*PASSION*ATE PUBLICS: CHRISTIAN MEDIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

by

KRISTJANA MADDUX

(Under the Direction of Bonnie J. Dow)

ABSTRACT

This project elucidates and interrogates constructions of citizenship in contemporary Christian-themed mass media texts. Whereas Jürgen Habermas and Robert Putnam have bemoaned the decline in citizenship—rational-critical deliberation in the public sphere for Habermas and community involvement for Putnam—others have countered that their visions of decline are precipitated by a too-narrow view of citizenship and the public sphere. Beginning with a broadened approach to citizenship—informed by Robert Asen's "discourse theory of citizenship"—I look to these popular media texts for the models of citizenship they construct. I focus on Christian media in particular in part because of the popular narrative that frames evangelical Christians as a newly-potent political force and a newly-lucrative consumer demographic, but also in light of Putnam's admission that regular churchgoers buck the trend of declining civic participation.

I pursue close textual analysis of three case studies—*The Passion of the Christ, Left Behind,* and *The da Vinci Code*—concluding that they offer distinct models of citizenship. *The Passion*, I maintain, celebrates feminine submission as the faithful practice of citizenship. That film, which depicts the suffering death of Jesus Christ in careful detail, makes heroines of Jesus's

faithful followers whose trust in an omnipotent God allows and encourages them to submit to unjust rulers. *Left Behind*, conversely, models brutish masculinity as the faithful performance of citizenship. In those novels, the Christian heroes fight the antichrist with physical violence, and they explicitly chastise characters who prize intellect. Finally, *The da Vinci Code* does not offer a model of citizenship. Even though it has been widely feared for its political implications—specifically its "radical feminism"—the novel's preference for the private sphere leads it to privilege heterosexual reproduction as the performance of faithfulness. In the final chapter, I turn to the contemporary Christian backlash against the Christian Right as a way to read the political potential of the models of citizenship constructed by these mass media texts. Ultimately, I conclude that the models of citizenship offered by clergy, scholars, and elected officials share little in common with the models made so widely accessible through these media texts.

INDEX WORDS: public sphere; citizenship; Christian media; feminist criticism; rhetorical criticism; femininity; masculinity; heteronormativity; *The Passion of the Christ*; *Left Behind*; *The da Vinci Code*

*PASSION*ATE PUBLICS: CHRISTIAN MEDIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

by

KRISTJANA MADDUX

M.A., University of Georgia, 2003

B.A., University of Puget Sound, 2001

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2007

*PASSION*ATE PUBLICS: CHRISTIAN MEDIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

by

KRISTJANA MADDUX

Major Professor:	Bonnie J. Dow
Committee:	Celeste Condit Christine Harold John M. Murphy Patricia Richards

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2007

DEDICATION

For my grandmothers, Fran and Geri

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My graduate student colleagues have often joked that someone should create a reality TV show about our department. We have people to fill all the typical character profiles—the slacker, the preppy athlete, the go-getter, the nerd, etc. We would be articulate in the confessional. And we can certainly create enough drama to rival any reality show. But, really, graduate studies in a small department lends itself to the reality show format because it creates a sense of community otherwise uncommon outside the confines of the Big Brother or Real World houses. Although most of us don't live together, we do share offices and hallways, take courses together, substitute teach each others' classes on occasion, and then socialize outside of school. Given how intense this sense of community among faculty and graduate students can be, I consider myself lucky to have spent six years in the department of Speech Communication at the University of Georgia. I have spent my days (nights, weekends) surrounded by smart, caring, and interesting people. With and without the drama, it has been a great place to be. I want to acknowledge a few of the people who have made this community so special.

Bonnie Dow has been the ideal advisor, and her influence on me is immeasurable. Living in both Athens and Nashville, she has always made herself accessible—through frequent meetings, phone calls, emails, and even the occasional text message. She has conscientiously read multiple drafts of (almost) everything I've written, providing valuable—and certainly honest—feedback at every stage. She has also been forthright in sharing her smart analyses of academic politics, which have added up to useful professional development advice for me. And from time to time, Bonnie has even dealt with my emotional outbursts—certainly her least

favorite part of the advising relationship, but one she performs better than she ever gives herself credit for.

The members of my comps and dissertation committee have been fantastic. All have been careful readers whose thoughtful questions have pushed my projects in productive ways. John Murphy has been caring, accessible, and reliable. His ever-comforting and cheerful presence in Terrell Hall, as well as his genuine care for the well-being of all of the graduate students, make Murphy integral to the success of graduate studies in this department. I am particularly grateful for Murphy always being accessible—often when he's "just Murphin'" outside Blue Sky or Walker's—to answer my questions, listen to my ideas, and talk me through writer's block. Celeste Condit has been a constantly supportive presence for me. I have especially appreciated her encouragement through the manuscript review process, as well as her willingness to nurture my work even when my research interests veered ever more sharply from hers. I am thankful for the useful perspective Christine Harold has provided on my comps papers and dissertation. She has been a careful reader who has asked provocative and helpful questions. And I'm grateful to Patricia Richards whose graduate seminar in social movements gave me space to think and talk about the issues of public engagement as well as to confront my own disciplinary bias in approaching these issues. Like the others, Patricia has also provided helpful insights in committee meetings.

I also want to acknowledge the other Speech Communication faculty members who have been integral to my professional development. Kevin Barge and Jen Monahan have both been great resources as basic course directors. Monahan spent a lot of time listening to me freak out during my first year of teaching, and Kevin allowed me leadership opportunities with the other TAs that may have benefited me more than them. I also appreciate the opportunity I had to take

two classes with Kevin and to work on a research project that pushed me beyond the types of reading and thinking I'm accustomed to doing. Ed Panetta has also been a valuable influence, especially as his seminar on the Public Sphere immersed me in the literature that grounds this dissertation. And beyond UGA, my thanks go to Jim Jasinski at the University of Puget Sound, through whose undergraduate classes I acquired critical principles—especially the all-important demand to describe before interpreting—that continue to guide my writing.

I have also benefited immensely from my interactions with the other smart people around me—the graduate students in Speech Communication. As a young MA student, I was lucky to be surrounded by more advanced graduate students pursuing feminist work, whose influence on me has been lasting. I remember especially fondly the Second Wave Feminism seminar I took my first year with Ashli Quesinberry Stokes, Kristan Poirot, Tasha Dubriwny, and Wendy Atkins-Sayre, all four of whom would serve as models of the feminist critic I aspire to be. Tasha, in particular, has remained a good friend and a valuable colleague. As often as we've traded "help me! I'm stuck" phone calls, Tasha's role as a sounding board for my ideas has improved my writing significantly. Throughout my time at Georgia, these feminism conversations have continued, but I've also been delighted by the growing community of graduate students interested in religion. I am especially grateful for discussions of Christianity with Bethany Keeley over the last two years. And I would be remiss not to thank the members of the Rhetoric Writing Group—Jarrod Atchison, Shannon Holland, Davi Johnson, Shanara Reid, and Dylan Wolfe—who have been valuable resources for talking about ideas, trading citations, and providing feedback on drafts. As Shannon, Davi, and Dylan went through the job search process a year before the rest of us, they provided unmatchable insight into what might have otherwise been a mysterious ritual. Because of his characteristic honesty, integrity, and

selflessness, Jarrod has been a great friend and colleague through the job applications, interviews, and dissertation writing that defined our last year.

In addition to my colleagues in the department, I'm also grateful for my larger support network of friends in Athens and around the world—especially Carly, Cassie, Chris J., Elissa, Jen, Justin G., Justin K., Lavelle and Xornam—who have always been available for phone calls and coffee shop time, the kind of breaks that make writing possible. As always, I am thankful for the support I receive from my family. Mom, Rachel, and Riley have become especially invaluable distractions in the age of instant messenger. Finally, since I started working on this project, I have lost two strong women in my life—both of my grandmothers, Frances Elaine Anderson Bolerjack and Geraldine Jeannette Rowe Maddux. I dedicate this project to them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter 1

"Write the Vision, Make it Plain on Tablets"[1]: Introduction to Christian Media and the Contemporary Public Sphere

With his six-part sermon series, "The Cross and the Sword," Greg Boyd hit a nerve in evangelical Christian circles. The St. Paul, Minnesota, mega-church pastor grabbed headlines for articulating a growing concern among evangelicals: the church should not entangle itself with partisan politics. In those sermons and in his book to follow, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church*, Boyd maintained that by wedding itself to the Republican Party, the Christian Right has chosen "the sword" over "the cross."[2] At risk, Boyd suggested, is Christians' ability to spread the gospel, when that message is firmly tied to right-wing political issues. Even if Boyd's church experienced strong fall-out from this argument—the *New York Times* notes 1,000 of 5,000 parishioners left the church unhappy—this message has also put Boyd on the national stage in a conversation with like-minded and adversarial evangelical Christians.[3] During the 2004 presidential campaign, the progressive Christian Sojourners community, led by avowed evangelical Jim Wallis, distributed bumper stickers and took out a full page *New York Times* advertisement claiming "God is not a Republican. Or a Democrat."[4] Like Boyd, other evangelicals have authored books questioning the appropriateness of Christian involvement in partisan politics, such as Randal Balmer's *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts*

the Faith and Threatens America -- an Evangelical's Lament and David Kuo's *Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction.*

If these challenges to evangelical Christianity's political entrenchment hit a nerve, they do so in large part because evangelical Christians have been so widely heralded as a potent political force over the last few years.[5] Finally reaping the rewards of the seeds they began sowing in the 1970s—with the founding of the Moral Majority and later the Christian Coalition—evangelicals have wielded their political influence to win elections for conservative Republican candidates and to pass state-wide legislation limiting abortion and same-sex unions. In particular, journalistic treatments have perpetuated the narrative that evangelical Christians swung the 2004 presidential election, as well as state-wide initiatives to ban same-sex marriage. For instance, in the days and hours after the election, journalists and commentators described, analyzed, and re-analyzed CNN exit polling data that showed, along with other things, that 80% of voters who ranked "moral values" as the most important issue in the 2004 election voted for Bush. [6]

At the same time, the turn of the twenty-first century has brought evangelical Christians unprecedented attention as a lucrative consumer demographic. When, in 2004, Mel Gibson's independently-funded *The Passion of the Christ* brought in more than $300 million at the box office, his financial success made plain the economic potential of media texts marketed to Christians. Gibson's success should have come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins's *Left Behind* empire. That same year they released *Glorious Appearing,* the twelfth and final installment in a series of novels has sold more than 62 million copies since 1996. Also in the spring of 2004, a Christian-themed novel, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* held steady at the top of the

New York Times fiction bestseller list, a list where it would claim membership for more than three years. The Baylor Religion Survey has found that by winter of 2005, 44% of Americans had seen *The Passion*, 29% had read *The da Vinci Code*, and 19% had read at least one *Left Behind* book. Following on the success of these media phenomena, bookstores, television screens, and movie theatres have hosted an influx of Christian-themed texts, including Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*—by some accounts, the bestselling non-fiction book of all time—NBC's spring 2005 miniseries "Revelations," the December 2005 motion picture version of C.S. Lewis's classic *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and the December 2006 *Nativity Story*. Christian-themed films, at least, should become a mainstay, as 20th Century Fox has announced its intention to create 12 religious-themed films annually, 6 of which will be released to the theatres.[7]

If the turn of the twenty-first century has marked the arrival (or re-emergence) of evangelical Christians into popular consciousness as both a potent political force and a lucrative consumer demographic, these two frameworks also have been linked together. That is, popular narratives tie evangelical Christians' political power to their consumer power. The *Washington Post* described the year 2004 explicitly in terms of this connection between Christian media and Christian politics. "From the red-state heartland that reelected President Bush to Mel Gibson's blood-splattered *The Passion of the Christ*," Kevin Eckstrom wrote on January 1, 2005, "2004 was very red indeed. Bush's win in the country's crimson center," he continued, "and Gibson's unexpected success with *The Passion* were both fueled by conservative and evangelical Christians, who flexed their cultural and political muscle everywhere from the ballot box to the box office in 2004."[8] Thus, as evangelical Christians' political and consumer power has become

noteworthy at the turn of the twenty-first century, these two forms of influence have been inextricable, at least by journalistic descriptions. For individual Christians, the implication is that their political subjectivities and consumer identities are wrapped together as faithful Christian discipleship.

This project works at this intersection between contemporary Christian political engagement and Christian-themed mass media. Specifically, I consider the construction of a political world order and the accompanying calls to citizenship in these media, pursuing close textual analysis of three artifacts in particular: *Left Behind, The Passion of the Christ,* and *The da Vinci Code.* Following Robert Asen's "discourse theory of citizenship," I begin with the premise that citizenship is performed in multiple ways, and I submit that popular media and discourse discipline—both limit and enable—the possibilities for those performances.[9] More specifically, I suggest that the world order that each of these texts constitutes—in terms of its distinction between public and private, the relations between Christians and non-Christians, and God's role in controlling earthly events—calls forth a particular form of citizenship. In each case, I note how the model of faithful Christian citizenship is marked by gender, making these texts what Teresa de Lauretis calls "technologies of gender."

In the sections that follow, I first describe the history and development of Christian-themed mass media. I do so to tell the story of the rich historical relationship between Christianity and media, but also to demonstrate the ways that producers and scholars have viewed Christian media in narrowly instrumentalist terms. Second, I review the scholarship on citizenship and the public sphere. I portray a trajectory from Dewey, Lippmann, Habermas, and Putnam's laments about the degraded nature of citizen

participation in the public sphere through to contemporary American scholars celebrating the public engagement that occurs in multiple publics. As I describe this trajectory, I point out significant gaps to which I hope this project attends. Finally, I preview the three case studies that follow.

Christianity and mass media

Christian engagement with mass media certainly is not a new phenomenon. Defined broadly enough, mass media technology has been instrumental to Christianity's development since its inception, just as Christian churches and leaders also have been instrumental to the development of various media technologies, especially over the last two centuries. In what follows, I first note the theological imperatives that have driven Christian use of mass media, before offering a brief review of the historic engagement between Christianity and media, and then concluding with a description of contemporary scholarship on religion and media.

Gospel Imperatives and the Media

Given the basic imperatives of Christian faithfulness, mass media are a natural tool for discipleship. Jesus taught his disciples to be "fishers of men," and in the Great Commission called them to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."[10] The writer of Acts even specifies that Jesus instructed his followers to make disciples of all those in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samara—seemingly the whole known world in a first century worldview—"and everywhere in the world." [11] The importance of these instructions from Jesus can be measured by their appearance in all three of the synoptic gospels plus the books of

John and Acts. Moreover, this Great Commission is placed as the dramatic climax of the resurrection narrative: the gospel writers describe Jesus commissioning his disciples after the resurrection, and the writer of Acts has him taken up into the sky by clouds immediately after.

Not only do the gospels recall this important instruction to preach the gospel, but, as John Durham Peters argues, they give early instructions in mass communication for the purpose of evangelism.[12] In Mark 4, Mathew 13, and Luke 8, the gospel writers relay Jesus's parables about a farmer spreading his seeds. The farmer spreads them far and wide, and even though some fall on rocky ground or get snatched away, some still fall on fertile soil, and those blossom. As the lesson goes, when the gospel message is "sown on the good soil," those who "hear the word and accept it" "bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundred-fold."[13] Moreover, the New Testament's redacted letters of Peter and Paul also serve as early models of mass communication. These epistles can be considered public letters, as they were initially the apostles' mechanism for communicating with the churches they had already founded as they continued their travels.

In addition to facilitating evangelism, mass media also serve as a useful resource in fulfilling a second Christian imperative: developing a familiar relationship between the believer and the deity.[14] Specifically, the Christ figure mediates between humans and the divine by offering the possibility of a personal relationship. Any mass medium—books, pamphlets, radio shows, music, television, film, or websites—that allows the believer to bring artifacts of the faith into his private space affords the possibility for developing this personal relationship that Peter Fraser argues Christianity demands. Moreover, the visual nature of more recent mass media, especially film and television, has increased the

intimacy and familiarity possible.[15] By watching Jesus movies, for instance, believers and non-believers alike can come to know a personal savior in both sight and sound, as he walks and talks and preaches and heals the sick.

As useful as mass media may be for fulfilling these basic discipleship imperatives—to evangelize and to know the Christ figure personally—Christian communities have not had a uniformly positive relationship with mass media. Instead, nearly every new media technology to emerge has found at least some opposition voiced in Christian terms.[16] John P. Ferré, for instance, argues that nineteenth century Christians perceived the fiction novel as the greatest threat to Christianity.[17] Heather Hendershot describes that Christians were skeptical of radio in its early days. Disquieted by the supernatural-seeming nature of sending messages through the air, they posited that the new medium might be controlled by Satan.[18] Michele Rosenthal notes Protestants' skepticism about television, admitting a few voices who wanted to "harness this new medium for missionary and educational purposes," but arguing that such "pleas for practical involvement in television, however, were largely overshadowed by negative evaluations of programming content."[19] The editors of *Christian Century* (the leading liberal Protestant journal of the twentieth century), Rosenthal argues, found television to be "at best, a waste of time, and, at worst, a direct assault on the American (that is, Protestant) way of life."[20] Rosenthal ties this distaste for television to a strain of elitism within American Protestantism, including a twentieth century trend where "high culture would increasingly be identified as the sole bearer of mainline Protestant values."[21] Michael Budde develops a more complete argument for why the culture of contemporary media technology—in concert with political economic developments—is fundamentally

incompatible with Christian faith. The television age has so changed our ways of thinking and relating, he suggests, that not only do we no longer devote sufficient time to the practice of faith, but moreover, we are fundamentally incapable of the sort of discipline necessary to an engaged prayer life. Budde argues, "what is at risk is not any particular interpretation of the gospel or the tradition of the church but the capacity to think, imagine, feel, and experience in ways formed by the Christian story."[22] Budde acknowledges that Christians have attempted to harness media technologies for purposes such as evangelism, but he concludes that the merits of such endeavors do not compensate for the way that these media have altered our culture so as to make it incompatible with faithful discipleship.[23]

History and development of Christian-themed media

Nonetheless, as much as some Christians have resisted developments in media technology, the theological imperatives to spread the gospel and to develop a personal relationship with Christ have entangled Christianity and mass communication in their mutual development. In the spirit of the Great Commission, Christian leaders have created various media texts for the purposes of evangelism, while media producers of all stripes have simultaneously exploited the economic potential of giving believers access to the mediated Christ.

The development of Christian media is intertwined with mass media more generally, at least since the first printing press gave us the Gutenberg Bible, an important prototype for the modern day evangelism effort—led by the American Bible Society—to put a Bible in every home. The American Bible Society and the American Tract Society's efforts to develop printing and papermaking technologies, as well as

distribution networks, contributed to the "explosion of Christian publishing during the 1810s and 1820s that amounted to the invention of the mass media in America."[24] In the 1820s and 1830s the ATS and ABS were responsible for distributing almost half a million inexpensive Bibles and more than ten million tracts nationwide.[25] Those decades were also the heyday of Christian journalism, when newspapers like Boston's *Recorder* and New York's *Christian Advocate* presented news from a Christian vantage point, establishing journalistic practices that would be influential for generations to follow.[26]

In the twentieth century, the technological developments associated with audio-visual media—especially cinema, radio, television, and home video—redefined the possibilities for Christian-themed mass media. As was the case with printing technology a century earlier, Christian interests have driven some of the developments in twentieth century media technology just as they have simultaneously benefited from those same developments. Moreover, the commercial interests behind these media technologies have used Christian themes for economic purposes just as much as Christian interests have used mass media for evangelical purposes.

By its very technology, film has been the most difficult for Christian interests—churches, evangelists, etc.—to harness for their own purposes. As a result, Christian films have generally been the product of the cinema establishment—Hollywood—rather than Christian organizations themselves. The history of Christian film can be traced as far back as the 1901 big screen adaptation of the 1895 novel *Quo Vadis?*, and religious films would come to dominate American theatres later in the century. Gerald Forshey notes, for instance, that in the 1950s, five religious films were the most popular of their year: *Quo Vadis* and *David and Bathsheba* in 1951, *The Robe* in 1953, *The Ten*

Commandments in 1956, and *Ben-Hur* in 1959.[27] Forshey lists dozens of other Christian-themed films that have been popular throughout the century, including *Elmer Gantry* in 1960, *The Exorcist* in 1974 and *The Last Temptation of Christ* in 1989. Given that such productions are for-profit endeavors, it is important to note that Hollywood has demonstrated repeatedly—and continues to do so with such films as *The Passion of the Christ* in 2004, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in 2005, and *Nativity Story* in 2006—that there is a market for Christian films.

