yet over! ... there is hope" (Hagelin 9). Moving past hope, the NRR argues that "We may lose battles, but the war will be ours" (Wildmon, "A Non-Christian" 21). Quoting from Galatians 6 (New King James), the NRR asserts: "in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Wildmon, "Let Us" 2). By looking at 1) the means of victory; 2) the ends of victory; and 3) the agencies of victory, I will show how the NRR "manages" the potential strains within its postmillennial appeals.

The Means of Victory: The War Without and the War Within

According to the NRR, the primary cause of any defeat would be the sins of its own followers, not the strength of the enemy or the ineffectual power of God. Members of the NRR who do not join in the fight against "sin" are themselves "sinners." Thus, if the NRR loses the war, God cannot be blamed, and Satan cannot be valorized. The sins of the NRR help to explain why, even with its "minority position", the enemy could win the war.[8] Numerous statements from the NRR make this internal war clear:

> *We're up against our meanest, toughest opponent yet. This enemy can crush every pro-family outfit, frustrate our campaigns, immobilize us, stop us in our tracks. But this adversary isn't a new branch of the ACLU. Planned Parenthood hasn't tripled in size. Molly Yard and company are just as beatable as ever. The enemy is us. (Bauer, "The Enemy" 16)*

In its initial response to the NEA-controversy, the AFA clarifies why the "enemy is us": But we Christians must, in my opinion, accept part of the responsibility. For various and sundry reasons, most of us have refused to publicly respond to the anti-Christian bias and bigotry found in various parts of our society, especially among certain segments of the media. "The Last Temptation of Christ" presented Jesus as a tormented, deranged, human sinner ... and now a crucifix submerged in urine and titled 'Piss Christ.' (Wildmon, "We Must Accept" 2)

Because followers of the NRR did not combat the anti-Christian forces, bias and bigotry have occurred, and will continue to gain in intensity. However, if followers shift their attitudes and behaviors, and confess their "sins," the thread connecting "The Last Temptation of Christ," "Piss Christ," and perhaps even the anti-Christ, could be severed.

By implicitly declaring war on itself, the NRR has two enemies to combat—the "profane" secular humanists and "sinful" NRR followers. The transgressions of the two sides, however, are separate and distinct. Rather than the pro-active sins of NEA-funded artists, such as obscenity, duplicity, blasphemy and sacrilege, the NRR argues that the sins of the NRR stem from passivity—laziness, apathy, and ignorance. Thus, rather than sins of commission, the NRR commits sins of omission. The differences between the two "sins" allow the followers of the NRR to purge their evil by rooting out the evil of their enemy, thus paving the way for victory, and bringing in the new millennial kingdom.

The NRR's sins of omission are laid out through a strategic argument from consequence: 1. Because we are "complacent" our children are being destroyed (LaHaye, "A Word" May 1990 3). 2. Because the "Church has ignored its responsibility," the NRR argues that "The breakdown of the moral fabric in our society ... has become the norm" (Wildmon, "Let" 2). 3. Because many leaders of the church have decided to "bow down and worship" the "god of apathy" just like they did "in Germany during the 1930s," "the moral decay in our society has occurred" leading to the threat of a Holocaust (Wildmon, "The god" 2). 4. Because of the "silence of the Church, we are losing" and "we will soon be so far down the road of decay that it will be impossible to turn back." (Wildmon, "Silence" 2; Wildmon, "Purpose" 2). These arguments from consequence warn followers of the cataclysmic results of losing the war they fight within themselves. A lost internal war equals a lost external war. The NRR implies that the non-involvement of Christians condones the "evil" of NEA-funded artists. Unless they purge these transgressions, NRR followers act in complicity with the worldview of the "profane"— and become true "blood brothers" of the enemy. However, by purging these sins, the NRR could win the war and save the "future of Western civilization" (Wildmon, *The Man* 215).

For the NRR, purification involves "fighting the good fight"—both morally and politically. Since its violations of the "thou-shalt-nots" are the result of passivity, activity will bring about the needed atonement. Reflecting on the possibility of cleansing, CWA proclaims: "If you have not been involved in our political system then you should fall on your face before God and beg His forgiveness before you ask Him for His blessings" (Hagelin 9). Forgiveness can only occur though involvement. And involvement offers the potential for victory. In other words, the NRR can repay its "accumulated debt" and purge the negative created by its violation of the "thou-shalt-nots" by fighting against the "profane" world view of NEA-funded artists and their secular humanist cohorts.