Unlike cinema, radio has been a technology harnessed by Christians eager to spread their message, ever since the first religious radio broadcast on January 2, 1917 out of the Pittsburgh station, KDKA: a worship service from Calvary Episcopal Church.[28] Later, Pentecostals Aimee Semple McPherson and Oral Roberts would both build their public reputations by spreading the gospel via radio frequencies. Roberts's ministry grew quickly, from one local broadcast in 1947 on KCRC in Enid, Oklahoma to a contract with ABC in 1953 by which Roberts reached a total of more than 500 stations.[29] Since then, Christian radio has blossomed into a multi-million dollar global business, and, as it has grown, it has diversified. Whereas early Christian radio content was typically Sunday morning preaching on carefully regulated shared-frequency stations, today Christian radio stations operate around the clock, offering talk shows and contemporary music in addition to preaching. Initially, mainstream Christian groups—organized by the Federal Council of Churches—received free sustaining air time from the Federal Radio Commission. However, when independent evangelists demonstrated their willingness to pay for air time, the latter became the norm, even against the protests of the Federal Council of Churches.[30] That initial commercial Christian programming on non-religious

stations has now developed into a network of Christian radio stations available in every major radio market and in many of the little hamlets and burgs between them. Many of these radio stations are affiliated with Salem Communications, which owns 103 stations and broadcasts to more than 1,900 affiliates.[31]

Moreover, the Christian music industry has developed in step with Christian radio. The magazine *CCM* was founded in 1978, and its moniker—Contemporary Christian Music—has become a common descriptor for a wide range of musical styles, including those made famous by Petra, Stryker, Amy Grant, and DC Talk.[32] Many of these artists have won both fame and accolades with Christian and non-Christian audiences alike. DC Talk, for instance, has won three Grammies, and four of its albums have gone platinum and another three gold.[33] Other Christian artists, like Jars of Clay, Creed, and Sixpence None the Richer have experienced crossover success, but often by downplaying their Christian roots in more mainstream venues. Christian music has been a unique tool for simultaneously speaking to the converted and reaching the unchurched.

In many ways, Christian engagement with television parallels its relationship with radio. As was the case with radio, mainstream Christians received initial access to television airwaves in grants from the Federal Communications Commission (the FRC's successor).[34] Evangelicals—having banded together as the National Religious Broadcasters—offered to pay for air time, which became the norm for television as it was for radio. Again, Oral Roberts was an early pioneer, developing a commercial televangelism program that was shown on 135 stations (of the nation's 500) by 1957, reaching 80% of the nation's television audience.[35] By televangelism's heyday in the 1980s—before the scandals associated with Jimmy Swaggart and James Bakker—Sunday

morning preaching claimed an audience of 13 to 15 million Americans, while another 4.5 million tuned in to see Pat Robertson's *700 Club* on weekday mornings. [36]

Christian television programming also has ventured out of the televangelism format, beginning as early as 1969, when Oral Roberts began producing prime-time specials with musical guests and other Hollywood-style entertainment.[37] By the mid 1980s, evangelical and fundamentalist Christians produced more than sixty syndicated programs and owned five religious television networks.[38] Pat Robertson has been noted especially for his success with this venture, given his development of both the Christian Broadcasting Network and International Family Entertainment (or the Family Channel).[39] The family channel's innovation was its emphasis on programming that ensured Christian family values, but not necessarily Biblically- or theologically-oriented programming. Just like radio, Christian television has progressed from limited shows on mainstream channels to full-time Christian stations, resulting in commercial success, as well as greater potential for evangelism.[40]

Although film, radio, and television have been the widest reaching media to carry Christian themes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, newer technologies have not been excluded. With the advent of home video, James Dobson's Focus on the Family took up the opportunity to follow up on the innovations pioneered by Oral Roberts and his *Venture in Faith,*[41] as well as others produced by Moody Films International, Ken Anderson Productions, and Billy Graham Association Films, [42] groups that had been producing films specifically to be shown in churches and other small group settings. Dobson's Focus on the Family took advantage of home video technology to offer videos that could be shown in church, small group, *and* domestic settings.

Finally, Christian groups have utilized the newest forms of media technology as they come along. Literally thousands of churches across the United States maintain web presences—my home church can be found at www.fumctacoma.org, for instance—as do denominational structures and parachurch organizations. Some older print media, such as *Christianity Today* and *Sojourners*, now make their content available electronically. Churches have even begun "Godcasting" their Sunday services; that is, they make them available in MP3 format to be listened to on iPods and similar devices. The website "GodTube" mimics the popular success of "YouTube," allowing users to share Christian-themed video clips. As this new media technology develops so quickly, its cultural impact has received little scholarly attention.

Scholarship on Media and Religion

This history of Christian media has received some scholarly attention, much of it devoted to individual media personalities or Christian uses of particular media technologies. Scholarship on media and religion, however, has begun to act as a coherent body only within the last decade. A newly emerging community of scholars studying media and religion may be seen in two initiatives. First, in the late 1990s, a diverse community of scholars began holding conferences on "Media, Religion, and Culture,"[43] and eight universities—four in the U.S. and four in Europe—developed a consortium around the same issues.[44] According to Hoover, this effort draws together scholarship "from cultural studies, material culture, cultural anthropology, religious studies, ritual studies, critical theory, reception studies, performance studies, history, and sociology, among others."[45] Second, in 2002, the *Journal of Media and Religion* was launched with Daniel Stout and Judith Buddenbaum as editors. The inaugural edition of that journal

included short essays from five scholars whose previous research on media and religion spanned a range of paradigms: Buddenbaum on the social science tradition, Hoover on cultural studies, Clifford Christians on communication technology, Stout on media literacy, and Thomas Lindlof on the social-semiotic theory of interpretive community. In its first few volumes, the journal has published scholarship operating from all of these perspectives and the books that have grown out of the conferences described above have also included this variety of approaches.

Prior to these two important developments, however, no such interactive body of scholarship existed on the intersection between media and religion. Importantly, in their introduction to the new journal, Stout and Buddenbaum point their readers back to their own 1996 "extensive literature review" that "concludes that religion and media is seriously understudied."[46] That literature review, which appears in their edited collection *Religion and Mass Media*, attends to the scholarship on this topic that has occurred within the fields of mass communication and sociology. They uncover 59 studies, 30 of which came from communication literature and 29 from sociology literature, but they note that none of these take up the intersection between religion and media explicitly; rather, these studies more often consider media one variable among a larger set of research questions.[47] These studies largely operate within the media effects tradition, considering, for instance, how religious views influence media consumption.

Beyond the limited social science research that Buddenbaum and Stout review, more of the scholarly attention paid to media and religion has been historical, cultural, and political economic studies of religious media figures and institutions. Much of this scholarship operates from an instrumentalist position—analyzing how Christian media

achieves its goals, especially fulfilling the imperative to evangelize. Razelle Frankl's often-cited study of televangelism considers it as a cultural institution with its roots in such evangelists as Charles Grandison Finney, Dwight Moody, and Billy Sunday.[48] Quentin Schultze's 1990 edited volume, *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media,* draws together a series of chapters all describing various evangelical uses of mass media technologies. Janice Peck's 1993 *The Gods of Televangelism* offers close analysis of Jimmy Swaggart and Pat Robertson's televangelism.[49] She makes the case that these two—whose styles she notes diverge in nearly every way—both became so popular because they responded to a cultural "crisis of meaning." Both Quentin Schultze and Michele Rosenthal have considered struggles among Christians—in Christian periodicals—over media technologies.[50] Schultze argues that in their debates about radio and television broadcast regulations, Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical journals helped situate their own tribes' places in the competitive media landscape. Rosenthal's analysis concurs, as she argues that Protestant disregard for television developed as the mainline churches, struggling to maintain their cultural dominance in the time after WWII, felt a growing need to protect their sects from the culture at large, whose values had gone astray. As such, Protestants distinguished their own high culture traditions from the increasingly-popular low culture mass media.

Peck, Schultze, and Rosenthal all do what is in some ways still uncommon—but not unheard of—within religion and media scholarship: they consider the *content* of these texts. As Quentin Schultze explains, "religious media are not only social institutions worthy of intellectual and institutional histories; they are also arenas of symbolic action in and through which cultural groups form their self-identities and create interpretations

of other social group's motives and actions."[51] However, these elements of symbolic action have been largely neglected until these most recent developments in religion and media scholarship.[52] Moreover, this scholarship has only begun to investigate the larger constitutive effects of Christian media. Attending largely to its instrumental value, scholars have not fully considered the cultural import of Christian media beyond the successes and failures of evangelism.

Citizenship and the Public Sphere

This project pursues a more constitutive approach, interrogating Christian-themed mass media texts for the models of citizenship they construct. I turn to such contemporary media in light of popular narratives about evangelical Christian political participation and media consumption at the turn of the twenty-first century, as well as scholarly and popular narratives that decry mass media as the cause of declining civic participation. Rather than assuming that mass media, simply by their form, have turned citizens into passive consumers, this project begins with the alternative premise that popular media, by their content, constitute possibilities for citizenship. In what follows, I review the narratives of the public sphere that have defined citizenship in ways that find it wanting, before reviewing more hopeful narratives of the contemporary public sphere. I contend that these differing notions of the public sphere call forth differing performances of citizenship, and that the latter, more hopeful descriptions of the public sphere offer more expansive visions of citizenship. Working from these more flexible notions of the public sphere, I consider the ways that popular media discipline possibilities for citizen participation.

The Public Sphere and the Demands of Citizenship

The contemporary American debate over citizen participation can be fruitfully traced to the exchange between John Dewey and Walter Lippmann in the 1920s. In Lippmann's 1922 *Public Opinion* and 1925 *The Phantom Public* and Dewey's 1927 *The Public and its Problems*, both men grappled with a rapidly changing society, where technological developments and the increasing flow of information seemed to make public influence on policy impossible. Even though Lippmann and Dewey offered relatively similar descriptions of their contemporary public sphere, the two offered competing visions of citizenship in that public sphere. For Lippmann, his despair over the complexity of information flow and technological advancement left him no faith that American citizens could successfully negotiate this public sphere, let alone participate in decision-making. Instead, Lippmann proposed that public participation be left to an intellectual elite (specifically an elite of journalists) capable of participating in discussion that required a degree of technical expertise.[53] Dewey's book, which Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer have called "the best-known expression of concern for the public in the face of social transformation,"[54] struggled with many of the same social transformations, ultimately characterizing an "eclipse of the public." Dewey's conclusion about citizenship was different, however: agreeing that citizens were overwhelmed with information made possible by technological progress, Dewey's solution promoted education for those overwhelmed masses. For Dewey, the duties of citizenship should remain in the hands of the masses, but the masses should be educated in order to be capable of fulfilling those duties.

If Dewey shared Lippmann's despair over the contemporary break down of the public, his overarching faith in the public as an entity bigger than, and existing prior to, the state mitigated some of his concern.[55] If the public is prior to and bigger than the state itself, citizenship cannot be defined by narrow acts like voting and legislating. Dewey instead treated democracy as "a way of life," where it was less a formal end and more a means to public engagement. [56] Moreover, healthy democracy depended on successful construction of public opinion, which for Dewey was not simply the aggregate of individual opinions. Rather, his public opinion was discursively constructed through a complex process involving "methods for detecting the energies which are at work and tracing them through an intricate network of interactions to their consequences," resulting in public opinion, or "judgment which is formed and entertained by those who constitute the public and is about public affairs."[57] For Dewey, then, the public was the naturally existing entity created by the interaction of its participants. Public opinion was not the monolithic product of an aggregate body, but rather the contested and conflicted ideas produced by this interactive body.

Dewey's appreciation for public interaction foreshadowed the work of the German theorist Jürgen Habermas, whose 1962 *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* has captivated American scholars grappling with the continuing issues of public participation. A product of his Frankfurt School mentors—Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer—Habermas shared Dewey and Lippmann's sense of despair about contemporary democracy. [58] By Habermas's account, the ideal public sphere allows for the critical formation of public opinion. This public sphere, which accords with the principles of liberal democracy, stands in sharp contrast to the one Habermas argues has

become more common—where public opinion is the product of select interests persuading the masses.[59] The distinct expectations for citizen participation in these two public spheres are clear: in Habermas's preferred public sphere, citizens are participants in rational-critical discourse about the issues of common importance, whereas in the diminished public sphere, citizens are simply passive consumers, forming part of the aggregate public opinion.

The argument of *Structural Transformation* proceeds in two parts: first characterizing this bourgeois public sphere, and then chronicling its destruction. In treating these historical developments, Habermas is able to invest faith in the conditions of a healthy public sphere while simultaneously decrying the factors that prevent its realization. A public sphere, Habermas explains, is a place where "something approaching public opinion can be formed."[60] This concept of public opinion was new to post-Reformation Europe with the decline in royal and clerical power and the beginnings of transformation to democracy. The seeds of democracy were sown prior to state revolutions in the public discussions in coffee houses (England), salons (France), and table societies (Germany),[61] where public discussion served the key social function of being a check against the state. In this public sphere, public opinion could be generated separately from the mechanisms of the state, so as to guard against potential excesses of the state. The state, however, was still responsible for enacting the will developed in this public sphere.[62] At the same time, this public sphere was separate from the private realm, specifically the family/economy (a conjoined entity in early capitalism). As such, the public sphere was also distinct from the influences of such private interests. Coming together in the public sphere, citizens would bracket their own private interests, so that

"they then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy."[63]

As Craig Calhoun explains it, there are two key characteristics to Habermas's public sphere: its rational-critical discourse and the openness of public participation.[64] Indeed, the only requirement for participation in this public sphere was a sound argument. Habermas makes it clear that "public opinion can by definition only come into existence when a reasoning public is presupposed."[65] Moreover, table societies, salons, and coffee houses "preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether. The tendency replaced the celebration of rank with a tact befitting equals."[66] Even as Habermas acknowledges that this disregard for status may never have been realized completely, he claims it was an ideal of this early public sphere.

This bourgeois public sphere was a fleeting phenomenon, however, fundamentally transformed by social, political, and economic changes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Habermas attributes the demise of the bourgeois public sphere to increasing access to publicity, which can be explained by modern technologies that increased the spread of information. "Because of the diffusion of press and propaganda," he explains, "the public body expanded beyond the bounds of the bourgeoisie."[67] Moreover, private organizations began to acquire public power at the same time that the state began to intervene in the private realm (specifically the economic realm). Habermas laments,

> Conflicts hitherto restricted to the private sphere now intrude into the public sphere. Group needs which can expect no satisfaction from a self-regulating market now tend towards a regulation by the state. The public sphere, which must now mediate these demands, becomes a field for the competition of interests, competitions which assume the form of violent conflict.[68]

As private and public, state and society, became interlocked, the space for a separate public sphere slipped away. With these conflations, it was no longer possible for a separate public sphere to serve as a check against the state, nor was it possible for individuals to bracket their private interests as they entered the public sphere.

Moreover, not only has the space of the public sphere disappeared, but its accompanying civic participation is no longer possible. Citizens no longer engage in public matters through open discussion. Instead, citizens have become passive consumers of the information marketed by private interests and the state.[69] Obviously for-profit corporations have become purveyors of such marketing, but "even legislatures are affected," Calhoun explains, "as they become arenas for staged displays aimed at persuading the masses rather than forums for critical debate among their members."[70] Even further, as products increasingly are marketed to niche audiences, and as few products reach a mass audience, the possibility for common ground decreases even more. We have grown so unaccustomed to public engagement, and we are so fragmented, that, as Habermas explains, the liberal model of the public sphere can be instructive, but "it cannot be applied to the actual conditions of an industrially advanced mass democracy organized in the form of the social welfare state."[71] We are too far removed from the

conditions necessary to embody the liberal public sphere. For Habermas, however, the possibilities for publicity still rest in enactments of citizenship. In his later work, as he develops the theory of communicative action, he posits that communication itself is the transcendent form that holds in its very properties the capacity for publicity. Distinguishing between the system and the lifeworld—wherein the system is the state and economy and the lifeworld is everything else that checks the system—Habermas proposes that the lifeworld is governed by communication norms.[72] In order to protect the lifeworld, a more feasible proposition than transforming the state, we need to protect and develop our communication practices—specifically rational-critical discourse and the ideal speech situation.

Whereas Habermas largely has reached a scholarly audience with his argument about the failures of the liberal democratic public sphere, Robert Putnam has conveyed similar concerns to both scholarly and popular audiences. With his provocative *Bowling Alone* thesis, Putnam both depicts an idealized America defined by a strong public sphere, as he also details a recent decline in public participation. Quoting Alexis de Tocqueville repeatedly, Putnam's notion of the American public sphere draws heavily on what the Frenchman reported about the young nation he visited in the nineteenth century: the threads of the American social fabric are composed of voluntary associations that bring citizens together.[73] Defining voluntary associations broadly, for Putnam, citizenship entails participation in such organizations. In Putnam's rendering, then, the changes in American society are signified by citizens' failure to participate in such organizations at the levels of previous generations. Drawing heavily on numerical data,

Putnam shows declines in public participation along a number of sectors—electoral politics, voluntary associations, religious groups, and others. He argues,

> For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century a powerful tide bore Americans into even deeper engagement in the life of their communities, but a few decades ago—silently, without warning—that tide reversed and we were overtaken by a treacherous rip current. Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century.[74]

Time after time, nearly every set of data Putnam analyzes shows this marked decline in public participation between the post-war climax in the late-1950s and early-1960s and the present day. For Putnam, the dreaded outcome of this decline in civic engagement is the loss of social capital, which consists of "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."[75] Moreover, he concludes that the most likely cause of this decline in public participation is television. Tracing out all the ways that Americans once spent their time but no longer do, Putnam tries to account for what has taken the place of this civic involvement in Americans' weekly schedules. Concluding that, overall, this time cannot be accounted for as extra hours worked, more time socializing, or anything else, Putnam surmises that the extra time has been devoted to watching television. Thus, Americans have exchanged active community participation for passive television consumption.

Alternative Publics and Citizenship Practices

As loud as these voices decrying the decline in public participation have been, there also has been no shortage of alternative voices willing to conceptualize the public

sphere in radically different ways, allowing for profoundly different possibilities for citizen participation. Habermas's account of the rise and fall of the bourgeois public sphere, in particular, has received extensive critique—both in terms of his historical narrative of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, as well as for his failure to account for contemporary "actually existing democracy." Putnam, too, has been cited on these latter grounds—that his description of civic decline fails to reckon with civic participation in total. But these responses to Habermas, Dewey, and the others have begun with some of the same fundamental questions: What is the nature of the public? How does the public relate to the state, the economy, the private sphere? What type of citizen participation does the public sphere call forth? What factors inhibit citizen participation, and what factors enable it?

Describing the widespread critique of Habermas's historical narrative, Asen and Brouwer suggest that Habermas has pursued this historical bourgeois public sphere somewhat blindly, and, even considering his concessions to some of his critics, note that some commentators still fear that Habermas's "idealization constructs a history of fulfillment then fall told through rose-colored glasses."[76] Calhoun critiques *Structural Transformation* on historical grounds, claiming that Habermas does not treat the various eras in symmetrical terms. By Calhoun's reading, Habermas judges the eighteenth century by Locke and Kant, the nineteenth century by Marx and Mill, but the twentieth century by the average suburban television viewer. Had Habermas turned to the intellectual tradition of the twentieth century, Calhoun suggests, he might have seen a different progression.[77] Still others have questioned the historical veracity of Habermas's

narrative, including his choice to mark 1700 as the originary date for the bourgeois public sphere.[78]

Habermas's bourgeois public sphere also has fallen prey to critiques of its defining principles. Whereas Habermas defined the bourgeois public sphere in terms of openness, countering narratives have suggested the extensive nature of exclusions buttressing this public sphere. Some of Habermas's first critics, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, took issue with Habermas's inattention to proletariat public spheres. Not only did he fail to account for the ways that the bourgeois public sphere was predicated on such exclusion, but he also did not acknowledge that other spheres for public discussion might exist among classes of people other than the bourgeoisie. Following Negt and Kluge, feminists have made similar arguments about Habermas's omissions: that he neither accounted for alternate female public spheres nor attended to the way that the bourgeois public sphere was fundamentally premised on women's exclusion.[79] Feminists have even countered Habermas with competing narratives of women's history in the bourgeois era, such as Ryan's account of women's politics in nineteenth century America.

More than just failing on the grounds of historical accuracy, however, Habermas's conceptualization of the public sphere also sets up normative ideals that are problematic on their own terms—whether in a historical or contemporary context. Nancy Fraser has taken issue with four assumptions underlying what she calls "the *bourgeois, masculinist* conception of the public sphere."[80] First, she questions the assumption that it is possible for interlocutors in the public sphere to bracket personal interests and interact with each other as if they were social equals. Douglas Kellner joins her in this critique, suggesting,

"politics throughout the modern era have been subject to the play of interests and power as well as discussion and debate."[81] Fraser also questions why one singular, unitary public is necessarily more democratic than multiple publics. Third, she questions Habermas's assumption that deliberation in the public sphere should be limited to topics that concern the common good.[82] Finally, Fraser questions the idea that a healthy public sphere and democracy are dependent on a sharp distinction between the state and civil society.[83]

Instead of Habermas's unitary, distinct, and discrete public sphere, then, it may be more helpful to envision "multiple, sometimes overlapping or contending, public spheres."[84] In contrast to the singular public sphere, there is no limit to the multiplicity of these publics; indeed, "there could be an infinite number of publics within the social totality."[85] These multiple publics are discursive entities, each one created and defined by discourse circulating within it. [86] Moreover, publics are open-ended, widely accessible, amorphous, evolving, and often ephemeral.