The NRR offers numerous means to purge sin, thereby bringing about a postmillennial utopia. Rather than watching the drama unfold, the NRR calls all believers to be agents of change by fighting the "sacrilege" and "obscenity" of the NEA. Supporters must "[give] of our time, our energies, and our finances to those individuals and organizations who are willing to stand up for what is right in America and to lead the way to a better tomorrow" (Hagelin 13). More specifically, supporters must:

1. Sign and mail my postcards to my two U.S. Senators and U.S. Congressman requesting them to take action to stop all funding of the NEA.
2. Write a personal letter to my lawmakers. (addresses enclosed)
3. Call my lawmakers in Washington D.C. (Main switchboard number enclosed)
4. Make copies of Action Memo Reply and share with my friends.
5. Give a financial contribution to support the American Family Association's work in this fight. (AFA Letter 1)

Postcards, letters, telephone calls, petitions, contributions—individual acts with collective effect are purgative and ultimately redemptive. According to the NRR, by beating the enemy within, followers should be able to beat the enemy without. Thus, a "True Believers'" choice is clear: The forces of good, to become and remain good, must vigorously confront the forces of evil. Followers have little choice but to sign, write, call, make copies, and give money. Not to do so would be to sin. For some NRR rhetors, the purging of this sin will provide the opportunity for victory. However,

most, as will be seen, take a more pessimistic view of earthly affairs.

How will the NRR recognize that it has been victorious? What signs will the NRR use to indicate that "due season" and a time for "reaping" has occurred? What are the performance measures for victory? The NRR offers a "due season" by creating a dual utopia related to a potential future victory: a utopia located outside of society, in heaven, and within society, on earth. The use of two utopias corrects the motivational deficit inherent in each. Since a heavenly utopia can be practically ineffectual, because of an after-life emphasis, and an earthly one is theologically dubious, because of the influence of a premillennialist eschatology, the NRR uses appeals to both "futures." An exploration of each utopia exposes how the NRR negotiates these "ideal" appeals.

The Ends of Victory: Utopia in Heaven; and on Earth?

While postmillennialists and premillennialists differ on whether a utopia can exist on earth, they both believe that a utopia awaits them in heaven: "Great will be our reward in heaven!" (Wildmon, "Silence" 2). Because earthly life is imperfect, temptation is persistent, and the enemy is ever-present, the promises of "eternal life" and "eternal rewards" have provided much respite from the pain and struggle of living on earth, regardless of the "chronology" of the end-times. But because the groups I studied position themselves as political groups first and religious groups second, and their followers come from both varying religious and non-religious backgrounds, "rewards" in heaven receive minor emphasis. Without specifying when the utopia occurs, the NRR asserts that ultimately, victory belongs to its side. "One day, one glorious day, the battle will be over.... And our hope is that promise that one day the Lord will say, 'It is finished. The battle is over'" (LaHaye, "CWA Pres" 19). According to premillennialist rhetors, the "battle" will not be over until either the death of NRR followers, the Rapture, or the creation of the "new heaven" and "new earth." For postmillennialist rhetors, however, the battle will be over on this earth as Christians usher in the millennium.

Those who rely solely on heavenly utopias face numerous hurdles when encouraging followers to work in this world. Why struggle on earth if there is no hope for earthly victory? Although "faithfulness to God" becomes the typical answer (Wildmon, "How Important" 1-2), postmillennialist rhetors skirt this problem by appealing to an earthly utopia. As will be shown later, while this offers the NRR an optimistic appeal, the pessimism of premillennialism dims some utopian hopes.

The postmillennialist optimist asserts that a utopia on earth is possible, and therefore worth fighting and even dying for. These idealists survey the past, the present, and the future and engender optimism by claiming "We can win." Gary Bauer, the president of Family Research Council, asks: "What would life be like in America if we won?" and answers with a focus on "faith, family, and country" and an eye on his enemy. Faith: "Picture a country where churches, synagogues and religious organizations are free to practice as they please." Country: "Where schools provide an education for our children that not only ensures they will know how to read and write, but that they will also know the religious roots of American liberties." Family: "The America we are trying to win is a place where families would no longer feel like islands in a hostile culture. A place where if a man and woman marry, they can reasonably expect to spend the rest of their lives together." To conclude his litany of earthly utopian hopes, Bauer counters critics by connecting to the past: "I don't think any of us are Pollyanish about our objectives. These goals may seem impossible, but they're not that far from what America was like only 30 or 40 years ago" (Bauer, "What If" 16). Lodged in an idealized past, these words offer followers the hope of a future earthly victory and a resulting earthly utopia.

Not only do these rhetors employ the unknown future and the "known" past for utopian appeals, they also tantalize followers with the hope of an idealized future by recounting numerous present victories in their war with the NEA. According to the NRR, no defeat is permanent. Although the "other side beats [pro-family values] down" these defeats are "never for good" (Minnery, "The Triumph" 10). Present earthly victories counter past defeats and set the stage for a future victory. Since "Reports of victories" provide a major means to "maintain public optimism" they strike a hopeful note for large-scale future victory and provide the motivation for the NRR "to keep on keeping on" (Reid, "New England" 285; Wildmon, "The Race" 2).

The present and direct goal of NRR rhetors in its conflict with NEA-funded artists is to shut down the NEA. Because this has not happened, yet, the NRR looks to smaller victories to claim its own efficacy. From the inception of its fight with the NEA to the resignation of NEA chairperson John Frohnmayer, the NRR discovers victories even within defeat, optimism even within pessimism. The NRR's response to "Piss Christ" resulted in an apology from the Equitable corporation, a funder of the exhibition ("Equitable" 9). The award of $1 to artist David Wojnarowicz for Donald Wildmon's violation of a New York state law pertaining to defacing an artwork resulted in the American Family Association's declaration that "the ruling was a clear victory for AFA" ("Judge Dismisses" 19). The NRR also takes credit for the NEA's denial of numerous grants to previously funded groups:

> *One immediate result of the effort by AFA and other groups to end government support for pornography was evident in newly announced grants. Frameline, the group which sponsors the San Francisco homosexual film festival, was not given a grant. Frameline has been supported with tax dollars for several years. ("AFA Efforts")*

Ignoring other political pressures for the NEA's decision, the NRR takes sole credit for shifts in the embattled agency. If the NRR did not become involved, tax-support of objectionable art would continue and grow.

The most rousing "success" of the NRR occurred with the "resignation" of John Frohnmayer, the target of many of its attacks.[9] Since he was the figurehead and architect of NEA policy decisions, the NRR asserted his resignation served more than just sacrificial lamb purposes. Each NRR group claimed its part in this "significant victory:" "AFA efforts opposing NEA 'art' pay off, Frohnmayer resigns under pressure" ("AFA Efforts" 1). "Frohnmayer's departure is a victory for CWA.... Our members' tireless campaign to end the agency's funding of pornography have finally paid off" ("Frohnmayer is Ousted" 14). "When congress and the White House received copies of the explicit books" from "Pro-family groups," "Oregonian Frohnmayer finally was given a one-way ticket west" ("Frohnmayer Goes" 2). Even though Frohnmayer "resigned" after Patrick Buchanan made the NEA an issue in the 1992 Republican primaries, the NRR again argues that it directly caused his removal. To admit other causal agents would be to dull the perceived efficacy of the NRR.

Victories of the NRR become a motivation for the continued involvement of NRR followers, for none of these "smaller" successes is permanent. Rather than rest on the laurels of victories, the NRR projects its work into the future to argue that followers must remain committed to the earthly cause. Referring to the NEA conflict, CWA asserts that "the resignation of Chairman Frohnmayer is merely the beginning. CWA will not stop until the NEA is completely defunded" ("Frohnmayer is Ousted" 14). In the larger "Culture Wars," CWA also uses its victories to call for renewed commitment to the "holy" cause: "We are winning a few victories, and now is the time for us to actively continue to 'stand for righteousness.' If you sense a tendency to ease off because we are winning a few victories, please confess it. That may be the devil's trickery" (LaHaye, "A Word" Sept 1990 3). In projecting into the future, the NRR expands the sin of passivity to include "easing off". Thus, "working harder" is the only righteous option.

The Agencies of Victory: Human or Divine?

The relationship between earthly and heavenly utopias is mirrored by the relationship between who causes the utopias, at least the one on earth. Reflecting a tension typical of all Christian discourse, the NRR conveniently shifts between two primary agencies of victory—human and God.[10] As the NRR utilizes both an earthly and a heavenly utopia in order to keep its troops in formation, it also utilizes both a human and a divine cause for the utopias. Echoing the problem with a sole emphasis on a heavenly utopia, the NRR seems to realize that if God is the primary cause of change, then there is little reason for human work. Reflecting the problem with an exclusive reliance on an earthly utopia, the NRR recognizes if humans are the primary cause of change, then there is little reason to ask for divine help. Similar to the negotiated balance between heavenly and earthly utopias, the tension between God's sovereignty and human choice could confuse followers or catalyze them into action.

Because of the tension between the human and divine agencies, the NRR attempts to hold two seemingly different notions concerning who engenders earthly victories. At times, the NRR implies that the two agencies work separately, or that one is more important than the other. At other times, the NRR asserts the two work in tandem. Advocating the responsibility and causal power of humans, CWA argues that "America's fate is not sealed as are the fates of nations specifically named or described in God's Word. That means we as Christians determine whether or not America will survive. We determine this country's future existence!" (Hagelin 9). If NRR followers repent of their sin, victory is probable. Combining human efficacy and an earthly utopia, CWA asserts that "CWA members left this year's convention knowing exactly who must save the family... . It's up to us—Christians throughout this nation-to fight, both physically and spiritually, the war being waged on the family ... it is a fight we are determined to win" ("Saving" 10).

While some rhetoric of the NRR places the locus of control in human hands, other rhetoric places the locus of control in God's hands, or in the joint custody of human and God. "It was not that we were so great, but we saw how the Lord's sufficiency can override the other side" (Farris, qtd. in "CWA Legal" 23). Combining both the divine and human, the NRR asserts: "The Lord says that it will be your work, your efforts that He will reward" and "God uses his people" (LaHaye, "Victimizing" 19; LaHaye, "A Word" July 1990 3). Throughout its rhetoric, the NRR shifts expediently between the two agencies.