In addition to these multiple publics, there may be overlapping and contending counterpublics.[87] Nancy Fraser initially used the term "subaltern counterpublics" to signify "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."[88] Warner adds to Fraser's definition to suggest that counterpublics "mark themselves off unmistakably from any general or dominant public. Their members are understood to be not merely a subset of the public but constituted through a conflictual relation to the dominant public."[89] Asen argues that counterpublics,

like publics, must be defined by their common discourse, and he demonstrates the dangers of trying to define a counterpublic in terms of people, places, or topics.[90]

In the wake of Habermas's unitary public sphere, these conceptualizations of multiple spheres, publics, and counterpublics have dominated critical accounts of the social. Lest we get too carried away with multiplicity, however, Calhoun decries the slippery abstraction of simply admitting the existence of multiple public spheres, and prefers instead "to think of the public sphere as involving a field of discursive connections."[91] Michael Warner also reins in this multiplicity: as he joins those promoting the idea of multiple publics, he also admits the existence of "*the* public" which is "a kind of social totality."[92]

Any of these accounts of multiple publics, counterpublics, and spheres makes room for an enlarged notion of citizenship. Unlike the rational-critical discourse demanded by Habermas's public sphere, for instance, these multiple publics are defined by a wide variety of discursive forms—rational and irrational, poetic, non-verbal, mediated, and more. As such, citizens in a public engage in any of these discursive forms. Importantly, a public is nothing more than these discursive practices of citizenship: as a discursive space, a public comes into being when citizens engage in the reflexive circulation of discourse, and a public ceases to exist when that discursive exchange abates.

Given this expanded notion of publics, and the accompanying expansive possibilities for participation in publics, Asen offers a "discourse theory of citizenship." This theory "conceives of citizenship as a *mode of public engagement*. In drawing attention to citizenship as a process, a discourse theory recognizes the fluid, multimodal,

and quotidian enactments of citizenship in a multiple public sphere."[93] Citizenship, Asen suggests (as Dewey might have), is an everyday practice, defined by the varying ways that citizens approach their shared social worlds. With this perspective, then, Asen takes issues with schemas such as Putnam's that purport to *count* citizenship behaviors. Claiming that citizenship cannot be measured as a set of activities, Asen suggests instead that citizenship should be identified as a process. To study citizenship, we should be asking *how* questions rather than *what* questions, redirecting "our attention from acts to action" and distinguishing "the manner by which something is done from what is done."[94] Reading citizenship in terms of its modes, we should be concerned with the manner in which citizens engage the public, taking into account the "dispositional factors" that define the manner of public engagement.[95] From the various manners of citizenship specific deeds necessarily follow, and Asen's discourse theory of citizenship suggests that critics should try to account for both.[96]

Even without explicitly employing Asen's "discourse theory of citizenship," many case studies of publics and counterpublics have done useful work to identify the various modes of citizenship that define the contemporary multiple public sphere. Gerard Hauser's analysis of prisoner of conscience discourse, which takes Polish dissident Adam Michnik's prison writing as a case study, considers resistance to the state as a mode of public engagement. In this case, public engagement comes in the form of illegitimate discourse from a prisoner whom the state has tried to silence, and that discourse has "the potential to invert society's ostensible power vectors."[97] My own work has tried to read anti-suffragists of the 1910s as a social movement and a counterpublic, arguing that their activism as a counterpublic can be characterized by non-rational, associative discourse.[98]

In her analysis of the Toxic Links Coalition's "Stop Cancer Where It Starts," Phaedra Pezzullo considers that counterpublic's cultural performances along "physical, visual, emotional, and aural dimensions."[99] In this case, the cultural performance of civic engagement proceeds by tourism, and spectatorship becomes a mode of citizenship. As participants traverse sites related to the cancer industry, they not only see those sites, but they also attract public attention to themselves. In the tour that Pezzullo observed, "participants walked across streets and redirected countless people who were walking on the sidewalks as part of their everyday routines. The tour created an inventive, spontaneous, persuasive, and risky mobile theater for cultural performance by communicating physically, visually, emotionally, corporeally, and aurally."[100] In his case study, Brouwer considers the multiple modes of civic performance within one counterpublic—ACT UP. Noting that ACT UP's civic engagement has often been characterized by the group's "disruptive, unruly, and often highly performative modes of protest in public spaces," Brouwer also considers their modes of civic engagement when group members appeared in congressional hearings.[101] In those hearings, ACT UP members' dispositions changed: no longer did they perform their dissent in a disruptive fashion, but instead they followed the discursive norms of rational deliberation common to the congressional hearing. Brouwer's analysis of ACT UP has demonstrated the multiplicity of citizenship modes even within one small space.

Importantly, many of these analyses of publics and counterpublics have demonstrated the role of mass media in facilitating public engagement. These analyses are especially significant in contrast to Putnam's argument that television has eviscerated civic involvement and Habermas's reading of mass media as tools that convey dominant

ideology. John Durham Peters even acknowledges a competing impulse in Habermas's work, suggesting that he "also finds in the mass media a potentially liberating power." [102] For Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, mass media have become so central to our social life that "public screen" is now a more useful guiding metaphor than "public sphere." [103] Taking as a case study the protests of the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle, DeLuca and Peeples show how the violence and disorder that defined those protests won them national media coverage that in turn stimulated discussion of the protesters' concerns. Douglas Kellner suggests that mass media have the unique capacity to mediate between state, economy, and social life, even if he acknowledges that they have not been using that capacity to promote democracy. In addition to reading the capacities of mass media for facilitating public engagement generally, other scholars have examined how particular movements have successfully deployed media technology. For instance, taking the case of the right-to-die movement, Todd F. McDorman explores "the potential of the Internet as a counterpublic tool for revitalizing the role of the public sphere in mass reform of public policy and private action," arguing that "the Internet offers the possible rejuvenation of the public by nurturing strong counterpublic challenges to state power."[104] The role of the media in facilitating public engagement is still far from settled, especially as the potentially democratizing power of the internet remains to be proven.

Opportunities for Extending Public Sphere and Citizenship Research

Even given recent work devoted both to theorizing the public sphere and citizenship, as well as analyzing specific modes of public engagement, significant

opportunities for furthering this line of inquiry remain. In what follows, I outline three fruitful spaces in which I hope this project works.

First, Asen has argued that there are multiple modes of performing citizenship, and although numerous scholars have debated the role of mass media in facilitating or destroying public engagement, no one has considered the role of mass media in defining the possibilities for modes of citizenship. That is, if there are multiple possible ways that citizenship can be performed, I begin with the assumption that those possibilities are often encoded in and disseminated through mass media. It has been amply demonstrated that the mass media discipline possibilities for performances of public subjectivities. Even if the disciplinary functions of mass media have been most clearly demonstrated by gender and feminist scholars who critique media policing of successful gender performance,[105] clearly mass media discipline identity beyond gender. In this case, I begin with the premise that mediated texts also discipline possibilities for citizenship performance. As such, this project investigates what other analyses of citizenship modalities have ignored: the ways that those modalities are constructed in popular media.

Second, those popular media constructions of gender that have been so clearly explicated are not absent from these constructions of citizenship. Indeed, citizenship modalities are often gendered. In this project, I operate from a feminist perspective that assumes that gendered behavior is neither natural nor fixed, but is, instead, created and disciplined through human-made structures, including language.[106] Only through the every-day reiterations of normative gender ideology is a binary system of gender kept stable—where bodies are divided into male and female and the accompanying behavior is defined as masculine and feminine. As such, I rely on the concepts of masculinity and

femininity not assuming that they are pre-given, natural categories, but rather, recognizing that they are powerful constructs sedimented over time. Masculinity is nothing more than the behavior traditionally ascribed to bodies defined male and femininity is nothing more than the behavior traditionally ascribed to bodies defined female. In such a binary system, male and female are always defined in relation to one another, as are masculinity and femininity. In this project, I note how the disposition of citizenship often is defined in accordance with gendered norms.

Third, this analysis considers the ways that religious worldviews define the public sphere and the attendant obligations of citizenship. As Charles Taylor has suggested, changes in the religious landscape throughout Western history have prompted accompanying changes in what he calls the "social imaginary," or the collective understanding of the social system. In the largest sense, Taylor maintains that our modern social imaginary is defined by secular time, by which he is suggesting that it has been radically divorced from a transcendent, divinely-ordered temporality. On a smaller scale, however, the varieties of contemporary religious belief systems embody varying understandings of the social imaginary and the requisite duties of citizenship that accompany that social imaginary. This project considers Christian mediated discourses for the way that they construct the public and the duties of citizenship.

Preview of Chapters

In each of the chapters that follow I take up the case of a recent Christian-themed mass media text and consider the ways that it constructs a particular social imaginary and disciplines an associated model of citizenship. I pursue analysis of three texts produced

between 1996 and 2004: (1) *The Passion of the Christ*, (2) the *Left Behind* novels, and (3) *The da Vinci Code*. These three texts are certainly not the only Christian-themed mainstream media from that short time period. Indeed, there have been numerous other popular successes, including the television series *7th Heaven* and *Joan of Arcadia* and bestselling non-fiction books like Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* and Jim Wallis's *God's Politics.* I choose these three texts, however, for their sheer popularity at the turn of the twenty-first century. Moreover, taken together, these three represent a diversity of thought about Christian history and theology. In what follows, I offer a justification for each text's inclusion in the project, as well as a summary of my argument about that text.

The Passion of the Christ

Released into the theatres on Ash Wednesday in February 2004, *The Passion of the Christ* remained on the big screen through the Christian season of Lent, and in those seven weeks, it became the highest-grossing independent film and highest-grossing R-rated film of all time. During its stay on the big screen, the film garnered media attention proportionate to its box office sales, inspiring public discourse about its purported anti-Semitism, its historical authenticity (or veracity to the gospels), and its extensive violence.

My analysis focuses on the extensive, graphic violence that I maintain is the film's defining feature. I argue that, through this violence, *The Passion* situates Christians as victims of the oppressive Roman and Jewish leaders, in a scheme ordained by the omnipotent God. The school of thought known as Liberation Theology has long celebrated victimhood as a powerful social location from which Christians can meet the

divine and also find agency to work for liberation. *The Passion*, however, demonstrates the limitations of victimhood, as it fulfills the fears of other contextual theologians who claim that this type of thinking too often denies Christians agency, making them passive dupes in God's plan for humanity. The film celebrates the feminized characters of Mary, Mary Magdalene and John, who all willingly acquiesce to the violence. In sum, *The Passion* constitutes feminine submission as the faithful model of citizenship.

Left Behind.

The *Left Behind* novels are the creative product of Tim LaHaye, one of the most influential evangelicals in the United States (as so named by *Time* magazine in their "25 most influential evangelicals" cover story of February 2005).[107] Working with co-author Jerry B. Jenkins, the two men have written twelve novels in the series, which have led to another 40 novels for children, graphic novels, non-fiction theology guides, three feature-length films, shorter video adaptations of the stories, and, most recently, prequels to the original series for adults. The success of the *Left Behind* books also has sparked a cottage industry of end-times fiction, much of which is cross promoted with *Left Behind* (on www.leftbehind.com, for instance).

My analysis focuses on the twelve novels that make up the main series for adults. These novels offer a premillenialist, dispensationalist theology, narrating the events from the Rapture—when Christ takes up his faithful on Earth to join him in Heaven—through the seven years of Tribulation for those left behind on earth, to Christ's triumphant second coming. I argue that this narrative sets up a social order starkly divided between good and evil, reality and appearance, and truth and persuasion. Within that world, it models faithful discipleship as muscular Christianity, where Christians are called to

active service on Christ's behalf, as they fight their enemy—the antichrist—with guns, swords, tanks, and other weapons. Importantly, men and women are equally called to perform this muscular Christianity, even if the story's female characters perform it less successfully than do the men.

The Da Vinci Code

Upon its release in March 2003, Dan Brown's *The da Vinci Code* quickly climbed the *New York Times* bestseller list, where it would remain for the full three years until its release in paperback. By the time it opened as a major motion picture, starring Tom Hanks and Audrey Tatou, the novel had sold more than 60 million copies. In that time, the controversial narrative would also inspire at least 31 books and 23 television and DVD specials produced in response.

I argue that *The da Vinci Code* does not offer a model of citizenship. Ironically, the novel has been derided by its critics as a "radical feminist polemic," and feminism, of course, is a movement that has long been concerned with the issue of citizenship. In limited ways, the novel seems to echo the general impulse of cultural or difference feminism: it celebrates women and women's uniqueness specifically. Ultimately, however, it undermines its own feminist potential by limiting women to the private sphere and by reinscribing binary notions of gender as well as heteronormativity. The novel celebrates women almost exclusively for their biology, specifically their abilities to reproduce and to facilitate men's spiritual/sexual fulfillment. By reducing women to the private sphere and the sexual act, the novel violates the tradition of American feminism that has oriented itself to the public sphere and to the possibilities for public citizenship. In sharp contrast to *The Passion* and *Left Behind*, *The da Vinci Code* maintains an

exclusive focus on the private sphere, leaving it without a model of citizenship to rival the other texts.

Chapter 2

"Whoever Resists Authority Resists what God Has Appointed"[1]: Victimhood and Feminine Submission in *The Passion of the Christ*

Mel Gibson certainly proved Frank Rich wrong. Of Gibson's then-forthcoming film, the *New York Times* arts columnist wrote in August 2003, "It's hard to imagine the movie being anything other than a flop in America, given that it has no major Hollywood stars and that its dialogue is in Aramaic and Latin."[2] Frank Rich was not the only industry expert Gibson proved wrong; initially, the film in question, *The Passion of the Christ*, had shown so little promise to movie studio executives that Gibson had to finance it with $25 million of his own funds.[3] Released in U.S. theatres on Ash Wednesday of 2004, the film remained on the big screen through the Christian season of Lent, racking up more than $370 in U.S. box office receipts in little more than seven weeks.[4] All told, *The Passion* would ultimately reach the top ten of all-time grossing movies in the U.S., as well as becoming the top all-time foreign language film and the top all-time grossing "R"-rated film.[5] In a fall 2005 Gallup/Baylor University survey, 44% of respondents reported having seen the film.[6] Mel Gibson's independent film, starring little-known actors and conducted in ancient languages, defied all expectations.

In route to this box office success, the film inspired more than a little controversy in the pages of the mainstream press. Frank Rich's aforementioned skepticism came as part of a brief exchange of fire with Gibson, wherein Rich challenged Gibson's pre-

screenings on the grounds that they excluded Jews, just as the film's potential anti-Semitism was being questioned. Rich even accused Gibson himself of trying to provoke Jewish response—by hinting at the film's anti-Semitism as early as January 2003—as a publicity maneuver. Prevalent as this concern over the film's depiction of Jewish characters was, by the time of its theatrical release, public outcry over the film's anti-Semitism was beginning to dissipate, even if the concern never disappeared.

Moreover, once the film began to reach mass public audiences, a new concern arose over its unprecedented graphic violence. Leon Wieseltier's *New Republic* review declared that the film "breaks new ground in the verisimilitude of filmed violence"[7] and Richard Corliss's *Time* article claimed that Gibson invented "a new genre--the religious splatter-art film."[8] David Van Biema described the film's "relentless, near pornographic feast of flayed flesh."[9] According to AP entertainment writer Christy Lemire, "the beating and whipping and ripping of skin become so repetitive they'll leave the audience emotionally drained and stunned." And in the *New York Times,* reviewer A.O. Scott explained, "the final hour of 'The Passion of the Christ' essentially consists of a man being beaten, tortured and killed in graphic and lingering detail."[10]

Certainly, the film is extremely violent, and it sets itself apart from more typical Hollywood fare by the setting and intensity of violence. *The Passion*'s violence is the most public of affairs, as it is an expression of the institutional power structure against its constituents. The story opens in a public garden, where Jesus's prayers are interrupted by Temple guards who arrest him and bind his hands and torso with rope and chains. As they drag Jesus out of the garden and through the city streets, the spectacle starts to attract a crowd. Along this walk, just 14 minutes into the film, the violence officially

begins when the guards push Jesus over the edge of a wall and he descends quickly until the ropes and chains that bind him reach their end, and he jerks to a stop. The violence that begins in this opening scene only intensifies over the next 96 minutes, which are filled with beating, binding, dragging, flesh-tearing, spitting, taunting, piercing, and crucifying. In that time, Jesus is constantly the center of public attention, and the masses around him all participate in the escalating violence. The Jewish leaders and Temple guards initiate the arrest, the Roman guards take up their charge to torture and kill him, and even the townspeople who line the walk as he carries his cross contribute to the beating. When Jesus is in the custody of the Jewish leaders who question and taunt him, a Jewish mob surrounds him as the high priest, Caiaphas, tears his own robe, spits in Jesus's face, and commences hitting him, before the other priests follow suit. Then, when the Jewish leaders turn over Jesus to Pilate, and Pilate is reluctant to have Jesus crucified, his lieutenants spare no expense in destroying Jesus's flesh. The soldiers chain Jesus to a stump and beat him with an assortment of lashes, including one with a metal claw that vividly tears Jesus's flesh from his body. The violence only pauses—after nearly eight minutes of screen time—when a Roman official comes out to protest the soldiers' excessive beating, given that their orders were to torture the man, not kill him. When Pilate returns him to the crowd, the angry masses shout "crucify him," and the reluctant Pilate consents. The soldiers begin the arduous process of forcing Jesus to carry his cross and then nailing him to it and watching him die.

The Passion's graphic violence generated extensive public discourse. Not only does it set *The Passion* apart from the Hollywood establishment generally, but the violence also distinguishes it from other Jesus films more particularly. Films from the

most recent generation of Jesus movies, including *Jesus of Nazareth* and *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, as well as the previous generation, exemplified by *King of Kings* and *The Robe*, focused on Jesus's life in totality, leaving only minimal screen time for his crucifixion. And within their limited depictions of the crucifixion, these films focused little attention on the violence itself. Given that *The Passion* unquestionably breaks new ground for graphic violence, especially graphic violence in a religious film, journalists and reviewers alike have wrestled with two central questions: does it need to be so violent? And why? Some reviewers would ultimately admit that there is no explanation for all this violence, at least not a sensible one from Gibson or the film itself. A.O. Scott called it Gibson's "most serious artistic failure" that the film "never provides a clear sense of what all this bloodshed was for."[11] Most reviewers, however, at least offered speculations. Negative critiques of the film were likely to explain the utility of the violence in terms of the filmmaker's motivations and psychoses. Favorable reviews more often understood the violence's redeeming qualities in theological terms.

Tying the violence to the earlier controversy over the film's and the filmmaker's anti-Semitism, one option is to read the violence as a vehicle for that anti-Semitism—that this excessive violence is necessary for depicting just how evil the Jewish priests were. Most negative reviews, however, speculated about Mel Gibson's psychoses in order to explain the violence. David Denby analyzed the director in his *New Yorker* review: "At that point, I said to myself, 'Mel Gibson has lost it,' and I was reminded of what many other writers have pointed out—that Gibson, as an actor, has been beaten, mashed, and disemboweled in many of his movies. His obsession with pain, disguised by religious feelings, has now reached a frightening apotheosis."[12] Eric Harrison, writing for the

Houston Chronicle, concurred. He explained Mel Gibson's martyr's complex where, "in film after film, he's subjected himself—or, rather, his characters—to gruesome tortures that stretched past the point of entertainment. He threw himself into these pummelings, disembowelings and symbolic crucifixions with such fervor we saw a deep-seated need we dared not question."[13] Given Mel Gibson's history of deeply violent and tortured films, these reviewers saw *The Passion* as little more than an extension of a trend. Other skeptical reviewers were more likely to explain the extensive violence in terms of Hollywood imperatives. That is, such violence paves the way for box office success. In *USA Today*, reviewer Claudia Puig speculated, "Director Mel Gibson has tackled the brutality not for the sake of titillation or even entertainment but to enlighten as well as to shock and awe audiences." And according to the *New York Times*, Mel Gibson "has exploited the popular appetite for terror and gore for what he and his allies see as a higher end."[14] These skeptical reviews of the film and its violence consistently implicate the filmmaker himself in the violence, most often attributing it to his anti-Semitism, or his inexplicable love of violence, or even just his desire to make money. They suggest that the violence is extraneous to the point of the film, and that rather than a necessary plot device, it is the expression of the director's madness.

The film's more sympathetic reviewers were more likely to read the violence as integral to the film's message. By making real the pain of Jesus's death, they suggest, this violence forces Christians and non-Christians alike to appreciate Jesus's sacrifice as well as their culpability in his death. One such sympathetic reviewer, S.T. Karnick, explains that, "this film is meant to be like the spikes that are so vividly and horrifyingly driven into the Christ's hands and feet as he is fastened to the cross.... The Passion of the

Christ is as pointed as those spikes. It does one thing. It implicates the viewer in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ nearly 2,000 years ago, and it does so with undeniable power."[15] David Neff, editor of the evangelical Christian magazine *Christianity Today,* echoed this explanation for the violence. "The film's bruising bloodiness," he argued, is necessary to convey "the sense of one's own sins being responsible for the Crucifixion, the sense of the enormous weight of the world's sins on the Savior's shoulders, the horror of the suffering that Christ endured..."[16] Without the violence, these reviewers suggest, the film would not have been able to so convincingly portray the eternal significance of Jesus's sacrifice for human sins, and it would not have been able to make that sacrifice personal for viewers.