Motivated by the possibility of dual utopias, and driven by dual agencies, some NRR rhetors seem to believe that earthly victory is possible. While war theorists argue that optimism is necessary for pro-war discourse to be powerful, the dualities of the NRR's optimism complicate yet bolster the strength of the appeal. Promises of a heavenly utopia can weaken the desire to work on this earth; but they can also offer solace when the earthly battle seems fruitless. Promises of an earthly utopia are handicapped by a premillennialist eschatology that strains against their possibility; but they can offer concrete rewards when heavenly rewards seem remote. Dual agencies further confound an already complicated rhetorical strategy. If God's sovereignty is emphasized to the exclusion of human will, the need for human action is weakened. If human efficacy is emphasized to the exclusion of God's will, God is rendered ineffectual. But if both are balanced, humans are given a reason to work for the "greater glory of God." While an over-emphasis on either side of the above dualities could deflate their dialectical power, the NRR uses both sides of each duality to correct the built-in deficiencies.

In the above analysis, the NRR takes an optimistic view of the "Culture War" it fights. By ascribing to a metaphor of war, the NRR attaches itself, perhaps unwittingly, to a postmillennialist eschatology. Optimism, according to war theorists, is necessary for pro-war rhetoric to be powerful. And optimism, according to research on apocalyptic discourse, is central to postmillennialism. But as will be seen below, the premillennialist bent of most NRR rhetors strains against any sort of earthly victory. In sum, the NRR's primary eschatology and its central metaphor are in tension—theoretically contradicting each other, but practically complimenting each other. The contradiction is the result of opposing appeals, one based in optimism, the other in pessimism. The complimentary quality is the result of having two sets of appeals to exploit, the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.

Fatalistic Fears of a Cataclysmic Defeat: Premillennialism Considered

Even without an optimistic eschatology, the NRR's alleged power could lead one to conclude that the NRR believes its victory is certain. Because the Lord is on its side, the NRR should win the war. Since the United States is a "Christian nation," chosen by God, the superior power of its sacred beliefs should defeat the Satanic enemy. Since the NRR holds "majority" status, it should have no trouble restraining the minority. God's support, a "sacred" worldview, and mainstream status, should easily guarantee victory for the NRR. With such a vast arsenal, one would think that "maintaining optimism" would be a relatively simple task.

But as mentioned previously, an overly optimistic view of war could deplete the power of the NRR's rhetoric. Why fight a war that one is guaranteed to win? Why send money to support the NRR's organizations if earthly victory is certain? While these questions function on a tactical level, the NRR's appeals to optimism are problematic on the theological level. While some NRR rhetors exploit the possibility of an earthly utopia, most reject it as theologically untenable. While some rhetors redefine victory as "faithfulness," most emphasize the pessimism of defeat.[11] These rhetors admit that those who argue that "victory is within our grasp during this decade" ("Conference" 5), ignore the pessimistic bent of a premillennialist eschatology: "things will only get worse" until Christ sets up the millennial kingdom. Contradicting its optimistic responses, AFA asserts that "evangelicals may be 'gaining political and

numerical victories but they are losing the war of morality'" ("Evangelicals" 4). Although the war metaphor is based on "a fight to win," many NRR rhetors admit the impossibility of earthly victory, and an earthly utopia. Utilizing a truncated metaphor of war, Cal Thomas, in an interview with Citizen, asserts that:

> *Christ tells us to occupy until He comes. We are to occupy to restrain the advancement of sin and evil.... And by restraining sin, being salt, preserving the culture, we are holding back, we are retarding, we are delaying slightly, though not inevitably, the advancement of sin that more people might have an opportunity to hear the gospel. (Thomas 15)*

"Delaying sin" suggests that an earthly victory is impossible until Christ's return. Donald Wildmon agrees with Thomas' prognosis: Answering the question, "What good have you done?" he asserts, "Without trying to mention all we have accomplished, I will admit that we haven't been successful .... Yes, the moral decline is far greater than it was when we began" ("What Good" 2).

After the optimism of the preceding section, Thomas' and Wildmon's pessimism could be either the result of their eschatology, the unconfessed "sins" of the NRR, or both. As mentioned previously, rather than place its lack of success in the hands of the enemy, the NRR typically locates its reason for loss within its own side. The sins of followers could cause the NRR to lose the "Culture War"; an earthly war, however, that cannot be won in pessimistic premillennialism. Throughout its premillennial appeals, the NRR downplays the fatalism of this eschatology by emphasizing the "sins" of NRR followers and the terrifying consequences of defeat. Although pessimistic in orientation, the NRR uses these "sins" and fears not to stop its followers from acting, but to frighten them into support. At least something can be done about the "sin" of passivity and non-involvement. The agony of defeat serves to keep the NRR's forces alert and ready, to root out their "sin," although the potential fatalism of this appeal could serve to temper their troop's enthusiasm. By looking at numerous consequences of not acting, "sin", the vast threat of losing the war will be made explicit-a loss that is pre-determined in premillennialist eschatology.