In this chapter, I share a premise with these journalists and reviewers: *The Passion*'s extensive graphic violence is its defining feature. Whereas this public discourse has sought to explain the director's intentions and the utility of the violence in portraying the gospel narrative, I focus on this violence because it provides a fruitful entry point into the issue of Christian models of citizenship. *The Passion*'s violent narrative, after all, brings audience members into a uniquely public moment, where citizens riot in the streets making demands of their leaders while the religious and state hierarchies struggle over how to manage the citizenry. Public torture and death then become a function of repressive state and religious control. Because this violence is both cleric-initiated and state-sponsored but also clearly unjust, the film opens questions about Christian civic obligations in the face of unjust state actions.

I ultimately argue that, in the context of this state violence, *The Passion* offers a model of faithful citizenship as feminine submission. In order to illuminate *The*

Passion's vision of citizenship, I engage two bodies of theology that struggle with the centrality of violence in the gospel narrative and the types of agency engendered by that violence. When liberation theologians argue that Christians can best know Christ through his suffering on the cross, they suggest that today's poor and marginalized have unique access to an empathetic relationship with Christ through their shared suffering. Moreover, from this position of empathetic suffering, marginalized people can become effective citizen activists, liberation theologians suggest. Operating from very similar politics (a deep concern for systems of injustice), other contextual theologians argue the opposite: that this empathy with Christ's suffering is dangerous for marginalized groups because it limits possibilities for civic participation. In my analysis of the film, I argue first that *The Passion*'s extreme violence allows Christians to do just what liberation theologians urge: to relate to Christ through the experience of suffering. Within the film's narrative, however, the experience suffering does not engender civic activism. Instead, *The Passion*'s violence does just what critics of the atonement fear: it constrains civic activism by making Christians feminized victims of their earthly rulers. They must acquiesce obediently to state-sponsored actions orchestrated by a paternal God figure. I argue that the film vilifies the Roman authorities, who demonstrate masculine aggression in performing their civil service duties, while it glorifies Jesus's faithful followers who demonstrate feminine submission to the state authority. Through this contrast, I conclude, the film models feminine submission as the faithful Christian mode of citizenship.

Playing the victim

Through its graphic violence, *The Passion* invites viewers into the mediated experience of victimhood, an experience explicitly celebrated by liberation theologians. Hardly a unified system, or even a clearly-defined body of texts, liberation theology is rather a grassroots theological movement that has developed globally from a diverse group of theologians working with members of social groups "on the margins" of various societies. Liberation theology's birth can most fruitfully be traced to a series of books and articles beginning in 1969, when Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Roman Catholic priest working in Peru, published an essay, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," which was later published in the U.S. journal *Theological Studies,* before being developed into his book, *Teología de la Liberacion: Perspectivas.*[17] Simultaneously, others working outside the Latin American context were developing similar ideas: North American theologian Frederick Herzog, whose work was based in rural African-American sharecropping communities in North Carolina, published his own "Theology of Liberation" essay in 1970, followed by his book, *Liberation Theology: Liberation in the Light of the Fourth Gospel*, in 1972. Also in 1972, the North American feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether published her own book called *Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power*. All of these theologians sought ways to use their Christian faith to bring about liberation for the marginalized people of the communities where they worked.

Since then, liberation theology discourse has proliferated globally, never coalescing into a unified movement or dominant theology but remaining particular to its

various sources. Mary Potter Engel and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite explain that "it is not wholly correct to say that the theologies of liberation share a perspective, for each liberation theology, whether African, Latin American, African American, Native American, Hispanic, *mujerista*, womanist, feminist, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (as well as the specific contexts within each of these contexts), is characterized by its distinctive viewpoint."[18] Engel and Thistlethwaite's statement makes two things clear about liberation theologies: (1) they are multiple and (2) they are contextual and positional. Liberation theologies ground themselves in the experiences of particular racial and gender groups, and they speak from the perspective of those groups. Moreover, from these perspectives, liberation theologies explicitly pursue liberation for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized victims of the world. They suggest that theology's goal should not only be to understand the divine better, but to follow Jesus's path, "to bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."[19] Liberation theologies are explicitly political, advocating social change to better the situations of the poor and oppressed the world over.

Although liberation theology's multiple, particular, and grounded nature inhibits making generalized statements about it as a system, it is fair to say that a few distinct themes run through this scholarship. Liberation theologies celebrate the position of the oppressed as a particularly fruitful place to meet Jesus. Acknowledging Jesus's suffering, liberation theologies suggest that relating to Jesus as one who suffered allows hope for liberation. Solberg argues that "only in the midst of his or her own suffering could the believer come to know God."[20] James Cone reads "the Jesus story" as "the poor

person's story, because God in Christ becomes poor and weak in order that the oppressed might become liberated from poverty and powerlessness. God becomes the victim in their place... This is what Christ's resurrection means."[21] Cone, a prominent scholar of Black theology, suggests that Jesus is best read *as Black.* As a victim in his own social world, his situation is most analogous to African-Americans in our contemporary society, and as such, Jesus is indeed Black. Helen Orchard, affirming the value of reading Jesus as a victim, interprets the Gospel of John in such a light, claiming that through the lens of victimhood, the fourth gospel is much less troublesome for progressive theology. "An effective and credible liberator," she argues, "must be closely identified with the oppressed and seen to share their experiences"—which she sees the Johnnine Jesus as capable of doing.[22]

Not only do liberation theologies see Jesus *as* a victim, but they celebrate the strategy of meeting Jesus *from* the perspective of victimhood. This epistemology is firmly experiential, and it acknowledges that we always operate from a socio-historic location. According to James Cone, "What people think about God, Jesus Christ, and the church cannot be separated from their own social and political status in a given society."[23] In Jon Sobrino's terms, "All thought comes from somewhere and derives from some concern; it has a viewpoint, a 'from where' and a 'to where,' a 'why' and a 'for whom.'" [24] Given that thinking must necessarily be so grounded, Sobrino, like other liberation theologians, chooses a particular grounding, "a *partial, definite, and concerned* viewpoint: the victims of the world."[25] Rosemary Radford Ruether expands on these sentiments as a theological methodology specifically. She explains that her experience has led her to a method that affirms "the need to put oneself in the context of

the oppressed in order to have some understanding, not only of their experience, but of the total system of society."[26] Never one to shy away from provocative language, Cone goes so far as to suggest that Christians can *only* encounter Jesus from the position of oppression. He explains, "The God of the Christian gospel can be known only in the communities of the oppressed who are struggling for justice in a world that has no place for them.... We can know God only in an oppressed community in struggle for justice and wholeness."[27] By this argument, not only is theology necessarily experiential, and not only can Christians encounter Jesus through the experience of oppression, but it is from this position that he is *best* understood.

Liberation theology is fundamentally a political system of thought, as Cone has said all theologies are.[28] Liberation is an explicitly this-worldly concern, even if it may be tied to spiritual, other-worldly liberation.[29] Within liberation theology, the function of meeting Jesus-the-victim from the perspective of victimhood is not only to know the divine better, but also to work for liberation from oppression. Jacqueline Grant ties black women's experience of Jesus's suffering directly to their work for liberation. "As Jesus was persecuted and made to suffer, so were they," Grant explains. Jesus's experience of suffering "inspires active hope in the struggle for resurrected, liberated experience."[30] James Cone focuses on Jesus's suffering on the cross, explaining that "because he was one with divinity and humanity, the pain of the cross was God suffering for and with us so that our humanity can be liberated for freedom in the divine struggle against oppression."[31] By his formulation, through Jesus's suffering on the cross, God came among the suffering, giving hope for their liberation. Understanding Jesus as suffering victim allows the poor and the oppressed to relate to him through their own experience of

victimhood, liberation theologies suggest, which opens up fruitful possibilities for liberation.

Although liberation theology is certainly more complex than what has been represented here, and although its program for social change is further developed, this short review has aimed to demonstrate how liberation theology values the image of Jesus as victim and the Christian experience of victimhood as the starting point for activism. Liberation theology is guided by the assumption that if suffering peoples understand that they share their suffering with Jesus, they will develop civic agency to participate actively in reform efforts. I have highlighted these grounding assumptions because I maintain that *The Passion of the Christ* invites viewers into an experience like the one so privileged by liberation theologians. The indisputably extensive violence that defines *The Passion* allows audience members to do exactly what liberation theology celebrates: to experience Jesus as a victim. By their overzealous violent aggression, the Roman and Temple guards become obvious oppressors, situating Jesus as the victim. Moreover, Jesus's status as victim is further solidified by his enactment of the victim role. Finally, amidst this violence, Jesus's followers too become victims of the oppressive tendencies of religious and state powers.

State-sponsored, Cleric-approved Oppression

The film's extensive violence comes largely at the hands of the Temple and Roman guards who, by their very aggression, set up a relationship of oppressors and oppressed between themselves and Jesus. Jesus and his followers simultaneously become the victims of power-crazed Jewish leaders, an incompetent Roman authority, and their unruly fellow citizens.

From the film's opening, the Jewish leaders are depicted as unceasing in their quest to punish Jesus. They convince Judas to turn over Jesus in exchange for 30 pieces of silver, and upon making this deal, follow Judas immediately to the Garden, where he exposes Jesus, and they take him into captivity. After they drag him through town, Jewish leaders interrogate him in the temple in front of a standing-room only crowd of onlookers. The interrogation is short, as the priests need little confirmation of the conclusions they have already drawn—that Jesus is a dangerous blasphemer developing a following of rebels. Although the Temple guards and Jewish leaders inaugurate the violence against Jesus, ultimately they must turn him over to Pilate because only the Roman governor has the power to sentence a criminal to death.

From the moment the Jewish leaders approach him, Pilate appears annoyed by their demands on him. Looking at the bloody and battered Jesus, Pilate's first question to the Jewish leaders is, "do you always punish your prisoners before they're judged?" When Pilate presents Jesus before the crowd in the basilica, the shouts of the citizens gathered there demonstrate that they share their priests' anger toward Jesus. Skeptical of the priests' demands for Jesus's death, but also fearful of mass uprisings that could result from freeing Jesus, Pilate seeks every possible alternative to crucifying this man that he assumes is a common criminal. He takes him to Herod, claiming that the Galilean should fall under Herod's jurisdiction. When Herod refuses to take the case, Pilate asks his guards to beat Jesus, hoping that a beating will satisfy the priests and the Jewish citizens. After the beating, when the Jews are still demanding that Jesus be crucified, Pilate allows them to choose whether to free Jesus or Barabbas. When Pilate presents them with Jesus,

and the rowdy mob shouts “crucify him,” Pilate has little choice but to sentence Jesus to death.

The Passion’s violent beating and crucifixion of Jesus is, thus, the result of this deliberation between various publics—Roman leaders, Jewish priests, and the Jewish mob—in the public sphere. Jesus’s death becomes the most public of affairs: not only is the crucifixion itself open to spectators, but the very decision-making process has involved these various groups. One model of citizenship in *The Passion* is the one offered by congregants of the Jewish crowd, whose contribution to the passion drama is to shout “crucify him.” They participate in state politics and influence their leader through their physical and vocal public presence. But this is the model of citizenship that ultimately makes Jesus the victim. In *The Passion*’s Jerusalem, where both the state authority and institutional religion are oppressive structures, Jesus’s followers must negotiate faithful citizenship.

Jesus Christ as Victim

The unceasing aggression on the part of Jewish citizens and leaders, as well as Roman guards, does the important work of setting those groups up as oppressors, who then make a victim out of Jesus. Jesus’s victimage becomes more evident through the film’s construction of his role. Jesus can only be this very human victim because *The Passion* delivers a low christology—focusing on the Jesus of history, rather than the Christ of theology. There is no attention to the later Christian tradition, established by Peter, Paul, and the other church fathers who explicated the soteriological significance of Jesus’s death. Instead, there are only fleeting moments even hinting at theological explanations of Jesus’s death, and these hints mainly come in the form of predictions that

Jesus will die. For instance, the film opens on a black screen with white lettering displaying the abridged text of Isaiah 53: "He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; by His wounds we are healed," which is dated to 700 B.C. on the screen. Also, in the garden, as Jesus wrestles with his impending capture, his disciples try to make sense of his agony by reading it in terms of his previous explanations of the divine plan. Predictions like these are the only clues given about Jesus's theological significance; rather than a heavy-handed interpretation of the function of Jesus Christ's death, the film focuses heavily on Jesus the human being who died this miserable death.

Moreover, Jesus's humanness is made evident by the damage that the violence inflicts on his body. By the time he is given his cross to begin the walk of the Via Dolorosa, Jesus wears only a loincloth, his head bleeds from the crown of thorns, one of his eyes is swollen shut, and his body is wholly covered by red slash marks. The weight of the cross is too heavy in this dilapidated condition, and Jesus falls repeatedly, especially as the guards continue to beat him as he walks. This 20 minute walk, defined by the rhythm of the soldiers' lashes and Jesus's falls, finally ends when the crowd reaches Golgotha, and Jesus is tied to the cross. His arms are stretched out (and one arm must be stretched so far that it seems to pop out of its socket), his hands and feet are nailed to the cross, and he is erected on the cross to die. When the Roman officials ultimately want to test whether or not Jesus is actually dead, they pierce his side one more time with a sword. Again they draw blood, and his blood spurts out over the onlookers gathered nearest to the cross.

Beyond his physical dilapidation, Jesus's intimately-depicted reactions to the violence also demonstrate his victimhood. As violence is inflicted upon Jesus, he displays his suffering both verbally and non-verbally. Verbally, Jesus's prayers to God from the very beginning of the film suggest just how desperate he is to be saved from the impending violence. On his knees in the garden, Jesus cries out, "Hear me, father... rise up. Defend me. Save me from the traps they set for me... Father, you can do all things. If it is possible, let this chalice pass from me... but let your will be done, not mine." In this moment, Jesus-the-victim pleads with God for deliverance, but his desperation also shows through vocally: his prayer is marked by panting and gasping for breath, as the trembling Jesus can barely form his words, eking out each as if it could be his last.

Later in the film, Jesus's distress is more evident visually. When he is brought before the Jewish priests for questioning, his facial and bodily expressions suggest the pain of a victim. His evident pain here is, importantly, contrasted with the flashback shortly preceding it. In that scene, a young, handsome, muscular Jesus has just finished constructing a table and proudly shows it to his mother. Not only is the Jesus of that scene bright and innovative (he has, after all, designed the modern table), but he is jovial and playful, laughing with his mother and splashing water on her as she pours it out to wash his hands, before kissing her on the cheek. Just moments of cinematic time later, though, when Jesus is questioned by the Jewish priests, the camera's repeated close-ups of his face show the many lacerations he has already received. He delays in answering the priests' questions, his pauses suggesting how painful it is to respond. When he does respond, he does so with very little facial expression: he can barely open his eyes or move his swollen cheeks. When, unsatisfied with his answers, the Temple guards hit

him, knocking him to the ground, Jesus recovers slowly, returning to his feet. In the beating scenes, Jesus plays the victim role even more explicitly, as his facial expressions especially betray his evident misery. While the Roman guards prepare for the extensive flagellation they will pursue, Jesus too prepares himself, praying to God that his "heart is ready." As the guards pick up their lashes, the close-up shot of Jesus shows him tensing up and holding his torso steady for the beating he anticipates. The beating begins with three successive lashes by different guards; as each one hits Jesus's back, his spine rolls forward, lunging his chest into the air, his face wincing. As the lashing continues from all sides, Jesus gasps with each strike, his body falling and correcting itself each time, until he finally falls to the ground entirely, almost hugging the stump that binds him.

Often, the scenic framing of Jesus and his oppressors only intensifies this sense of victimage. When Jesus is brought before the Jewish priests, he stands, plainly-dressed, at the center of a crowded room, surrounded immediately by formally-garbed priests and guards, who are flanked by dozens of citizens skeptical of Jesus. The abused Jesus stands all alone amidst a crowd of people who wish death upon him. The scene is framed similarly when moments later the priests and guards bring Jesus before Pilate in the basilica. Entering the large space, Jesus is guided by the guards on all sides of him who carry the chains binding him, and those guards are flanked by priests all around them. The growing crowd follows behind. From the moment they enter the basilica, a close-up of Jesus shows him looking down at the floor, his lacerated eyelids barely open. As Caiaphas makes his case to Pilate, Jesus maintains this stance, only glancing up once, opening his one functioning eye to look at a bird in the sky. His face largely remains expressionless, as he is the willing victim in the sentencing drama unfolding around him.

Jesus's Followers as Victims

Jesus is not the only victim of the drama depicted by *The Passion of the Christ.* Just as the violence situates him as the victim of the oppressive tendencies of the Jewish leadership and the Roman guards, it also affords Jesus's followers—both ancient and contemporary—the role of victim. In the film, the only of Jesus's followers depicted are Mary his mother, Mary Magdalene, John, James, Peter, and Judas. This small band is usually scattered throughout the crowd: though Mary, Magdalene, and John remain together throughout the film, James disappears shortly into the film, and Peter and Judas are both depicted alone, haunted by their own acts of betrayal. That very few of Jesus's followers are developed as characters only further underscores Jesus's aloneness, but it also makes his followers seem small amidst the powerful crowd. They too become victims of the loud, angry, violent Jewish mob.

In addition to making Jesus and his original followers into victims, the film also offers the role of victim to its contemporary viewers. Indeed, the 96 minutes of extensive, graphic violence serve to abuse the film's audience members, submitting viewers to forms and extremes of violence unknown to many movie-goers. Sitting in a darkened theatre for two hours, there is little release from this violence, and audience members endure the pain of watching inescapable violence. Short of walking out of the theatre, this violence cannot be avoided; even looking away from the screen for the full eight minutes of the flagellation scene, an audience member would still be subject to the sounds of the lashes hitting flesh, the guards grunting, and Jesus gasping for breath. Even if the experience is only mediated, audience members also become victims of this violence, watching abuse piled on to the hero of this film. Yet millions of audience

members have knowingly subjected themselves to this violence, seeking out the experience of victimhood.

In short, *The Passion* offers mediated access to just what liberation theology celebrates: the experience of empathetic victimhood with Jesus. The film depicts a power-hungry religious authority, plus a brutal state authority, which, by their aggression, make Jesus and his followers victims. Viewers are thus allowed to see Jesus *as* victim, as they also share in his oppression. Whereas liberation theology suggests that the empathetic experience of suffering engenders activism, I argue next that *The Passion*'s celebration of violence constrains the possibilities for civic agency. In doing so, the film demonstrates the limitations of victimhood as a starting point for liberation.

The Gospel of Submission

As clearly as *The Passion* constructs Jesus and his followers as victims of an oppressive religious and state hierarchy, it also does so within a divinely-ordained world. Thus, when Jesus becomes the victim of these over-zealous Jewish leaders and Roman guards, it is according to his own Father-God's will. Then, because this violence is God-sanctioned, Jesus and his followers acquiesce to it willingly. In accepting this violence, Jesus and his followers model citizenship as feminine submission, especially in contrast to the masculine aggression performed by the film's antagonists. Because they trust God's divine providence, Jesus's followers acquiesce to the extreme violence performed by the state authorities. By modelling feminine submission, the protagonists fulfill the fears of contextual theologians who have maintained that the privileging of suffering so

common in the Christian tradition ultimately minimizes resources for citizen agency, instead limiting citizens to the obedient acceptance of public injustice.

Just as some contextual theologians—Latin American, feminist, Black, and others—have developed liberation theologies that rely on identifying with Jesus through the experience of oppression, other contextual theologians—primarily feminist and womanist theologians—have detailed the dangers of such identification. According to these theologians, the Christian celebration of Jesus's suffering death leads contemporary Christians to accept the suffering in their own lives. If Jesus is the perfect role model, and if his suffering ultimately served a divine purpose, this thinking suggests, then so too might our suffering fulfill a divine plan. In Brown and Parker's rendering, this is "the deep and painful secret that sustains us in oppression: We have been convinced that our suffering is justified."[32] Christian celebrations of suffering, in combination with the straightjacket of divine will, ensure the perpetuation of suffering in faithful Christians' lives.

Christians have been so willing to accept suffering because they have put their full faith in the God who wills suffering. Feminist and womanist critics, however, take issue with the conceptualization of a paternal God figure who visits violence and pain upon His followers. This paternalistic God was so angry with humanity that He had to kill His own son in order to save humans.[33] Rita Brock argues,

> when the Christian tradition represents Jesus's death as foreordained by God, as necessary to the divine plan for salvation, and as obediently accepted by Jesus the Son out of love for God the Father, God is made into a child abuser or bystander to violence against his own child.[34]

Not only is the crucifixion itself divine child abuse, but this theology more generally relies on an angry, paternal God figure, for whom these feminist theologians cannot profess affection.