In order to make the threat of defeat visceral, the NRR traces out the horrifying consequences of losing the war. In fact, rather than "cushion the discouragements of defeats or intensify the encouragement of victories" as Burke suggests, the NRR assaults followers with a great deal of discouraging information ("War and Cultural Life" 406). Reflecting Burke's notion that the "fearsome condition" of the negative can be brought "before our very eyes" through reference to a set of "sensory details," the NRR paints numerous scenes of a "profane" future. These pictures are an attempt to reinforce the "moralistic exhortation" of "be involved" and provide a means to sin and a means to purge sin (*Language* 452).

The explicit descriptions of numerous exhibitions come the closest to recounting the "sensory details" of the enemy's victory. In describing Mapplethorpe's *X Portfolio*, the NRR exclaims that the exhibition included photos depicting "Mapplethorpe with a bullwhip protruding from his rectum, one man urinating into the mouth of another, and a man with his forearm up another man's rectum" ("NEA on the Ropes" 1). Annie Sprinkle's "outrageous" work provides numerous "sensory details" to flesh out the enemy's negatives. Quoting from *The Independent*, a magazine published by the Association for Independent Video and Film, the NRR asserts that Sprinkle's video "Slut" "presents 'the erotic side of such pleasure stimulators as flagellation by oak leaves, gender bending, body shaving, body painting, menstrual blood, rhythmic deep breathing, passionate safe sex, and more!'" ("NEA Funds Books" 23).

Throughout these "sensory details," the NRR seems to savor "illicit" sexuality, albeit through the interpretive lens of sin. Although utilized as a distancing device, ironically, these explicit descriptions shorten the distance between the NRR and the NEA as the two become almost indistinguishable in form and content. By relying on NEA-funded art, NRR followers can read, hear, and in some cases see how "bad" things have become because of "sin;" actually experience the "sin;" and even purge the "sin." Recognizing the awkward position of relying on the taboo-breaking quality of NEA-funded artists for primary material, the NRR introduces numerous articles with caveats, thereby raising interest levels and excusing sexual explicitness:

> *The following article contains material which some readers will find offensive. This article was reviewed by staff members at AFA, much explicit language was removed, and the decision was made that the content should remain in the article so that readers would know precisely how their tax dollars are being spent. ("Tax Dollars Continue" 14)*

By distinguishing between "explicit language" and "content," the NRR portrays itself as taking the high road even as it gives exhaustive details of the low road. It can utilize explicit sexual descriptions, providing a kind of "Christian pornography," while simultaneously portraying itself as the champion of sexual virtue and the protector of "family values."

Even with the NRR's warnings, the line between prudence and prurience becomes blurred by pessimism as the NRR attempts to delineate "profane" and "sacred" differences to show how bad things have become. Quoting a review from the *LA Reader* of "Father Larry's" NEA-funded performance, the AFA includes prose that veers close to its definition of pornography:

> *The bleeding naked man leapt into the audience as the drag queen speed-metal band backing him thrashed to disjointed climax. His prey were two longhairs seated among a stunned and leering crowd of three hundred art-nihilists. Father Larry threw the pair to the ground, tore their clothes off and used his considerable girth to immobilize and a large dildo to impale the two while orally copulating them. Some spectators loved it and it seemed a perverse orgy would break out, especially when a porn-queen fellated a comely six-foot-plus transsexual. ("Congress Votes" 27)*

Although the NRR uses external reviews to report these "offenses," the content remains the same, regardless of the source. By reproducing these "sins," the NRR surrounds its members with "sin," thinning the line between the NRR and NEA funded artists. Those followers who are aroused by "dirty words and pics" can purge their sin by supporting the NRR. But because the "dirt" is increasing, more and more work is needed to purge. In sum, the evocation of the taboo allows followers of the NRR to "sin," purge their guilt by supporting NRR organizations, and "sin" anew with the latest batch of direct mail.

The NRR proclaims that if its followers stay unenlisted, wallowing in the "sin" sent to them, sexual pathology, transsexualism, lesbianism, etc., will move from the margins of society to the mainstream as the breaking of taboos becomes the new norm ("Finley Presents" 24). Those who refuse to participate in the NRR's war with the NEA will encourage further assaults on "faith" as Christ will continue to be portrayed as a "transvestite ... with a crown of thorns on His head, make-up around the eyes and having breasts" (Rohrabacher 20). Those who neglect their divine mandate will be accomplices in attacks on the "family" as the use of aborted fetuses in artwork will continue: "Americans have been shortchanged with ... 'Alchemy Cabinet,' which contains a coat hanger next to the remains of an aborted baby" (LaHaye, "A Word" May 1990 3). Those who neglect their calling will bear the burden of the continued artistic sacrilege of the flag, a "sacred" symbol of the country. In sum, those who continue sinning by their lack of involvement will condone and encourage the spread of the "profane" world view.

The NRR ups the spiritual and cultural ante by extending the stakes of the NEA conflict beyond who wins individual artistic skirmishes to who wins the total "Culture War," and by extending the fate of American civilization to Western civilization. Expanding its war with the NEA, the NRR unwittingly follows Burke's advice as it brings the "fearsome condition" of the "unfavored character" of the enemy to a "climax by association with a purpose that is the most thoroughly (or 'perfectly') disfavored." As Burke contends, this disfavored purpose "should be his ambition for total tyranny, absolute misrule" (*Language* 403).