Moreover, in constructing a world controlled by a Father-God who wills violence, this theology creates a model of earthly citizenship wherein faithful Christians acquiesce to the suffering in their lives. If Christians only have enough faith, they should be able to trust that God has a plan for their pain. Brock and Parker note that when "power is structured as benevolent paternalism in Christianity," then "adults are asked to surrender their lives passively and obediently in exchange for salvation."[35] Jesus's experience at the cross, specifically, encourages Christians to accept their suffering. Marie Fortune takes issue with theologies that celebrate suffering, arguing, "sometimes Jesus's crucifixion is misinterpreted as being the model for suffering: since Jesus went to the cross, persons should bear their own crosses of irrational violence (for example, rape) without complaint."[36]

As Fortune's comment suggests, many of these feminist theologians are concerned with theologies that condone the human acts of violence that they have encountered in their lives and work as Christians, pastors, and counselors. All acts of violence, Carole Bohn suggests, are "the products of a theology that enables and encourages them."[37] According to Brown and Parker, "Christianity has been a primary—in many women's lives *the* primary—force in shaping our acceptance of abuse."[38] Carole Bohn lists the myriad responses that women have described hearing from ministers upon reporting abuse to them, and one among them is a direct entailment of atonement theology: "all of us must suffer: it makes us more Christ-like. Offer up

your suffering to Jesus and he will give you strength to endure."[39] This theology, then, leads women

> to keep silent for years about experiences of sexual abuse, to not report rape, to stay in marriages in which we are battered, to give up creative efforts, to expend all our energy in the support of other lives and never in support of our own, to accept it when a man interrupts us, to punish ourselves if we are successful, to deny so habitually our right to self-determination that we do not feel we have an identity unless it is given to us by someone else.[40]

These feminists contend that theologies that justify suffering, in combination with willing acceptance of a vengeful patriarchal God, have concrete manifestations in the lived experience of faithful Christian women the world over. Bohn and Fortune both work from examples of violence common to the private sphere, but this theology can be used to justify all kinds of violence, including public, state-sanctioned violence.

This body of feminist thought about theologies of suffering works at cross purposes with the work that other contextual theologians are doing in developing liberation theologies. Liberation theologians would suggest that identifying with Christ's experience of oppression helps the victims of the world understand that God cares for even the lowliest, and, equipped with that knowledge, even the most oppressed find agency to work for social change. Other feminist theologians would suggest exactly the opposite: that identifying with the suffering Christ leads to willing submission in the worldly public sphere as Christians see suffering as part of God's plan for them or for humanity.

The Passion of the Christ fulfills feminist fears about celebrations of suffering: it situates faithful Christians as obedient onlookers to divine-willed, state-sanctioned violence. Even though it starts with the experience of victimhood that liberation theology so privileges, *The Passion*'s strong demarcation between human and divine capacities leaves humans with few options for civic participation. The only model of citizenship offered is feminine submission to earthly powers in the face of God-willed violence.

The Omnipotent Divine and Impotent Humans

In the film's world, the divine is an all-powerful God, who, from a position on high, orchestrates the worldly events below. The human sphere is sharply demarcated from the divine, and humans are at God's mercy for intervention in their lives. Only occasionally do elements of the divine order make their way into earthly reality—such as Satan and the demons that appear among the crowd—and the distinction between human and divine is otherwise sharply maintained, with even Jesus firmly situated in the human realm. Jesus only moves into that divine space upon his death, but before that moment he, just like all the other humans, must submit to God's will in the unfolding human drama.

Through the film's visual framing alone, a clear divide between human and divine emerges, as the human on earth is always set in opposition to the divine above. The opening image of the film is an expansive camera shot across the cloudy sky, lit only by the full moon, with the sound of wind in the background. As the camera moves slowly down from the moon to the earth, a male voice singing becomes audible and is then replaced by the breathy Aramaic emanating from a body just coming into focus on the earth. The Aramaic is not subtitled, and the first widely-familiar words come when the

camera has zoomed in on the back of the body, which is looking upward and pleading, "Adonai, adonai." The camera follows this body—slowly revealed to be Jesus—as he wanders through the garden, praying. Jesus wakes the disciples, and the camera stays with them as they watch Jesus, who walks on ahead and, in the sliver of light from the moon, looks up to the sky and then falls down on his knees. From his knees, he looks up at the sky and his words suggest the nature of his human relationship to the divine. As he prays, "Hear me, father. Rise up. Defend me. Save me from the traps they set for me," it becomes clear that Jesus, like all humans, is impotent in the face of divine will. He can only fall down on his knees and ask God above for mercy. Later, he does the same, looking up to God, asking "Father, you can do all things. If it is possible, let this chalice pass from me... but let your will be done, not mine." One last time, as he is on the cross, Jesus must supplicate himself, seeking God's intervention. As Caiaphas and one of the criminals hung with Jesus taunt him, asking why he cannot save himself, Jesus prays for them. Slowly and painfully, he raises his head to look skyward, and he asks God, "Father forgive them. They know not what they do." In all of these cases, Jesus is visually situated as the human on the earth, looking up to the divine figure in the sky.[41] As the earthly human, he is powerless to do anything except make requests from God above.

Throughout the film, Jesus's disciples demonstrate a similar relationship with this all-powerful deity always represented by skyward glances. In the opening scene in the garden, for instance, as Peter and the other disciples struggle to understand Jesus's agony, Peter casts a long questioning gaze at the moon. Here, the visual relationship between humans and God is again recreated, and the nature of the relationship is also made clear: humans must look to the all-powerful God for help and for answers.

Through its sharp distinction between the human and divine, the film portrays the power relationship between the two realms—that power comes from above, and humans must request God's favor. In constructing this authoritarian God figure, the film suggests a divine desire to bring about Jesus's death. Plead though Jesus and his disciples might, ultimately God's will must be done, and God's will is to bring about the death of his son. The film's temporal filming only enhances this narrative: because the film focuses on the last 12 hours of Jesus's life, his ministry is framed from within the lens of his impending death as if his violent death was the inevitable conclusion to his life. By the time we, as the audience members, join the story, Jesus is already in the Garden and about to be arrested—by which point in the Gospel narrative all signs point to his death. Unlike other films that focus on Jesus's life more holistically, including his parables and miracles, this film treats those earlier moments through the prism of Jesus's impending death. Jesus's violent death becomes the fulfillment of God's plan, the primary achievement of his years on earth.

In an earthly social order defined by an all-powerful God who uses state agents to bring violence upon His son and His followers, the suitable response for faithful Christians is to demonstrate obedience to that God and His agents. More than simply obedience, however, I argue that *The Passion*'s models of faithful Christian citizenship are defined by their submissive femininity, whereas the anti-models of Christian citizenship display a barbaric masculinity. Importantly, the film's graphic violence facilitates these characterizations, as the guards who beat Jesus are dangerously masculine, while the faithful followers of Christ demonstrate their willingness to accept this extreme violence.

The anti-models of faithful citizenship

The Temple guards, in their very brief role, and the Roman guards, who receive considerably more screen time, all display particularly barbaric forms of hyper-masculinity as they perform their public duties.[42] In actions, the Roman guards are loud and aggressive. In appearance, they are coarse and ill-groomed, with the armor of the Roman authority clothing their overweight frames. They are so out of shape that, during pauses in the beating, they fold forward with their hands on their knees trying to catch their breath. Most sweat profusely and have crooked, uneven, and discolored teeth. Their most common form of communication seems to be grunting (presumably in Latin). Their idiocy is demonstrated throughout the film, especially as typified by their repeated failure to comprehend or follow orders.

Although the Roman guards figure prominently throughout the film, they receive their most intimate treatment in the extended flagellation scene, where for more than eight minutes of film time, they are responsible for beating Jesus. In those eight minutes, there are nearly 80 camera shots of the guards and approximately 60 of Jesus, plus another handful of long shots that depict Jesus and the guards together. In that space of time, there are fewer than 40 shots of other characters.[43] The action in this scene moves quickly, especially for the first few minutes. When the beating begins, there is a consistent rhythm to the visual images: a guard takes a big step back and, with all his weight, thrusts a lash forward into Jesus's flesh; Jesus then lurches forward in a compensatory fashion and another guard, in a manner similar to the first, propels his whip at Jesus; again, this whip is followed by Jesus's reactionary lurch. When the beating begins, this pattern is repeated six times in succession before the camera work diversifies.

Just moments later, however, after a pause in the action while the guards switch weapons, these two coordinate shots—the guard whipping and Jesus recoiling—define the visual pattern again.

As the guards perform this extreme violence, they carry themselves with a masculine swagger. When they are initially preparing for the flagellation, the guards carefully contemplate the numerous whips and lashes laid out on a table. Each having chosen the lash that best suits his needs, the men strut and stretch out with their instruments. Each holds his wooden lash with one hand at each end and raises it above his head, circling his shoulders back, and arching his spine, as if to ensure that he is properly limber for the task at hand. One guard then stretches in the opposite direction, holding the lash in front of his abdomen and arching his spine forward. Also as they prepare, two guards engage in a playful dog fight; bringing their faces close together, they make biting motions while they growl and grunt in Latin.

In addition to their masculine swagger, these guards' collective persona is defined by their glee in performing this beating. They are a rowdy, jovial bunch throughout the scene, a tone striking in contrast to the stoic Jewish priests and the sympathetic Mary, Mary Magdalene, and John around the edges of the room. Even as they enter the room with Jesus, the guards are already giddy: the first close up of Roman guards in this scene is of them laughing. While they prepare to beat Jesus, a full one-third of the camera shots are of guards laughing or playing. Even once they begin the flagellation, the guards continue to laugh while Jesus's followers look on in tears and even the Jewish priests become so disgusted that they turn away. At the climax of the flagellation scene, one guard lashes Jesus with a tool that tears his flesh away from his body, and the guard is

propelled backward by the thrust of his own swinging motion. As he moves backward, he laughs heartily before the camera pans to other guards sharing in the laugh. Even the Roman official supervising the beating, who generally appears stern, cannot fight back a smile as the violence gets particularly gruesome.

The Roman guards, who are agents of the state, gleefully perform their civil service duties in a mode defined by excessive, barbarous, unintelligent, unattractive hyper-masculinity. Though it should come as no surprise that the film vilifies these men who beat Jesus, their characterization in terms of barbaric masculinity is important for its contrast with the more favored characters. Moreover, their enactment of violence and their extreme pleasure in inflicting it further solidify the relationship between the state and Jesus as oppressors and oppressed.

Models of Christian Citizenship

In clear opposition to the oppressive guards, the characters of Mary, Mary Magdalene, and John, who are typically depicted together, offer the film's model of faithful Christian participation in the public sphere.[44] Because these three receive the most visual attention throughout the film, and because the narrative operates from their perspective more than any of the other characters', Mary, Magdalene, and John become the most familiar, accessible, and sympathetic of the film's characters.. These three, with whom the film encourages audience members to identify, uniformly model feminine submission. Even if they occasionally try to intervene in the unfolding narrative, their interventions consistently prove fruitless, which demonstrates the futility of trying to stop divine will. Like Mary, Magdalene, and John, other feminine characters—Pilate's wife Claudia and the women who line the walk up the hill—also try to resist the violence, but

all are refused, and they too resort to feminine submission. Ultimately, in a world with such a sharp divide between divine and human, where the divine power orchestrates human events, and where the worldly government is rendered impotent in the face of unruly citizens, surely the most fitting mode of citizenship for the faithful believer is feminine submission.

Even if Jesus-the-victim and his oppressors carry the storyline, the submissive feminine followers define the narrative because it is depicted from their vantage point. Mary, Magdalene, and John's story begins when Mary awakes with a start, announcing that this night is "different than any other" "because once we were slaves and now we are no longer." Mary and Magdalene cling to each other, and John bursts into their home, shouting, "they've seized him!" Immediately, these three recognize what has begun. Mary recognized it by her own premonition even before John's arrival, a sharp contrast to the disciples in the garden who could not make sense of Jesus's agony. John's encounter with Mary and Magdalene here, just moments into the film, marks his own transition: previously, he had been in the garden with the men, and now he has come to the home of the women with whom he will remain for the rest the film. Indeed, these three are inseparable throughout the passion drama, as together they follow Jesus through his presentations before Pilate and the crowd, his flagellation, his walk, and his crucifixion. In each of these scenes, Mary, Magdalene, and John receive consistent camera attention, and their visual prominence makes them available as models for audience members. For instance, in the repeated scenes where Pilate brings Jesus before the crowd in the basilica, the masses always consist of the Jewish high priests up front with the Jewish crowds surrounding them. In the midst of this rowdy mob, the film captures Mary, Mary

Magdalene, and John—seemingly Jesus's only loyalists—in repeated close-up shots. In these scenes in the basilica, the camera alternates between a limited number of shots: it shows Pilate and Jesus up above the crowd, Claudia in an interior window off to the side, the mass of Jews citizens and religious leaders down below, and Mary, Magdalene, and John together. Whereas Jesus, Pilate, and the Jewish masses are frequently (though not exclusively) captured in long shots, Mary, Magdalene, and John are consistently the subjects of close-up shots that encourage identification on the part of audience members.

Just as the basilica scenes alternate visually between these four images, the violence toward Jesus is portrayed in a similar fashion. As noted above, when Jesus is scourged by the Roman guards, Mary, Magdalene, and John watch from the side, and the camera alternates between shots of the beating of Jesus and shots of them. Even though there are numerically more shots of the Roman guards during this scene, the images of Mary, especially, linger much longer. One cutaway of Mary, for instance, lasts 34 seconds, as she prayerfully meanders out of the open space where they are beating Jesus and into a corridor. As we visually follow Mary as she walks, we still hear the sound of the whips, the laughter of the guards, and the moans and cries from Jesus. While we move with Mary, we still hear what she hears. In this moment, we experience the beating of Jesus through the ear of Mary.

As the film progresses, after Pilate has decided to have Jesus killed, and the Roman guards begin his public procession, Mary, Magdalene, and John follow along with the crowd, and the film depicts their experience with Jesus's death. In the 20 minutes of the procession, the camera cuts to Mary, Magdalene, and John no less than 15 times, in addition to depicting many other women along the way. In the last half hour of

the film, once the crowd has reached the hill where the three men will be crucified, the camera focuses in on the three women no fewer than 39 times, and many of these are lingering shots. In a very slow and detailed scene, Jesus is nailed to the cross, cut against shots of Mary Magdalene and the others watching the nailing. In the three minutes and thirty seconds of film time that begins with a close-up of a hammer hitting a nail, the camera develops a rhythm of rotating back and forth between shots of Jesus, shots of the instruments of violence, and shots of the women. The camera initially focuses on that hammer hitting the nail as it hits it three times. The hammer keeps hitting the nail, however, as the camera moves to focus in on a still Mary and then a close-up shot of an also-still Magdalene before a distanced shot of a chaotic band of Romans, followed by a shot of a still John. All the while, the hammer continues to hit the nail, blood spurts, Jesus moans in agony, and the dramatic music increases its intensity. The scene flashes back to the Last Supper, and when it returns to the crucifixion, the camera zooms in on Mary weeping and then Jesus laying on the cross, his arm being stretched by a Roman guard. Here, some distant visual attention is paid to the Roman guards who cannot figure out how to hang Jesus, and one guard yells "Idiots! Let me show you how to do it. Like this." With all his strength, he stretches Jesus's arm, trying to get his hand to line up with the marked nail hold on the cross. When Jesus's arm snaps, Mary gasps, and then the Roman yells, "No, get it in there. Hold the hand open." There is a close-up shot of Jesus's hand as the nail starts to touch it, and then on Jesus's face as he says, "Father forgive them."

The camera follows with a series of close-up shots: first John, then the hammer striking the nail, then Jesus's face, then Mary, then Jesus's arm, then Jesus's face, then

Magdalene on her knees as her face falls to the ground, then the blood spilling below the cross, and then John. The camera pans back out to show the Romans manipulating Jesus's legs, but then it zooms back in on Jesus's face, followed by Mary's, then back out to a Roman on a horse, and returning to dwell on Jesus's face. The shot zooms back out to the Romans at Jesus's feet laughing, then back in on the hammer hitting the nail and on the Roman hammering that nail. The camera displays Jesus's body as he cries out "My father, my father... my God," but the camera has moved to a kneeling Mary before Jesus finishes his utterance, and as a result, the English subtitles for these words frame the shot of Mary. She closes her eyes, and the camera moves down to her hands as they dig in the soil. We see Caiaphas, and then the Romans in the background across a shot of Jesus's body, as Jesus calls out "they don't know... they don't know."

The visual exchange between Magdalene and Jesus's body becomes especially intense as the Romans decide to turn the cross over. Up until this point, the cross had been resting on the ground, with Jesus laying on it, as they nailed him down. Now, the guards decide to turn the cross over so that Jesus will be facing the ground. As the Romans very slowly pick up the cross from one side, so as to be able to flip it over, Jesus's body is slowly lifted perpendicular to the ground, and all the while, the camera focuses on Jesus's body. As the cross falls to the ground, however, the camera focuses in on Mary Magdalene, who is kneeling in the background, with the descending cross and face of Jesus obscured in the foreground by dust and shadows. As the cross falls, Mary covers her face, and the cross stops just short of Jesus hitting the ground. While the Romans are laughing, Magdalene looks up, and the camera zooms in on her, then on Jesus, then back to Magdalene, then back to Jesus, then to Magdalene again, and then

back to the hammering in the foreground, with Magdalene in the background. Throughout this scene, Mary, Magdalene, John, and Jesus receive almost the only close-up shots. Indeed, these characters become more visually accessible than anyone else at Calvary.

These three sympathetic characters, who become most accessible to audience members, are all very similarly feminine. Even though two are female characters played by female actresses and one is a male character played by a male actor, all three perform submissive femininity. All three actors are feminine in appearance: they are small in stature with fine features. Even John has the small stature and fine features, plus short, soft, curly hair, with only slight evidence of facial hair. Moreover, they behave in very submissive ways. In the scenes described above, where camera shots of Mary, Magdalene, and John are juxtaposed against camera shots of the Roman guards, the three are defined by their silence in contrast to the loud buffoonery of the guards. Mary, Magdalene, and John speak rarely, and, when they do, it is in hushed tones that are often reverential in prayer. The characteristic slow, lingering camera shots of them only underscore their stillness. In the longest scene focused exclusively on Mary and Magdalene (with John nearby), the women accept cloths from Claudia so that they can mop up Jesus's blood after the scourging. As they wander the corridor next to the courtyard where the guards beat Jesus, Mary and Magdalene are met by Claudia. Dressed entirely in white, Claudia brings white cloths to the women. As she extends her arms offering the cloths, Claudia keeps her eyes low, and Mary and Magdalene do the same as they accept the cloths. The camera alternates back and forth ten times, capturing a prolonged, silent exchange between these three. Not a single word is spoken, and as

soon as Mary and Magdalene have accepted the cloths, Claudia scurries away. After the guards have untied Jesus and taken him out of the courtyard, the women, on their knees, prayerfully wipe up Jesus's blood. Because the camera depicts this scene from above, we see the expanse of Jesus's splattered blood as the women work methodically. Off to the side, John stands silently, shedding a discrete tear, which he wipes away with the back of his hand.

These feminine characters, who are largely submissive, show sparks of resistance throughout the film, but their resistance always proves futile, which underscores the virtue of accepting, rather than challenging, the divinely-controlled state government. Shortly after Mary and Magdalene learn that Jesus has been seized, they venture out into the crowds, where a distraught Mary looks up to a Roman guard on a horse and appeals to him for help, crying out "In there! Stop them! They've arrested him! In secret!" Even though one guard looks compelled by her cries, they collectively decide that she is crazy and that the Jewish leaders have simply arrested another criminal. In this scene, she explicitly accepts her incapacity to stop the unfolding of the divine drama, when she acknowledges, "it has now begun, Lord. So be it." Even more than Mary, Magdalene, and John, the film's other feminine characters also try to intervene to stop Jesus's death. Foremost among them is Pilate's wife, Claudia; with Pilate when he receives the news from a Roman official that the Jewish high priest Caiaphas has had some prophet arrested, Claudia becomes interested when she hears it was a Galilean. She establishes a watchful presence over the proceedings in the basilica, occasionally making eye contact with Mary, Magdalene, and John. In private conversations, as Pilate carefully weighs his options about whether or how to punish the Galilean, Claudia consistently urges him not

to punish Jesus. She begs, “Don’t condemn this Galilean. He’s holy. You will only bring trouble on yourself.” Even though she cannot convince him at this point, Claudia does not give up. She pleads again with Pilate in subsequent scenes but never finds success, of course. Other female characters along the way as Jesus carries his cross also try to help him, if not to stop the procession toward crucifixion. For instance, one woman who is first shown with a pitcher of water, is disturbed by the noise of the crowd and immediately falls to her knees and looks upward as if asking something of God. The woman will later approach Jesus with a towel and water. She will have time to give him the towel, with which he wipes his face, but her attempt to offer him water is thwarted by the Roman who shoves her away, demanding “Who do you think you are? Get away.” Just moments later, another unidentified woman cries out, to no avail, “Someone stop this!” As the guards and men in the crowd push Jesus on, alternatively beating him and instructing him to keep going, the camera pans past a series of women in the crowd, all of whom hold their shawls tight or cling to each other, looking distraught but unable to do anything.

These feminine characters, as much as they might want to stop Jesus’s crucifixion or lessen his pain, find themselves unable to do either. Even still, they are the celebrated characters of the film, lauded visually for their unceasing devotion to Jesus. They are, remarkably, the most feminine characters in the film, as their femininity is especially apparent against the barbarous masculinity of the film’s villains. The film’s implicit suggestion is that Christian citizenship is performed as submissive femininity, especially as juxtaposed to barbarous masculinity. Indeed, in a social order defined by a power struggle between religion and the state, where God uses that power struggle as the

productive space to bring violence upon a religious leader, faithful Christians have little choice but to accede to state oppression, trusting that God has a plan for all this suffering.

Conclusions and Implications

Buying a ticket to see *The Passion of the Christ*, an audience member purchases entrance into the experience of victimage. Twenty-first century American viewers become victims of the extensive graphic violence portrayed in image and sound for two hours, as they simultaneously meet Jesus-the-victim, who displays his pain verbally and visually, pleading with God to spare him. His pleas for mercy, however, must go unanswered, as Jesus is up against the unrelenting Jews and the dispassionate Roman authority, but also because he is the foreordained subject of God's plan. In making Jesus the victim, then, the film has bifurcated the blame for Jesus's death. On the one hand, the Jews are to blame for his death, as Jesus explicitly tells Pilate that it is the Jews who have sinned. Yet, on the other hand, the film's use of prophesy suggests that Jesus's death happened by God's will—even if that divine plane is never explained. Thus, Jesus is the tragic victim of the bloodthirsty Jews while he is simultaneously the sacrificial victim of the omnipotent God. By both explanations, he is an unwilling subject of larger social and cosmic forces. Meeting Jesus as this unwilling subject, then, I have argued that *The Passion* allows American audience members to do just what theologians of liberation suggest that Christians must do: witness Jesus as a victim and share his experience of oppression. Theologians of liberation suggest that identifying with Jesus from this position of oppression is the only way that Christians develop civic agency to work for social change.

The Passion, however, disciplines the possibilities for civic participation by sharply demarcating human and divine powers and also by situating its sympathetic characters as willing victims. It does, then, what other contextual theologians fear that atonement theology usually does: by sanctioning violence as God-willed, *The Passion* encourages audience members to suffer injustices, trusting that they have a purpose. It never spells out atonement theology or any other explanatory system explicitly; rather, it encourages audience members to focus on the human Jesus and the violence done to him. Throughout *The Passion,* audience members never discover *what* God's purposes are for Jesus's death, but instead we have to trust that, because God is in control, there must be such a purpose. The same lesson works in our own lives: even if we do not recognize God's plan, we must trust that there is one and faithfully accept it in its unfolding. The film also gives us sympathetic characters who model this faithful acceptance of God's plan. By the visual framing, the film encourages audience identification with Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and John, the three consistently faithful, submissive, and feminine characters. Even when these characters are momentarily rebellious—trying to disrupt the unfolding passion narrative—their protests go unanswered, further demonstrating the virtue of feminine submission as a mode of citizenship in a divinely-controlled world.

If some contextual theologians have suggested that identifying with Jesus as a victim gives the poor and oppressed the agency to overcome their own situations, and other contextual theologians have argued that it is this identification itself that perpetuates victimization, this film demonstrates the limitations of such identification with Jesus. *The Passion* shows, first, that as long as the violence is God-willed, citizen agency is

limited to prayerful submission. Had *The Passion* only portrayed Jesus's suffering and death as the product of a religious or state power structure gone mad, and had the violence not been divinely sanctioned, then audience members would have been able to identify with Jesus as one whose oppression was unjustly perpetrated by humans. The moment that such oppression is approved by God, however, Christians who identify with Jesus's suffering can see their own also as God-inspired. Second, identifying with Christ's suffering fails to engender earthly citizen activism when the models of Christian faithfulness willingly accept their victimization. *The Passion*, then, demonstrates that identifying with Jesus's experience of victimage cannot promote civic work for liberation as long as the suffering is part of a divine plan to which faithful Christians must accede.

Moreover, *The Passion*'s presentation of Jesus and his followers as victims allows *all* contemporary Christians to understand themselves as victims. The film's characters are the victims of the state and institutional religion, as well as of their fellow citizens, and the film allows audience members to see themselves as victims of these same forces. Where liberation theologians are committed to "the poor" and "the oppressed," especially in Latin American and other developing-nation contexts, *The Passion* allows white, middle-class, North American audiences to see themselves as victims. As followers of Christ, even economically secure, well-educated audience members become victims of the persecution of Christians. *The Passion* demonstrates, then, that oppression is a fundamentally discursive category. Even if theologians of liberation want to consider material discrepancies when they talk about "the poor" or "the oppressed," the experience of victimhood provided by *The Passion* ignores such discrepancies, as oppression is instead about discriminatory treatment based on religious beliefs. This discourse of

oppression is an important starting point for twenty-first century Christian counterpublics. When contemporary Christianity sets itself at odds with the larger culture, arguing for values true to their faith rather than the world, their discourse is grounded in a persecution complex. *The Passion of the Christ*, providing an experience of victimage that privileges this oppression, provides discursive resources for such counterpublic rhetoric.

This persecution discourse has enabled Christian counterpublics throughout American history, and it undergirds contemporary "culture wars" discourse, at least from the Christian Right. If the larger "culture war" is being fought on a number of different fronts—abortion, same-sex marriage, and others—this persecution discourse may have been nowhere more evident than in the widespread Christian panic over the "war on Christmas" in 2005. Fox News anchor John Gibson prompted the controversy with his book, *The War on Christmas: How the Liberal Plot to Ban the Sacred Christian Holiday is Worse than You Thought*, and he quickly drew the support of like-minded opinion leaders including Jerry Falwell, who said that secularists were trying to "steal Christmas from America," as well as Bill O'Reilly, who claimed that these same secularists were aiming to "destroy religion in the public arena."[45] Claiming that stores and schools, especially, were opting for more neutral holiday celebrations in place of Christmas greetings, decorations, and parties, conservative Christians declared that their values and traditions were under siege by a secularizing culture.[46] The secular left, it seemed, was waging this battle on two fronts: school and local government officials were keeping Christians out of state-sponsored arenas, and retailers, including Target and Wal-Mart, were caving to secular consumer pressure to use neutral language in their marketing. The

conservative Christian identity within the culture wars is consistently informed by this idea of persecution: this logic suggests that, by participating in the culture wars, Christians are only defending themselves, their values, and their way of life. The persecution rhetoric that defines contemporary Christian counterpublics mimics the persecution ideology that runs through *The Passion of the Christ* while it simultaneously engenders an activist citizenship unknown within the film's worldview. Thus, *The Passion* provides discursive resources for Christians to view themselves as oppressed even if it does not model the type of citizenship characteristic of this culture wars activism.

Finally, *The Passion of the Christ*'s portrayal of gender and gendered citizenship is also noteworthy, especially as it distinguishes the film from other Christian media and Christian thinking. *The Passion,* of course, is not the first Christian text or even the first Christian film to venerate femininity, especially in the embodiment of Mary the Mother of Christ. Moreover, Christianity has given women the role of sacrificial martyr since its earliest days, a history that Karen Armstrong has usefully explicated.[47] *The Passion*'s particular portrayal of submissive femininity, however, is significant because it deviates from traditional Catholic practices of Marianism and from previous cinematic depictions of the characters of Mary, Magdalene, and John.

Even if Catholics the world over have celebrated Mary's role in the gospel drama for centuries, their attention has been to the Lucan Mary—the Mary of the Magnificat, the virgin birth, and Simeon's blessing. This is the Mary who, by saying "yes" to God became "the sole human agent in the generation of Jesus" and thus ushered into humanity God's promise for a new creation.[48] She is "the pre-eminent human agent in those

events which led to the birth of Jesus and the coming into being of that new humanity of which he is both the first member and the source."[49] This Marianism focuses less on the Mary at the cross, the Johnnine Mary who is only known as Jesus's mother.[50] Marianism makes Mary a co-redemptrix for her affirmative response to God's call in her life, not for her willing accession to her son's violent death. This Mary of Catholic Marianism does share some of *The Passion*'s Mary's submissiveness: she, too, accepts God's will. She does so, however, in the hopeful promise of bringing about the Messiah and a new humanity. In the prayer that concludes Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, he praises Mary because, by abandoning herself to God's will, she has "given the world its true light" and "became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him."[51] The way that *The Passion* expands upon this traditional Marianism, then, is by celebrating Mary's role in Jesus's death specifically. If traditional Marianism sees her as the willing and hopeful participant in the new birth of humanity, *The Passion* portrays her as the reluctant participant in her son's violent death.

Moreover, *The Passion* marks an explicit break with previous cinematic treatments of these feminine characters. Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans briefly consider the role of gender in four films they deem "Christ films"—Cecil De Mille's 1927 *King of Kings,* Nicholas Ray's 1961 *King of Kings,* George Stevens's 1965 *The Greatest Story Ever Told,* and Martin Scorsese's 1988 *The Last Temptation of Christ*—specifically as played out in the two characters of Mary the mother of Christ and Mary Magdalene. In the case of the former, they note "the reiterated depiction of the iconic Mother, an absolute of asexual purity and self-sacrifice."[52] By their vague description, this Mary shares the quality of self-sacrifice with the Mary of traditional

Marianism and *The Passion.* Where *The Passion* deviates more drastically from these traditional portrayals is through the characters of Mary Magdalene and John. According to Babington and Evans, there are very few consistencies among depictions of Mary Magdalene, except for the persistent emphasis on her sexuality. The two Marys are typically depicted as opposites with "the reduced, idealized sexuality of the Virgin contrast[ing] markedly with Mary Magdalene's traditionally heightened eroticism."[53] In contrast, *The Passion* does important work by de-sexualizing Magdalene and yet still showing her faithfulness to Christ: the film demonstrates how such self-sacrifice is possible for, even required of, faithful Christians beyond Mary the mother of Christ. No longer is this sacrificial faithfulness unique to Jesus's mother, but rather Magdalene's portrayal shows how any of Jesus's followers should be capable of Mary-like devotion.

The Passion's portrayal of John as the women's companion also breaks with previous depictions of him. I have chosen to read John as a compatriot in the femininity demonstrated by the two Marys, but his behavior and appearance could just as easily be read as a particular form of masculinity. Failing to fall exclusively into one category or the other, John's gender performance might even be read as subversive. In John's character, the film challenges cultural ideologies that preserve the sex-gender link (that males are masculine and females are feminine), almost allowing gender to become "a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one."[54] If the film's character depictions challenge the normative system of gender, however, they do so only in the interest of celebrating a male body's submissiveness.

As difficult as it might be to fathom *The Passion's* record-breaking box-office successes, it is also hard to grasp its wide-reaching public implications. By helping audience members to experience themselves as victims, *The Passion* invites those audience members into subject positions that can define their civic participation outside the movie theatres. By encouraging audience members to see themselves like Jesus and his feminine followers—who submit to divine will and a corrupt social order—*The Passion* influences the way that contemporary Christians articulate themselves as oppressed, yet submissive, followers of God's plan in the earthly social order.

Chapter 3

"I Came Not to Send Peace, but a Sword"[1] : *Left Behind*'s Apocalyptic Masculinity

Spanning twelve volumes and nearly 5,000 pages, the *Left Behind* novels offer a fictional account of the seven year Tribulation era, stretching from Christ's Rapture of his church through to his Second Coming. The brainchild of influential evangelical Christians Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins,[2] the novels have now sold more than 62 million copies. From just one novel in 1996, published with only tentative plans for a few more, the series has grown beyond the twelve volumes for adults, to include another 40-book series for children, graphic novels, feature films, shorter video adaptations of the stories, and prequels to the original series for adults. Most recently, the series' creators have announced the publication of a thirteenth volume in the series for adults, presumably depicting Christ's millennial kingdom after his Second Coming. The books owe their popularity, in part, to the fact that even though they started out in Christian bookstores, the national chain booksellers quickly picked them up, some even creating promotions for them (Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Costco, and Barnes & Noble).[3] The first of the three feature films, starring Kirk Cameron, was also released widely, premiering in 867 theatres in February 2001.[4]

The Baylor Religion Survey's self-report data suggests that *Left Behind*'s readership is spread across demographic categories in the United States.[5] Exactly 19% of respondents report having read at least one of the novels, and the readership is heavily

skewed to include more women than men (23.7% to 13.6%), but there is no significant difference between African Americans and whites. The books also are read at similar levels among Americans with and without a college education, but they are more commonly read in households with incomes over $100,000 (24.6%) than in households making less than $35,000 (18.6%). Finally, the *Left Behind* books have been most popular among younger audiences, with 25.8% of 18-to-30-year-olds reporting reading the novels, as opposed to 11.7% of those over 65.

The series has captivated readers with its apocalyptic theology set within action-adventure sequences. The first novel opens with the Rapture almost immediately: commercial airline pilot Rayford Steele is piloting a transatlantic flight and lusting after his flight attendant when he hears reports of disappearances on the plane. Passengers have simply vanished, leaving all their earthly possessions behind. Reports from the ground below only magnify the chaos on the plane: millions of humans have instantaneously disappeared, causing car accidents, fires, electrical outages, and widespread panic. After Rayford re-routes his flight back to Chicago and begins searching for his family, his findings confirm his suspicions about the disappearances. His wife and son, faithful Christians who warned him about the impending Rapture, have disappeared, while he and his daughter Chloe, for their stubborn rationality, have missed the Rapture.

Rayford immediately makes his way to his wife's church, where he discovers that only one of its pastors and a few of its members were left behind. Together with Bruce, the remaining pastor, Rayford repents of his sins and accepts Christ, and he soon persuades Chloe to do the same. These three form the "Tribulation Force," with the

explicit purposes of studying scripture's warnings about the end times, so that they can identify the antichrist, speak out against him, and oppose his domination. They are soon joined by Buck, the rising star journalist of one of the nation's newsweeklies, whom Rayford had met on his flight the night of the disappearances. Through the series, the ranks of the Tribulation Force swell, due to its members' evangelism efforts as well as their good fortune in encountering other hidden cells of believers around the globe. Although the group's membership is too extensive to detail here, important additions include Rabbi Tsion Ben-Judah, an Israeli Jew who becomes the group's spiritual leader because his study of the scriptures has led him to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig, a chemist who received global acclaim for developing a formula that made Israel's deserts arable. By the time of Christ's Second Coming in the final book, dozens of men and women have passed through the Tribulation Force or have worked as allies of the group. Of the original four, only Rayford lives out the end of the Tribulation, but all of the members witness Christ's Second Coming as he reunites the living and dead.

Almost immediately upon its inception, the Tribulation Force begins watching the rise to power of Nicolae Carpathia, a young Romanian legislator who, within days of the disappearances, ascends to the post of President of Romania, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, before remaking the United Nations into the Global Community and installing himself as Global Potentate. This transformation of the United Nations includes an ambitious global reform program. Promising peace and security in an uncertain time, Carpathia convinces the United Nations to eradicate all national borders (dividing the world into ten regions instead), to convert the world into one monetary

system, and to dispose of 90% of the world's weapons systems, leaving the remaining 10% in the control of the Global Community. While his ambitious plans for peace endear Carpathia to the rest of the world, Tribulation Force members immediately recognize him as the antichrist. They watch him secure his power as Global Potentate by weakening or eliminating other global leaders and by developing Global Community troops. Over the seven years of the Tribulation, Carpathia follows God's preordained script for the antichrist: he ascends to power with the signing of a peace treaty, he is assassinated exactly half way through the tribulation and rises three days later, giving him a god-like status, and he seals his followers with the mark of the beast. Finally, upon Christ's Second Coming, he is sentenced to 1000 years in the lake of fire.

Recognizing Carpathia as the antichrist and anticipating each of these developments foretold by scripture, Tribulation Force members devote themselves to resisting and countering his dominance. Some of them fight Carpathia from within his Global Community (GC) administrative structure. While Rayford works as his personal pilot, Buck as the editor of his global magazine, and others as his helicopter pilot and computer technology experts, they use their inside positions to gather information useful to Tribulation Force missions and to sabotage Carpathia's own work. Most Tribulation Force members never make their way into Carpathia's employ, instead conducting external, oppositional missions. Often their missions are efforts to rescue believers who have been caught or are in danger of being caught by GC soldiers. For instance, Buck and a pilot, Ken Ritz, fly to Israel to rescue Tsion Ben-Judah when he is being held captive, accused of murdering his family. Three other characters fly to Greece to rescue George Sebastian, who is being held by Global Community troops after being captured

during another mission to evacuate two young believers. Other missions surround hosting the largest global gathering of believers and securing Tribulation Force leaders' safety throughout the event, as well as sabotaging Carpathia's own plans through, for instance, the group's theft of a shipment of computers bound for Carpathia's command center.

All the while, as the books' heroes and heroines fight the antichrist, they also endure the plagues that define the Tribulation. In the first major calamity after the Rapture, one-fourth of the world's population dies in a global earthquake that is accompanied by a global black-out, a meteor shower, and the moon turning blood-red. At other points in the series, the world's rivers turn to blood, the sun grows so hot that it scorches people to death, and a global horde of scorpion-like locusts attacks all non-believers. These locusts cause six months of pain so intense that sufferers wish for death, but find themselves unable to die. And, of course, the four horses of the apocalypse bring their own devastations.

Finally, in the twelfth book, all of the believers' efforts, their steadfast faith, and their endurance through these tribulations are rewarded when Jesus Christ rides triumphantly back into Jerusalem. The believers who survived the final battle at Armageddon witness Jesus's return, accompanied by all the deceased and raptured believers the Christian community has ever known. The entire Christian Kingdom is united as Christ divides the sheep from the goats, and while he sentences the goats to hell, he demonstrates nothing but love for his own sheep, calling each of his children by name and welcoming them into his kingdom.

This Rapture and apocalypse narrative has captured the imaginations of American Christians, building upon and adding to a discourse of the apocalypse that has long been popular in the American context, especially among Protestants. While *Left Behind* typifies some of the generic patterns of apocalyptic discourse, its significance lies in the ways it expands upon this tradition. I argue first that, although the novels follow the apocalyptic tradition of providing a sense of order, they do so not only by defining a pre-ordained script for history, but also by creating a binary world based in disjunctions and dissociations between good and evil, reality and appearance, and truth and persuasion. And whereas most apocalyptic constructions of order serve to pacify believers, *Left Behind*'s binary world enables Christian activism. These binaries facilitate Christian activism because they divide the world along clear battle lines, and *Left Behind*'s characters model the type of civic activism suitable within this starkly divided world. I argue, finally, that *Left Behind*'s model of citizenship is best characterized as brutish masculinity, which the series' men consistently perform more successfully than the women.

Millennial America

In many ways, the *Left Behind* books are nothing new in American Christianity. They join a rich tradition of apocalyptic thinking—rich because the American context has been particularly hospitable to these belief systems. Less an organized school of theology, apocalypticism is more properly the broad category encompassing all manner of Christian thought that posits an impending end time. As Stephen O'Leary explains, "the essential claim of apocalyptic argument can be reduced to the statement: 'The world

is coming to an end.'"[6] Christian apocalypticism commonly draws upon scriptures from the books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation especially, and sometimes Matthew and 2 Thessalonians as well, but these belief systems differ greatly in how they read those scriptures.[7] Of the two most common American traditions of apocalyptic thought—premillennialism and postmillennialism—only the former consistently looks to these scriptures for literal descriptions of coming events. Premillennialists assert that Christ's Second Coming will bring an end to this human era, subverting the world as we know it, and ushering in the Christian millennium that they see promised in Revelation 20. Unlike the revolution basic to this premillennialist thought, postmillennialists have tended to be more progressive in nature. They have assumed that the promised millennium will come as the product of Christian efforts toward the advancement of humanity.[8] By this way of thinking, Christ's Second Coming—whether it be literal or metaphoric—will occur after the millennium. Many scholars have noted that these two categories are simplistic and may not prove fully explanatory, yet they continue to circulate because they prove useful as a starting point.[9]

Apocalyptic thinking has recurred throughout two millennia of Christian thought, even as it has changed and developed along the way. Just like the early Christians, who believed that the Christ they had known personally would return soon, subsequent centuries of Christians have awaited Christ's Second Coming with eager anticipation. As they have done so, Christians have found all sorts of signs of Christ's return, such as the Reformation-era defectors who argued that the Roman Church or the Pope himself was the antichrist.[10] Apocalyptic thinking has only grown more feverish in the American context. Given prevailing attitudes of American exceptionalism, plus religious freedom,

plus a characteristic orientation toward the future, apocalyptic discourses have fared well here. Early Christian sects and utopian communities in the Northeast, such as the Shakers, developed around distinct theologies of the impending apocalypse.[11] Many of these sects—including the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science—would develop into lasting religions.[12] Important though apocalypticism was to these small groups, it first attained mainstream American attention through the preaching of William Miller.[13] Itinerating through New York, Vermont, and Ontario in the 1840s, Miller developed a following convinced by his prediction, which he used Biblical evidence to argue, that Christ would return between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Even following the Great Disappointment of 1844, Millerites remained faithful to their apocalyptic doctrine, eventually evolving into the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Nineteenth century premillennialist thinking grew even more mainstream under the leadership of John Nelson Darby, who itinerated through the United States and Canada between 1862 and 1877, preaching the already-popular idea of dispensationalism and adding the Rapture, a concept that had been tentatively formulated within the previous two centuries.[14] Darby's teachings remain influential through the Scofield Reference Bible; written by a Darbyite, Cyrus Scofield, present-day conservative Christians still rely on its explanations of apocalyptic prophecy.[15] Ultimately, due in large part to Darby's itinerant preaching, dispensationalism became a key tenet in the fundamentalist ideology that would revolt against modernism at the turn of the twenty-first century. That ideology, spread widely with the publication of *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* between 1910 and 1915, continues to resound in fundamentalist circles to the present day.[16] In that same era, postmillennialism influenced mainstream thinking

through the writings of Social Gospel theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, who promised the kingdom of God as a result of Christian reform efforts.[17]

In the twentieth century, apocalyptic thought has remained popular within fringe sects, such as the Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate, Ásatrú/Odinism, the Church of the Creator, and B'nai Noah.[18] It has also, however, continued its move toward the mainstream, especially through the writings of the premillennialist Hal Lindsey, whose 1970 *The Late, Great Planet Earth* became the *New York Times* bestseller of that decade.[19] In that book, Lindsey not only makes a sustained argument for the authority of literal Biblical apocalypticism, but he draws upon contemporary global politics—especially the Cold War and nuclear proliferation—as evidence of the unfolding divine plan.[20] By reaching such a large audience, Lindsey's book paved the way for the apocalyptic fiction and non-fiction books and films that would follow in the 1970s and 1980s, and it also softened the ground for secular, political discourse drawing on an apocalyptic framework. For instance, O'Leary notes the persistent apocalypticism implicit in Ronald Reagan's Cold War public discourse as well as the more explicit apocalypticism of his Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, who famously speculated in Congressional testimony about the imminence of Christ's return.[21]

So rich is this history of apocalyptic thought that critics have noted discursive similarities across apocalyptic rhetorics. Brummett even makes the case for a genre of apocalyptic discourse, an idea that O'Leary explicitly challenges on the grounds that it misses the specificity of various apocalyptic rhetorics.[22] The *Left Behind* books, though concerned with the impending apocalypse, neither fit into Brummett's genre of contemporary apocalyptic rhetoric, nor do they resonate all that strongly with the

apocalyptic discourses that concern O'Leary. After all, both focus heavily on apocalyptic arguments—that is, non-fictional accounts of the predicted end-times. As Brummett's generic approach attends to both apocalyptic situations and strategies, his description of the situation sheds some indirect light on *Left Behind*'s construction of a social order.[23] O'Leary pursues both a dramatistic and argumentative approach to these discourses. Although his argumentative focus on claims and evidence proves less explanatory for the *Left Behind* narrative, his dramatistic analysis provides a useful framework for reading the possibilities of human agency within an apocalyptic script.[24] Both Brummett and O'Leary's analyses of apocalyptic discourse figure into my argument below.