The "total tyranny" of the enemy is brought before the "very eyes" of the NRR followers through a series of "if/thens" which threaten the existence of the United States, no less than any physical war: "'We live in a time when the future of America hangs in the balance... '" (Hutchens 10). Reflecting the territory at stake in the "Culture War", the NRR argues that the simple truth is that if we do not work every day to preserve our Judeo-Christian heritage—if we do not strive to institute laws which reflect our morality, values, and beliefs, then the laws that are instituted will reflect the morality, values, and beliefs of those who proclaim that life is worthless, that truth is relative, and that God is dead. Then America will die. (Hagelin 13)

For the NRR, "relative truth," "worthless life" a "dead God" and a "dead America" are synonymous: One naturally leads to the other, and all are the result of a secular humanist victory.

Furthermore, if the enemy wins the war, then Western civilization will join the U.S. in the grave—buried by the "cultural dirt" of secular humanism (Hallman 4): "Many say the Church is sleeping through a revolution... a revolution not fought with guns and swords, but with ideas and philosophies. And what is at stake in this conflict is the very foundation of Western civilization" (Hallman 4a). The NRR asks, "What will life be like in the Western world if secular humanists prevail in the struggle for social dominance?" And it answers by constructing a "brave new world" drawn from "inferences from court decisions, medical experiments, and governmental policies that emanate from the humanistic agenda":

1. "'[f]orced abortion' to control family size would be imposed upon us ...
2. the licensing of parents by the state. Unlicensed mothers and fathers would be required to give up their children for adoption ...
3. the terrible molestation of a child, if photographed or videotaped during the crime, could be sold on newsstands for the profit of pornographers ...
4. Anything that emanates from the Christian heritage is unconstitutional, and therefore, illegal."
5. Children could be "artificially inseminated" by their parents to bear fetuses whose body parts are used to save adults. (Dobson Children 15)

While these are predictions, the NRR also looks at the present to put the finishing touches on its horrifying scene. The following are the fault of secular humanism and secular humanists: "chaos" in the inner cities, the "destruction" of the "Black family," high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, the suicides of the young, gang warfare, the number of jailed "Black males," homelessness, sexual molestation, physical abuse of children, and the "crises in our school." These are only a few of the listed consequences if and when the enemy wins. According to the NRR, "These are not isolated horror stories drawn from the exceptional or unique. They are prime examples of humanistic thinking" (Dobson, "The Second" 15). These threats exploit the fears of followers—for the survival of their faith, their children, their nation, their civilization and even themselves. Although they are given some agency to fight the "sin" within by fighting the "sin" without, the external threat looms so large that pessimism is the natural outcome. This pessimism "cushions" the encouragement of victory and "intensifies" the discouragement of defeat (Burke, "War and Cultural Life" 406)-a dramatic counter to the optimism of postmillennialism.

In summary, the majority of NRR war rhetors believe that complete and clear earthly victory can never be claimed. Although ultimate heavenly victory is assured, most NRR rhetors proffer an earthly war that is unwinnable. "We can win" is overpowered by "We can't win": "we haven't been successful.... Yes, the moral decline is far greater than it was when we began" (Wildmon, "What Good" 2). A perusal of direct mail over four years proves this orientation as losses are the norm and victories the exception. Rhetorically speaking, none of the few victories claimed is permanent. And once one threat seems to wane in persuasive power, another threat is brought forward to rouse followers to action. For premillennialist rhetors, the condition of the world will only deteriorate. Unlike war rhetoric, where victory is possible, the premillennial orientation of most NRR rhetors means the NRR must remain on constant defense, for the attack of the enemy is unending. Since "true victory" cannot occur on this earth, the NRR's "culture war" becomes the permanent status quo. Thus, the NRR remains frozen in an oppositional stance.

Cataclysmic Defeat vs. Ultimate Victory: The Creation of a Bunker Mentality

In its war with the NEA, the NRR exploits both the fear of a cataclysmic earthly defeat and the guarantee of an earthly victory—one the result of a premillennialist eschatology, the other the result of the metaphor of war, with a postmillennial influence. With both the threats of defeat and the promises of victory in its arsenal, the NRR's appeals

to the future simultaneously contain strengths, limitations, and dangers.

Throughout its "future orientation," the NRR conveniently shifts emphases between the threats of defeat and the promises of victory. This shift occurs as the NRR attempts to temper the inherent deficiencies within each appeal. Threats of defeat can move followers to action by frightening them with the consequences of inaction. If emphasized too strongly, however, these same threats can paralyze followers as determination is replaced with discouragement. Promises of victory also contain analogous tensions. These promises can motivate followers to work for change by increasing the hope of things to come; or they can induce passivity as winning is taken for granted. By emphasizing "ultimate defeat" (to the exclusion of ultimate victory) or "ultimate victory" (to the exclusion of fears of defeat) the NRR can provide individuals with a rationalization for non-involvement. But by balancing the negative and the positive, a pro-war rhetor can exploit both the "terror" and "triumph" of war (Lloyd George, qtd. in German 111). For these advocates, the tension between defeat and victory is a tenuous one— an over-emphasis on either fear or hope can deflate the power of the dialectic, while a balance between them provides catalysts for action.