Ordering the Public Sphere

One of the important characteristics that the *Left Behind* series shares with the tradition of apocalyptic rhetoric is that it introduces order into the social world. Whereas Brummett and O'Leary both suggest that apocalyptic discourses respond to a sense of chaos or anomie by defining human history as linear, telic, and determined, the *Left Behind* novels provide this sense of order not simply by outlining the preordained human history, but also by dividing the social order through three persistent disjunctions and dissociations—between good and evil, reality and appearance, and truth and persuasion. More than just providing order, however, these three divisions offer a vision of the public sphere, including the nature of interactions between Christians and other groups. Drawing clear battle lines between groups, these binaries enable the public Christian activism that *Left Behind* models as brutish masculinity.

The defining situational characteristic of apocalyptic rhetoric, Brummett suggests, is that it appeals to audiences in situations of chaos and anomie. When received systems of explanation have failed to provide meaning for the events of their lives, audience members turn to apocalyptic thinking as a new system of explanation.[25] Reid argues that "Apocalypticism has been accepted widely only during periods when substantial numbers of people were dissatisfied deeply with their present and faced an uncertain future."[26] Defining how and when people experience this dissatisfaction and uncertainty has proved more difficult. O'Leary notes how, depending on the cases of apocalyptic discourse they study, scholars have variously seen the goad to apocalypticism in terms of sociological factors (such as economic hardship and material deprivation), political persecution, natural and human-made calamities, or the psychological states of relative deprivation, anomie, and absence of meaning. For O'Leary, none of these possibilities is totally explanatory, as the first three are unique to particular instances of apocalyptic rhetoric while the psychological conditions are so universal that they are always existing. Instead of these states that exist *outside* of apocalyptic rhetoric, O'Leary argues, the commonality lies in apocalyptic rhetoric's internal appeals that create a sense of anomie and disorder.[27] Here, Brummett concurs, offering numerous examples of apocalyptic rhetors making such appeals.[28] Brummett resorts repeatedly to the language of psychology, suggesting that a sense of disorder is always fundamentally psychological, whereas O'Leary calls it discursive. In either case, a sense of anomie is potentially ever-present.

If a sense of anomie is ever-present, then it is less a situational characteristic of apocalyptic rhetoric and more a strategic one. That is, regardless of what is going on

outside the text, however audience members' situations are best characterized, the apocalyptic text offers a sense of order. "To an audience that thought that it was adrift amidst chaos," Brummett explains, "apocalyptic reveals a grand plan underlying all of history, a plan that was in place all along."[29] Apocalyptic rhetoric puts human events into a larger cosmic order, arguing that God is in control of this greater plan. It allows audience members to trust God's control, and relieves them of the obligation to try to control the unwieldy events that define their earthly reality. Thus, apocalyptic rhetoric performs a pacifying function, calming audience members and allowing them to accept the circumstances of their lives.

For Brummett, the sense of order that apocalyptic rhetoric provides is always linear, telic, and determined: history proceeds in one direction, it has an end goal, and God controls the entire sequence. Typically, apocalyptic rhetors relate current events to the cosmic plan, which resolves any anxiety that might result from those events and also proves the cosmic plan's unfolding. For instance, when Hal Lindsey recognizes the restoration of Israel as a key prediction in the ancient texts, he claims that this prediction has been fulfilled by the creation of a Jewish state in 1948.[30] Equating the modern-day Russia with the Biblical nation of Gog, Lindsey uses the Cold War framework to prove that he and his audience members are living in a pivotal time in history as the apocalyptic events are being revealed before their eyes.

Like *The Late, Great Planet Earth* and other apocalyptic rhetoric, the *Left Behind* books offer a vision of history as linear, telic, and determined. God controls all earthly events, which have been foretold in scripture. Through their Bible study, the books' believers discover a typical premillennialist script, which initiates the seven years of the

Tribulation with the rise of the antichrist and the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and the world. Once those seven years have begun, they can predict an even more precise timeline: the first 21 months will bring the seven Seal Judgments, the second 21 months will bring the seven Trumpet Judgments, and the last 42 months, known as the Great Tribulation, will bring the most devastation of all, the seven Vial Judgments.[31] The characters also learn that, at the half way point, the antichrist will be assassinated. Upon his resurrection, he will be worshipped like a god. Even if the timing of other events, such as the implementation of the mark of the beast, remains ambiguous, Tribulation Force members still anticipate their coming. Thus, in some ways, the *Left Behind* books appropriate the typical apocalyptic strategy for providing order: they define an exact script for the end of days, and they depict all of God's plans coming true.

This sense of order, however, is always decontextualized, as the books are set in an uncertain future time and bear no relation to contemporary events. Save for one passage in the first book that refers to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, the novels make no references to real news familiar to their audience members.[32] Instead, the narrative largely invents a geo-political world that contains signs of the impending apocalypse. Even the pre-Rapture world, as the books describe it, had advanced far past today's world affairs. For instance, Israel had become a global super power in large part because of the fertilizer that internationally-renowned chemist Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig had developed to make its deserts arable. The newly-powerful Israel had recently been the subject of a thwarted nuclear attack as showers of Russian missiles were miraculously intercepted, unable to penetrate the Israeli skies. Other, smaller developments also define the pre-Rapture world, including the transfer of the world's

economies into just three currencies. Because these fictional world events divorce the *Left Behind* narrative from the contemporary politics of its readers, the novels' depiction of order does not quell chaos the same way that Lindsey's interpretations of Cold War events did.

Instead, *Left Behind*'s decontextualized vision of history is only one small element in its definition of the social order. More influential are the three disjunctions and dissociations—good and evil, reality and appearance, and truth and persuasion—that order the novels' future fictional world. These divisions speak across contexts because they give shape to the public sphere in the *Left Behind* world while also resonating with the contemporary public sphere outside the books. Unlike the pacifying function so often performed by apocalyptic rhetoric, these disjunctions and dissociations impose order on the public sphere in a way that makes activism possible and even necessary. They draw clear divisions between social groups—between good and evil—and, by distinguishing between reality and appearances and truth and persuasion, they offer resources for distinguishing between good and evil. Such a clearly-divided public sphere, then, calls forth the Christian citizenship that the books model as brutish masculinity.

Good against evil

The *Left Behind* narrative is set within the "great supernatural war between good and evil," and this very basic divide gives shape to all of the characters' actions.[33] The antichrist is the embodiment of Satan and he is surrounded by henchmen in whom evil also dwells, so those who choose to follow the antichrist make their allegiances to evil. The only alternative in this binary world is to choose Christ. The division between good and evil, although apparent to the story's heroes from the first book, slowly becomes

more widely apparent as the series progresses—as the antichrist's evil becomes apparent (in books one and two), next as Christians are sealed with the mark of the believer on their foreheads (books three and four), and then as the antichrist imposes his own mark upon his loyal citizens (beginning in book eight). By the end of the Tribulation, all humans bear either the mark of the believer or the mark of the beast, designating that all of humanity has been divided into good and evil. Jesus then validates these allegiances upon his return, when he welcomes the faithful into his family and assigns the unfaithful to hell.[34]

Beyond simply dividing good from evil, the *Left Behind* books make an important statement about the ongoing power struggle between good and evil. They simultaneously depict evil as a goliath force oppressing the feeble soldiers of good while also providing constant reminders of the numerical strength of those forces for good. By depicting evil as an insurmountable foe, the novels portray good as always fighting an uphill battle against evil, as evil indwelt in the antichrist has come to take over the world. Even though the relative strength of evil is apparent throughout the narrative, this disparity reaches its apex at the final battle at Armageddon, when various characters take note of the strength of their opponent. For instance, George Sebastian, commander of the Christian army, stands at the edge of their community at Petra, and, scanning the forces they face, he knows that "it was just he and his ragtag bunch of earnest, impassioned believers, ringing part of the Petra perimeter with a handful of fairly sophisticated armaments... against the largest fighting force in the history of mankind.[35] Lest there be any doubt, Sebastian's observation here makes it clear that Nicolae Carpathia's Global Community forces, which have run the world for seven years, have far more military

might than necessary to overtake the last band of opposition they face. As has been the case throughout the Tribulation, Carpathia exercises total control over the world, making Sebastian and the remaining Christians seem meek by comparison. This sense of oppression is common across apocalyptic rhetoric. By Brummett's account, apocalyptic rhetoric resonates with its audience members because it depicts them as an oppressed minority, while also promising ultimate vindication over their oppressors.[36] *Left Behind* is no exception: even if evil becomes "the largest fighting force in the history of mankind," ultimately it will be overpowered by the imminent return of the reigning Christ.

Even while they make Christians the oppressed victims of personified evil, the *Left Behind* books also consistently depict the growing strength of the global Christian community. Indeed, the books nearly fixate on numbers, repeatedly defining the Christian community in terms of its size. Once Tsion Ben-Judah takes over as spiritual leader of the movement, the books note in more than one place that his following quickly grows to more than one billion.[37] In the penultimate minutes before Christ's second coming, Chang, the group's technology expert, monitors people's conversions over the computer, as "tens of thousands every few minutes were totaling in the millions now," and ultimately there are "more than two hundred million martyrs."[38] Throughout the Tribulation, Tsion posts daily messages on what becomes "the most popular Web site in history,"[39] and his subversive television messages are equally popular. He holds all of the television broadcast records, as "Nothing Carpathia ever broadcast had come close; in fact, the previous three records had all been held by Tsion Ben-Judah."[40] Even Tsion

himself cannot fathom the extent of the popularity of his Christian message. He contemplates that

> Technology has allowed me a congregation, if the figures can be believed, of more than a billion via the Internet.... I cannot picture it, cannot tell you how many one-hundred-thousand-seat stadiums it would take to house them all. Well, of course I know that ten thousand such stadiums would equal a billion people, but does that help you picture it in your mind? Me neither.[41]

As large as the movement grows, and as often as the novels offer reminders of its numerical strength, it always remains vulnerable to the awesome power of evil. "There may be a billion of us," the pilot Ken explains, "but we're still going to be in the minority, and we're still going to be seen as criminals and fugitives."[42] In a world sharply divided good against evil, the Christian forces of good are simultaneously the fastest growing and most powerful movement the world has ever seen as well as the pathetic victim of the vengeance of evil.

Reality and Appearance

Left Behind's construction of a social order grows stronger through its dissociation of reality from appearance, which underscores the divide between good and evil. Not only are good and evil clearly distinct, but good can be trusted for its association with the real, whereas evil always operates in the realm of appearances. The dissociation between good and evil operates on two levels within the narrative: first, *real* Christians can be distinguished from merely *apparent* ones, and, second, those *real*

Christians can be further distinguished from Carpathians, who are defined by their *appearances*.

Dissociating real from apparent Christians begins early in the first novel: when the humans left behind on Earth after Christ's Rapture grapple with the nature of the disappearances, they discover that real Christians were raptured and apparent ones were not. The difference becomes clear in the case of the Steele family, where the mother, Irene, and son, Raymie, are raptured, and the father, Rayford, and the daughter, Chloe, are left behind. Prior to the Rapture, Irene had warned Rayford about Christ's impending return, and Rayford had professed to share her faith, but the Rapture exposes all of them for their true beliefs: Irene and Raymie are real Christians, and Rayford and Chloe are only apparent Christians. Rayford's story matches the experience of the many other apparent Christians who missed the Rapture:

> For years he had tolerated church. They had gone to one that demanded little and offered a lot. They made many friends and had found their doctor, dentist, insurance man, and even country club entrée in that church... Rayford... even served on the church board for several years. When Irene discovered the Christian radio station and what she called "real preaching and teaching," she grew disenchanted with their church and began searching for a new one... Irene's new church was interested in the salvation of souls, something he'd never heard in the previous church.[43]

The lesson Rayford learns after the Rapture is that simply attending church and claiming to be a Christian are not enough. Those are only outward signs of faith; what Rayford

lacked prior to the Rapture was the inward spiritual reality of a commitment to Christ. As he seeks out others who missed the Rapture, Rayford discovers that many of them had made the same mistake. At Irene's church, he encounters Bruce, who had been on the church's pastoral staff, and Loretta, a long-time church member. But, as Bruce explains himself, even while serving as a pastor he never embraced the faith the way he talked about it. He encouraged others to come to Christ, but he never accepted Christ himself. He even "knew that true Christians were known by what their lives produced and that I was producing nothing,"[44] but he continued to live a "phony life of pietism and churchianity for years."[45] Bruce made the same mistake as Rayford: he had gotten so caught up in the appearances of Christianity—trying to look like a Christian—that he had missed the reality of faith, which entails commitment to Jesus Christ. The more people they meet, the more that Bruce, Loretta, and Rayford discover that the mistake of apparent Christianity was common. One after another, as people share their Rapture stories, they admit some time before the Rapture spent as an apparent Christian. And they all quickly rectify their situations: by confessing their sins and professing their faith in Christ, they become real Christians.

The Rapture, then, does just as John Nelson Darby had promised in the nineteenth century: it illuminates what he called Christ's "invisible church," making plain for the world to see who had been the truly faithful Christians.[46] As it prompts many of the apparent Christians who were left behind to become real Christians, however, the Rapture also further perpetuates this divide. In the *Left Behind* narrative, the protagonists do all they can to become real Christians while simultaneously observing the stubborn insistence of some apparent Christians who fail to understand the message of the Rapture.

These apparent Christians persist through the first half of the Tribulation, as exemplified by Cardinal Peter Mathews of Cincinnati. After the Pope has disappeared in the Rapture, Mathews is widely rumored to be the most popular candidate to succeed him.[47] When Buck, the investigative reporter, secures an interview with Cardinal Mathews, he first watches the Cardinal sip champagne and later gets the Cardinal to explain that the disappearances were a great spiritual cleansing, leaving behind people possessing "the basic goodness of humankind."[48] The Cardinal explains that he does not object to the global efforts to form one world religion, and, indeed, he would go on to lead that unified religion. As the Cardinal resists the truth that the protagonists have accepted after the Rapture, he resists the opportunity to become a real Christian. His apparent Christianity serves as a foil for the protagonists' real Christianity—a reminder that, even after the Rapture, true Christianity demands more than appearances.

In addition to distinguishing among people who claim to be Christians, this reality/appearance divide does the important work of characterizing Christians and Carpathians.[49] Whereas Christians operate in the realm of the real, Carpathia and his followers can never be more than appearances. The antichrist, by Scripture's prediction, necessarily trades in the realm of appearances, as "he will be appear to be their friend and protector, but in the end he will be their conqueror and destroyer."[50] And, indeed, scripture was correct. Carpathia offers a compelling appearance, so much so that even Christians wish he could be reality: "every time Buck looked at Carpathia's strong, angular features and quick, seemingly genuine disarming smile, he wished with everything in him that the man was who he appeared to be and not who Buck knew him to be."[51] Like Buck, however, all Christians can see through Carpathia's appearances;

indeed, Christians are almost the only ones who can. Another time, when the antichrist tries to prove his own divinity, or at least essential goodness, by referencing his ability to raise the dead, Rayford too recognizes him as appearance,[52] claiming "the enemy has been known to imitate miracles."[53] But that is all the antichrist ever is—an imitation, an appearance, a surface—never the reality that Christians can trust Christ is and will be.

Truth and Persuasion

This binary world is further defined by its division along the lines of truth and persuasion. Because Christians only dwell in the realm of reality, their commitment is always to the truth, whereas the antichrist's appearances rely heavily on persuasion. Whereas Christians prize honesty, the antichrist relies on deception.

As the antichrist rises to power, his appearance is upheld largely through his persuasive capabilities. Nicolae Carpathia's greatest assets are that he "is young and dashing and all that, charming and persuasive..."[54] The narrator and characters marvel at his capacity for public speaking, noting how it enables his rise from a lowly member of the Romanian senate to the President of Romania to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Potentate of the Global Community within weeks. Indeed, the jump from President of Romania to U.N. Secretary-General is the product of the global acclaim for the speech Carpathia gives at the U.N. as the newly-elected Romanian president. Described in the first book, that speech is widely lauded for

> not only did he not use notes, but he also never hesitated, misspoke, or took his eyes off his audience. He spoke earnestly, with passion, with a frequent smile, and with occasional appropriate humor... Carpathia spoke primarily in perfect English with only a hint of a Romanian accent. He

> used no contractions and enunciated every syllable of every word... He employed all nine languages with which he was fluent, each time translating himself into English.[55]

As he finishes his speech by listing all the United Nations member states by name, Carpathia's delivery is so moving that the representatives of the various nations began standing in turn, the rest of the assembly applauding each nation, until the whole assembly is standing. This speech

> was an amazing display, and suddenly it was no wonder this man had risen so quickly in his own nation, no wonder the previous leader had stepped aside. No wonder New York had already embraced him.[56]

While the rest of the world steps aside for Nicolae Carpathia, only faithful Christians are able to recognize him for what he is—skilled at the craft of persuasion, nothing more. They see that there is no reality behind this persuasive appearance, and they know he does not speak God's truth, as much as they and others might want to believe his hopeful message about global peace.

The novel's protagonists quickly discover that Carpathia's "mastery of spoken communication second to none" also resounds in interpersonal interactions.[57] Anyone who encounters him falls naturally into his persuasive spell, except for those protected by the shield of God. In a near miss, Buck almost fails to accept Christ before he meets with Carpathia, which would have made him vulnerable to Carpathia's persuasion. Instead, because Buck enters his first meeting with the antichrist guided by God's protection, Buck can see Carpathia for who he is. Other very well-accomplished men who fail to accept Christ instead succumb to Carpathia's persuasion. The brilliant Israeli chemist,

Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig, gives up his secret formula, and one of Buck's well-respected journalist colleagues, Steve Plank, becomes Carpathia's press secretary. As Buck explains it, "Steve is a hard-nosed journalist from the old school. That he could be talked into leaving legitimate news coverage to be a spokesman for a world politician shows Carpathia's power of persuasion."[58]

Carpathia is not simply persuasive; he is also deceptive. In the *Left Behind* world, persuasion is set at odds with truthfulness in the way that persuasion is always coupled with deception. Based on scripture's predictions, the series' Christians know that the antichrist will have to be a deceiver. Bruce Barnes explains to Buck, "the antichrist is a deceiver. And he has the power to control men's minds. He can make people see lies as truth."[59] Tsion Ben Judah explains similarly that Satan—who dwells within the antichrist—is "deceiving, persuasive, controlling, beguiling, possessive, oppressive."[60]

Carpathia's characteristic persuasion and deception distinguish him from the truthfulness that defines Christian leaders. Setting Carpathia in direct contrast with the Tribulation Force's pastor, Bruce, Buck notices that Carpathia's impression is "choreographed, manipulated," whereas "Bruce wasn't trying to impress anyone with anything but the truth of the Word of God."[61] Unlike the antichrist, Bruce had no need for the trickery of persuasion because he was simply conveying the truth of Christ. This comparison is even more pointed between Carpathia and the Christian leaders who can transcend communication—the prophets Eli and Moishe, the spiritual leader Tsion Ben-Judah, and Christ himself. When Eli and Moishe appear at the Wailing Wall, there can be little doubt but that they are the prophets predicted in scripture. They preach day and night, never requiring rest or nourishment, and they smite any challenger with a ball of

fire. The most important of their divine powers is their unique gift of speaking to everyone gathered in their own tongues. Buck and Tsion Ben-Judah are amazed to discover that they hear the two witnesses in their own languages—English for Buck and Hebrew for Tsion—and the people standing around them hear the witnesses in Spanish, Norwegian, and other global languages.[62] Even Tsion Ben-Judah is blessed with this power when he speaks to a mass meeting of the faithful at a stadium in Israel; the dozens of translators are suddenly rendered unnecessary when the whole crowd can understand Ben-Judah in their own languages.[63] And in the final book, when Jesus reappears, he calls to each of his children by name in their own languages. As one of the faithful realizes, "we're hearing Him in our hearts instead of with our ears."[64] Upon Jesus's reappearance, even believers come to understand each other without a shared or spoken language. As Rayford walks through masses of people, a woman comments to him about how full and healthy the trees and bushes look. He is able to understand her even though he only knows English and she claims to be speaking Russian.[65] Such is the virtue of Christian truth: it can be conveyed without language, or any form of representation. Indeed, it need not be communicated, since it is so universally true that it can simply be understood. Evil dwells in the messy realm of representation, where one thing must stand in for another and language becomes an appearance for reality. Jesus offers Christians the opportunity to escape this slipperiness of representation and the possibility of appearances. Their ownership of the truth instead allows Christians to communicate directly to one another's hearts, absent the realms of communication, persuasion, or appearances.