The primary danger of the NRR utilization of dual futures concerns the permanent quality of its conflict with the "world." The continuity of the conflict is a result of combining a premillennialist eschatology, which claims no victory on this earth, with a metaphor of war and postmillennialism, which asserts the possibility of victory: "Keep fighting, even though we'll lose" coexists with "Keep fighting, we can win." These two provide a rhetorical trajectory that reifies a state of war. While the means and ends change depending on the eschatology, ultimately, threats of defeat and promises of victory nullify each other, leaving the common ground of "Keep fighting." The NRR's rhetoric of war does not clearly allow for the permanence of defeat nor the permanence of victory, instead, the war becomes both a means and an end.

With war becoming both a means and an end, the premillennialist and postmillennialist eschatological orientations of the NRR significantly affect its "choice of means with reference to the future" (Burke, *Permanence* 18). In sum, "keep fighting" creates a "bunker" mentality that impels the NRR to resort primarily to the threats of defeat. "Sin" is everywhere: within, without, always lurking, always spreading. The need to fight "sin" is greater and greater as its threat grows larger and larger. Consequently, the larger the threat the more that is at stake. And the more that is at stake, the more reason the NRR has to work still harder to combat what they probably cannot win. Ultimately, these threats, consequences, and reasons result in a heightened level of hostility because the survival of the United States, Western civilization, and even the world hang in the balance.

The NRR offers little reason for followers to give up the fight, or fight to "win" the earthly battle. In fact, future projections increase the stakes of the war, and increase the work and "deaths" of NRR followers. In order to "preserve 2000 years of the influence on Christ on Western civilization" the NRR argues its followers must "begin once again to lose our life for Christ" (Wildmon, "The Church" 2). Although used in a metaphoric sense, the NRR prefigures the possible literal loss of life.[12] With the stakes of war so high, and the possibility of disaster so close, the NRR may never be able to disarm intellectually. Pearce, Littlejohn, and Alexander in their article "The New Christian Right and the Humanist Response" highlight the permanent quality of the NRR's fight with secular humanism.

The conflict between fundamentalist religious views and secular society has been a continuous one at least since the first century A.D. It was expressed in the question "What has Jerusalem (the symbol of religious faith) to do with Rome (the symbol of humanistic reason)?"[13] ... There have been other times in which the conflict between these world views has been open and heated, and more when one side or the other has successfully muted the other, but there has been no clear 'victory' (175-6). The NRR seems to agree with these assertions when it argues that "only the battleground changes, never the battle" (Parker 3). For the NRR, clear earthly victory is impossible, for then the "war" will end and opportunities to fight for the "greater glory of God" will be exhausted. Although heavenly victory is guaranteed, the NRR relies on questions about earthly victory for its rhetorical appeals, so as not to alienate followers from differing religious traditions.

Why use a metaphor which has at its center questions of victory or defeat if one or the other is impossible? In his article, "Ronald Reagan's Re-formulation of the Rhetoric of War," Goodnight compares the metaphoric "War on Poverty" to Reagan's military posture and concludes that, "Whereas the 'War on Poverty' moved through phases of inception, crisis, and consummation in a tenuous effort to redirect the status quo, Reagan's military preparedness posture seems to have suspended the present in a time of crisis and succeeded. The world fashioned by this discourse is one that forever has endured threats of aggression demanding in response eternal vigilance, and that forever approaches an alternative future ..." (408).

Although the "Culture War," like the "War on Poverty," is a metaphoric war, the NRR fashions a "world" demanding eternal earthly vigilance. While war as metaphor does not call for continuous conflict—there are "losers" and "winners"— because of the NRR's premillennialist eschatology, the NRR's use of the metaphor makes the war the end in itself, "suspending the present in a time of crisis." In other words, the "war becomes the thing"—both the container and the thing contained, a powerful and dangerous prospect when "lives" are at stake.

Notes

[1]. The New Religious Right was galvanized into action after a series of Supreme Court decisions, ranging from a 1962 ban on prayer in the public schools, the Engel decision, to *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973. These decisions confirmed "suspicions that the highest court in the land was engaged in a Kulturkampf against established mores" (Wills 117). Coupled with the cultural revolution of the late 1960s—feminism, the pill, sexual liberation, gay rights, etc.—these decisions led conservative Christians to believe that their "terrain" was being overrun by "pagans."

In response to the seeming secularization of American society, conservative Christians in the 1970s, began, ... to see the benefits of being a more active participant in the public arena from which they had retreated; they had begun to feel threatened by secular humanism not just as a deceiver stealing individual souls but as an aggressive institutional opponent, encroaching on the territory they had created. They were ready to fight back

(Ammerman 4).

The displacement caused by changing social structures was the common link that now bound 50 million "born-again" Christians, mostly Protestant and fundamentalist, plus 30 million "morally conservative" Roman Catholics and a few million Mormons and orthodox Jews. This 80 plus million composed the "New Religious Right" and became committed to dealing publicly with political issues (Crawford 161; Hunter 47). They are the ones who have chosen to "fight back" as they have been "transformed into an institutionalized, disciplined, well-organized, and well-financed movement of loosely knit affiliates" (Crawford 5). According to Pearce, Littlejohn, and Alexander, as a movement the NRR "has now established itself as a successful rhetor in contemporary social life" (175).

[2]. The American Family Association was founded by Rev. Donald Wildmon in 1977 in order to "[uphold] traditional values in American Society" by "leading the battle" against political and cultural "anti-Christian bias" (*AFA Brochure* 1). Formed as a response to NOW, CWA was created in order to "educate other women in our communities on the issues that were destructive to the family, such as ERA, homosexuality, abortion, parents rights, etc." (LaHaye, "In Appreciation" 2). While the AFA began as a church organization, and CWA began as political organization, Focus on the Family was founded in 1977 as a psychological support group to "strengthen the home" (*FOF Introductory Newsletter* 1). Since its founding, FOF has branched out into political activities with the creation of the Family Research Council which "[counteracts] the anti-family influences that threaten your home today" ("Win the War" 9). These three groups are especially active in the struggle over the NEA.

[3]. For a discussion of the tragic and comic frames in relationship to apocalyptic rhetoric see O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, Chapter 3.

[4]. For a discussion of the premillennialist emphasis of the NRR see Martin, *With God on Our Side.*

[5]. In an article critiquing Reagan's simultaneous use of both premillennial and postmillennial appeals, Ritter concludes that although they were "contradictory" because they were "logically and theologically inconsistent," they were also "politically appealing" as they spoke to "two audiences" (1-2). The premillennialist appeal echoed the theology of the Christian right, and the postmillennialist appeal encouraged political conservatives to engage in political action. But rather than speak to two audiences, the groups I studied seem to speak to the same audience, albeit one with conflicted views of the "end-times."

[6]. The NRR's use of the appeals of territoriality and ethnocentricity have been studied in other projects. See Olsen, David, "The New Religious Right and the Power of the Negative: The Creation of a Literal 'No Man's Land.'" Presented SCA Convention, Miami Beach, 1993 ; and Olsen, David, "The National Endowment for the Arts and the New Religious Right: The Survival of the Fittest—Kill or be Killed." Presented SCA Convention, San Antonio, 1995.

[7]. According to Ivie, Eisenhower's Cold war rhetoric, unlike Truman's, equivocated on the potential for victory, and thereby "left a legacy of fear" (30).

[8]. Throughout its direct mail campaign, the NRR goes to great lengths to prove that it is in the majority position, and that the "enemy" is in the minority position: The NEA is the "morally decadent minority" while the NRR is the "decent majority" who rides in the mainstream of American values ("NEA Continues" 15; Feder, "The Decent" 19). One would think that this would make the "minority" less threatening.

[9]. While Frohnmayer, a moderate Republican and Bush appointee, technically resigned, most sources, including Frohnmayer, asserted that he was fired, a "scapegoat" for the Bush administration (interview with author).

[10]. The tension between God and human is also reflected in the tension between pre- and postmillennialism. O'Leary and McFarland argue that premillennialists emphasize God's omnipotent control. The result of this belief is that humans are "not urged to actively resist" because only God can conquer the enemy. Postmillennialists, on the other hand, emphasize human agency since people can bring about change for the better (434-5).

[11]. Although some of the rhetoric of the NRR proclaims the potential for victory, most NRR rhetors attempt to counter their pessimistic eschatology by placing more emphasis on faithfulness than on success in the "if/thens" of victory. If the war cannot be won, why fight it? For the "greater glory of God" and because the NRR is called by God to be "faithful." And "being faithful" allows one to root out sin. Because the NRR has few means at its disposal to determine whether it is winning the war, "faithfulness" becomes the primary "should" and "ought":

> *God did not call me to be successful, only faithful.... There are some things I have no control over, and success (as the world measures success) is one of them. There are other things over which I have control, and one of those is faithfulness. I may not be successful, but I can be faithful. One pastor expressed the opinion that we have already lost the war. That, I responded, could very well be true. But true or not it should not and will not affect what I do with my life and the task to which God has called me. (Wildmon, "How Important" 1, 2).*

Because "God calls us to obedience, not to results" the NRR, at times, conveniently attempts to nullify the question of victory (Thomas 15).

[12]. Another NRR group, the Coalition for Revival, has a "call to screen out of their seminars 'any well-meaning Christian who simply is not willing to die for Christ at this time' in order to secure only 'martyr-willing, mighty warriors'" (Hunter 299).

[13]. According to George A. Kennedy, Tertullian's quotation should read: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (147).

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