Thus, by the time of Jesus's return, this developing binary social order is complete. Good has been separated from evil and reality from appearances, as Jesus has sent evil to suffer in hell. All that remains are real Christians, who only trade in truth and thus have no need for appearances, persuasion, or deception. Of course, this ideal world only comes about with Christ's return. The more important world that the books establish is the earthly one prior to Christ's return, akin to the world inhabited by the book's readers who also await his return. In that world, good and evil, reality and appearance, and truth and persuasion actively contest each other in the public sphere. These binaries give meaning and order to *Left Behind*'s audience members who live in a world that has not yet eradicated evil, appearances, and persuasion, and they also make space for Christians to work within the defined public sphere. *Left Behind* marks a sharp break from the tradition of apocalyptic discourses because its clearly-ordered social world engenders, rather than nullifies, Christian activism in this world. These three binaries, in combination, facilitate the model of citizenship evident throughout the series. The good and evil binary draws such sharp demarcations between social groups that *Left Behind*'s readers should have little doubt about which side they are on (or should get themselves on) and who their enemies are. With such clear battle lines, Christians emerge as public citizens fully capable of navigating the public sphere in order to do God's work on earth. The reality/appearance binary facilitates a model of citizenship that is uniquely anti-intellectual, as it encourages citizens to exchange rational thinking for faith in order to become *real* Christians. Moreover, the truth/persuasion binary, by assuming a transcendent truth that is knowable through faith alone, renders communication useless and thus makes citizenship a non-discursive practice. By

themselves, these binaries do not define a mode for Christian civic engagement. Rather, this well-defined social order makes space for the manner of Christian citizenship that I argue the books celebrate: brutish masculinity.

Muscular Christian Activism

If providing a sense of order has been common to apocalyptic discourses, the role of the individual human actor within the preordained order has been much less universal. Apocalyptic rhetors have to contend with the very basic question: if God has total control over the course of history, then what agency do humans have to act? Surely, public Christian activism in the United States at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries suggests that apocalyptic thinking does not preclude involvement in earthly affairs. Some of the most visible heralds of the apocalypse in the last generation—Ronald Reagan, Tim LaHaye, and Pat Robertson, for instance—have also been influential political figures.[66] So, how do Christian actors negotiate this capacity for agency within a predetermined world? The answer to that question typically depends on the apocalyptic script.

In a premillennialist worldview, God is working in history to bring about cataclysmic change that will, in the blink of an eye, usher in a new world order. If Christians cannot know the precise hour or day that Christ will return, but they live with the utmost certainty that he will return, then their attention is best spent focusing on the most personal concerns—preparing themselves and their loved ones for that moment. Christians can exercise total passivity in other earthly affairs, such as politics and civic

life, as those things will pass away under the new world order. In contrast, postmillennialism seems to allow, even demand, greater public agency. The progressive view of history inherent in this theology, which has long been common among liberal, social gospel Protestants, encourages human activism. Positing that the millennium will only come as the result of Christian social reform efforts, postmillennialism rests the burden of Christ's return on human shoulders. In this system, lack of public activism would keep the millennium forever at bay.

O'Leary's analysis of apocalyptic discourse in terms of narrative form underscores this difference. Using Kenneth Burke's characterizations, he distinguishes between tragedy and comedy in terms of "depiction of time, human action, and agency."[67] The tragic typically precludes human agency, as it offers a determined narrative, careening toward an unhappy ending where human action could make little difference.[68] The comic, conversely, is episodic, open-ended, and allows humans to work toward a happy ending.[69] By O'Leary's characterization, apocalyptic discourses can take the form of tragedy or comedy or both. The book of Revelation, for instance, is both tragic and comic as it promises an unfortunate fate for the "wicked" but a happy ending for the saints and martyrs.[70] Moreover, the book can be read through either a comic or tragic framework. The tragic framework only sees it as predictive, structuring history in linear terms and progressing irreversibly toward its ending. Read through the comic frame, however, Revelation takes on an episodic quality. If the book is read as allegory, rather than prediction, "the drama of the end is continually re-enacted and experienced in the present while the End itself is delayed."[71] O'Leary uses these frames to explain contemporary apocalyptic discourses, suggesting that premillennialism

operates through a tragic framework and postmillennialism through the comic (even as he decries the simplicity of this binary categorization scheme).[72] Because premillennialism dwells on the impending End and precludes human agency from interfering with the unfolding script, it is necessarily tragic, whereas postmillennialism's open framework makes the End "a consequence of human choice and activity in the world."[73] Moreover, the comic postmillennialism makes evil "something to be overcome by recognition, reform, and education,"[74] which gives humans a role in overcoming evil. And because a tragic apocalyptic stresses the predictive function, and a comic apocalyptic stresses the hortatory function, the comic encourages humans to change their ways, and the tragic simply accepts their predicted fate.

The *Left Behind* narrative complicates all of these distinctions. Even with its very traditional premillennialist theology, the story depicts characters who are anything but passive. Instead, *Left Behind*'s protagonists take their individual roles in a fatalistic world to an opposite extreme: they seek God's calling to guide them on public missions throughout the years of the Tribulation. They do not cease their typical activity nor do they retreat into the pious activities of the private sphere, such as prayer and Bible study; instead, they engage themselves in the ongoing battles in the public sphere. In this section, I first demonstrate that *Left Behind*'s characters seek out opportunities for activism in the public sphere. Second, I argue that this activism is enabled by the books' theology of salvation. Third, I maintain that the activism itself is characterized by anti-intellectualism and aggression, which I call brutish masculinity.

Here I stand, for I can do no other

If premillennialist discourse generally sets Christians in a tenuous place between their earthly realities and their future roles in a new world order, *Left Behind*'s characters demonstrate a firm commitment to this world. As sad as they are that they missed the Rapture, and as much as they long for the loved ones taken away, the books' protagonists consistently express their dedication to their lives and work in this world. In the final book, one character explains to another, "I would have rather acted on the truth when I had the chance and be in heaven already, if you want complete honesty.' 'Well, 'course,' Sebastian said, 'but given that we missed it, there's no place I'd rather be right now. I just wish my wife and daughter could be here with me.'"[75] Chloe and Buck also share this will to live, and they even make an agreement at the half-way point of the Tribulation; Buck suggests, "Let's watch out for each other, keep each other alive. We've only got three and a half years to go, but I want to make it."[76] Rayford demonstrates this desire to live, even in the direst of circumstances. On a mission, he is knocked off his ATV and tumbles down a cliff, and "when it seemed everything had ebbed from him but his last breath, Rayford considered releasing his hand and letting his life's blood slip away too. But he could not."[77] Rayford, Sebastian, Chloe and Buck are like all of the series' faithful Christians: they are glad to be alive on earth, even during the most dreadful seven years the world has ever seen. As the narrator explains of the Tribulation Force hiding out together, "All hoped to survive until the Glorious Appearing, but more than that, to also somehow make a difference from their claustrophobic warren."[78]

More than just wanting to stay alive, time and again these characters express their desire to be involved in the action that defines public life during the Tribulation era.

They are not content to spend their days waiting for Christ's return; rather, the *Left Behind* characters seek out action-oriented ways to live out their faith. This desire for action emerges in the first novel, with the creation of the Tribulation Force. Soon after Pastor Bruce Barnes, Rayford, and Chloe have all accepted Christ and start meeting together as a study and support group, they decide to enlarge the mission of the group. Bruce explains,

> "I've been praying about sort of an inner circle of people who want to do more than just survive."
>
> "What are you getting at?" Rayford asked. "Going on the offensive?"
>
> "Something like that. It's one thing to hide in here, studying, figuring out what's going on so we can keep from being deceived... But doesn't part of you want to jump into the battle?"...
>
> "A cause," [Chloe] said. "Something not just to die for but to live for."...
>
> "Tribulation Force," Bruce said... "Make no mistake, it won't be fun. It would be the most dangerous cause a person could ever join. We would study, prepare, and speak out. When it becomes obvious who the Antichrist is, the false prophet, the evil, counterfeit religion, we'll have to oppose them, speak out against them."[79]

And just as Bruce describes, from its inception, the Tribulation Force takes on this ambitious mission of fighting back against the antichrist. Buck joins the group soon after its formation, and its ranks continue to swell throughout the Tribulation era, but the core mission remains the same. From its inception here, Bruce makes a distinction between

the work he and his compatriots could do in the private sphere versus their action in the public sphere. They could just stay in hiding, where they could study and figure out the antichrist, he admits. Or, they could leave the safety of their safe house and "jump into the battle." When the Tribulation Force forms out of this desire to join the battle, it commits itself to public action, and *Left Behind* distinguishes itself from other premillennialist discourses that have typically valued agency in the private sphere—such as prayer, study, and evangelism to loved ones. Although *Left Behind* does not neglect these private activities entirely, its characters' attention always skews to the more public tasks.

Throughout the following eleven books, *Left Behind*'s growing ranks of Tribulation Force operatives repeatedly echo the sentiment that drove Bruce and the others to form the group in the first place—they seek escape from their hiding places, so that they can pursue public actions. The narrator explains of the characters sequestered in hiding, "each wanted an assignment, something away from the safe house. They wanted to be proactive, not waiting for Nicolae and the GC to be the only ones on the offensive."[80] Chloe and Buck acknowledge together that "we've already declared ourselves. We're enemies of the world order, and we're not going to just sit by and protest in our minds."[81] And when a group of believers tries to dissuade two Tribulation Force members from conducting a jailbreak, the response is clear: "'We are people of faith,' Hannah said... 'And we know you are too. We must also be people of action. We know the odds and we accept them.'"[82] These characters certainly get their wish. They are sent all over the globe on missions to transport goods (especially once Christians are

excluded from global commerce), conduct jailbreaks, and rescue exposed believers, among other tasks.

Left Behind's protagonists devote their lives to pursuing these battles even though they know that God ultimately controls all of history. Having seen every one of God's promises fulfilled, these characters cannot doubt that the plan will continue to unfold as predicted, whether or not they participate. And yet, they still actively work to bring about the events God has promised, rather than sitting by idly and waiting for the works of God to take their course. For instance, based on their Bible study, the characters know that the antichrist will be assassinated half way through the Tribulation. Exactly three and a half years after the signing of the treaty between Israel and the U.N., and exactly three and a half years before Christ's Second Coming, Nicolae Carpathia will be killed, but he will rise again three days later. Book six of the series, *Assassins,* follows three characters—group leader Rayford Steele and as-yet-unconverted Hattie Durham and Chaim Rosenzweig—as they race around the world trying to be with Carpathia at the moment that he is to be assassinated, each one wanting to be the one to make it happen. Conceivably, as Hattie and Chaim have not yet converted, they may not fully believe that God's prediction will come true at the appointed hour. But Rayford was the first of the characters to convert, and, as he has been consistently faithful, he knows that God's plan will be fulfilled. Yet, he has "prayed for the permission, the honor, of being the one assigned to assassinate Carpathia at the halfway point of the Tribulation. Now, truth be told, he found himself to be angling to be in position at that time."[83] Rayford trusts God's will to run its course, and yet he wants to earn himself a role in its unfolding. Ultimately, even though it is Chaim, a former Carpathia loyalist, who turns against his

hero and murders him, Rayford's efforts still set a powerful example of the Christian imperative to work as God's agents in earthly affairs.

Seeking Salvation

The rationale for this pronounced activism can be explained, at least in part, through *Left Behind*'s theology of salvation, or soteriology. By the narrative's depiction, salvation is one-dimensional, instant, and irreversible. The *only* requirement for salvation, the only criterion by which humans are judged, is the acceptance of Christ as savior. Believers must prove no merit or any special favor from God, nor must they offer any evidence of good works in order to be saved. This soteriology, although never explicitly named, is reminiscent of Arminianism, the doctrine of salvation named for Jacob Arminius, that developed in response to Calvinism and has been especially popular among American evangelicals.[84] Whereas Calvinism posited that Christians are saved by God's grace and that God chooses who shall receive that grace, Arminianism asserted in response that God's grace is open to all who seek it. So, for *Left Behind* characters, salvation comes as the result of asking for it through a simple "transaction."[85] It requires only a sincere prayer to Jesus, in which the new believer accepts him as savior and repents of all sins. Tsion Ben-Judah teaches his followers that they need only pray,

> Dear God, I know I am a sinner. Forgive me and pardon me for waiting so long. I receive your love and salvation and ask that you live through me. I accept you as my Savior and resolve to live for you until you come again.[86]

Following Tsion's guidance, one person after another achieves salvation by praying this simple prayer, and they even applaud its simplicity. As one working class Latina

explains in her testimony, "What got me was that it wasn't fancy, wasn't hard to understand, didn't get all complicated. It just told me God loved me, Jesus died for me, and Jesus is comin' again... All I had to do is pray and mean it."[87] In addition to being simple, this formula for conversion and salvation is instant, assuring the believer's salvation the moment that she offers this prayer. Thus, even as people convert during the battle at Armageddon, in the final moments before Christ's return, they receive the mark of the cross on their forehead instantly, suggesting they have been sealed by Christ. They receive that mark, that is, if they have not yet taken the mark of the beast. As Tsion writes to his followers, "The Bible tells us that once one is either sealed by God as a believer or accepts the mark of loyalty to Antichrist, this is a once-and-for-all choice."[88] Salvation is a simple, instant, one-time, everlasting transition. One chooses either good or evil, and that choice defines the remainder of one's life and eternity.

Having made that choice, and having been sealed by the mark of Christ, the *Left Behind* Christians might rest easily, assured of their salvation, until Christ's return. But none of them do. Instead, as they actively work on God's behalf, their activism is best read not as an *effort toward* their salvation but as the *result of* their salvation. The group's first pastor explains that many people have been taken by the misconception that being saved "has something to do with doing good and living right. We're going to do that, of course," he assures Rayford, "but not so we can earn our salvation. We're to do that in *response* to our salvation."[89] By this soteriology, the requirements for salvation are simple—confess your sins and profess faith in Jesus Christ—but the demands for faithful discipleship are higher. When *Left Behind* Christians do God's work on earth, they do so out of the obligations of this discipleship.

Soldiers for Christ

Amy Johnson Frykholm has argued that Rapture narratives follow a predictably-gendered plot. They begin with a woman or women disappearing at a moment of domestic crisis (and Frykholm gives the example of a woman disappearing while being beaten by her husband). Thus, in the midst of her suffering, a woman is rewarded for her faith. "These narratives," Frykholm contends, "offer to women the role of the faithful and forgiving victim who disappears into silence rather than name the injustices done to her, who receives otherworldly reward for her suffering rather than this-worldly justification."[90] After the woman's disappearance, her husband must cope with his loss, often leading to despair, suicide, further sin, and/or conversion. *Left Behind* begins with this Rapture plot exactly: Rayford's doting wife Irene is raptured as she is tucked safely in bed (wearing her wedding ring), while Rayford is left behind as he is piloting a 747 and lusting after his flight attendant.[91] Following Irene's disappearance, Rayford redeems himself by finding Christ immediately—he is the first character depicted repenting of his sins and praying for salvation.

Beyond its opening Rapture scene, however, the *Left Behind* series veers into uncharted gendered territory. The earth has been robbed of all its pure, self-sacrificing women, and instead the series' heroes are celebrated for their masculinity. The civic activism that *Left Behind*'s characters perform is uniquely, almost exclusively, masculine in nature. This masculinity is particularly brutish—prizing strength, instinct, and courage over rationality and intellect. A persistent anti-intellectualism runs through the books, deriding and disciplining characters who demonstrate any book learning and transforming them into valiant warriors for battle. In the actions of the series' characters, this

masculinity transgresses the boundaries of gender; both male and female characters enact brutish masculinity. However, as the male characters are consistently more successful in their performances of masculinity, and as masculinity is prized as the faithful performance of Christian citizenship, women are proved to be less adequate Christian citizens.

The series' anti-intellectualism develops early in the first book and persists throughout the narrative. The characters who miss out on the Rapture are consistently shown to be well-educated and intellectual, and it was always their rationality that precluded them from hearing the truth of God's word. The dichotomy is made clear in the Steele family: whereas Irene was thoughtful and emotional, Rayford was rational. She was "a more emotional, more feelings-oriented person" and "he was brighter—yes, more intelligent," "a technically minded person," "an organized, analytical airline pilot."[92] Even of the two kids, the raptured twelve-year-old Raymie had faith like a child, but the left behind Chloe was a hardened, scholastic Stanford student. Raymie never had "the killer instinct," he was "too compassionate, too sensitive, too caring."[93] When Rayford tries to persuade Chloe to accept Christ, he has to admit that she gets her rationality from him. Before the Rapture, "he had run everything through that maddening intellectual grid—until recently, when the supernatural came crashing through his academic pretense."[94] This division holds up outside the Steele family as well, as many of the characters who missed the Rapture were similarly intellectual. Buck, for instance, was Ivy League educated and had built his career as an investigative reporter.[95] As he struggles to accept that the disappearances were the product of a supernatural force, he too has to run it past his "cognitive reasoning skills."[96] For all of these characters, since

their intellectualism is to blame for their having missed Christ's essential truth before the Rapture, they have to strip away their "academic pretense" before they can demonstrate the sort of faithfulness that God demands.

The practice of faithful Christian citizenship throughout the Tribulation era is marked by this absence of intellectualism. Christian discipleship demands very little in the way of study, including Bible study, especially for believers who are mature in their faith. In the first two books, as the protagonists are new to the faith, in their "'first love' of Christ,"[97] they study the scriptures and especially the end-times prophesies. Beyond this honeymoon period, however, these believers are comfortable leaving the Bible study to the religious leaders of the group, primarily Tsion Ben-Judah. As such, most of the series' characters consistently demonstrate their total Biblical illiteracy. Although these people have sworn their lives to Christ, and although they regularly risk their bodily well-being on faith-based missions, the protagonists repeatedly and unabashedly display their ignorance of scripture. Telling her story of devouring the Bible when she first became a Christian, Hannah explains that she "started in at the beginning and I loved all those stories in Genesis, but when I got into Exodus, and then—what's the next one?" Someone answers "Leviticus," and her story continues. Hannah, one of the book's central characters and one of the leaders of the Tribulation Force, demonstrates no embarrassment at not being able to name the books of the Pentateuch. When Rayford and Chaim encounter a new believer in former news reporter Bernadette Rice, she explains to them that there is one verse that really explains her conversion. It "is the verse that both Dr. Rosenzweig and Dr. Ben-Judah have often quoted—how does it go, Doctor? Something about not wrestling with flesh?"[98] Failing to remember the scripture

that explains her conversion, this new Christian is glad to have one of the group's spiritual mentors recite it for her, also demonstrating no remorse over her Biblical illiteracy. These spiritual mentors, in turn, have very low expectations for the Biblical literacy of their followers. When Tsion preaches to a large group of believers at Petra, he instructs them to "Turn in your Bibles to Zecheriah 13. That is the second-to-last book in your Old Testament."[99] Even though he is speaking to people who will fight and die for Christ's cause, Tsion has no expectation that they will know the order of the writings of the minor prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. These Christians demonstrate their faithfulness not by their knowledge of God's word but through their willingness to fight on its behalf.

Given how little attention is paid to Bible study in these books, the characters have much more time to devote to the public work of God's kingdom—going to war against evil—an effort that requires more brawn than brain. Rayford's character sets the standard for that brawn, as he is "a man's man. Six-four and thickly muscled, he had played sports through pain of all sorts."[100] Buck is similarly masculine, and he gets his name because he "bucks" "the traditions and the trends and the conventions."[101] Both Buck and Rayford demonstrate their masculinity at the beginning of the second book when, in back to back scenes, they are depicted as demonstrating insubordination in their workplaces: Rayford refuses to stand down when he is chastised by his boss for evangelizing to his first officer on the job, while Buck refuses to take the orders of his (female) direct supervisor until she ultimately calls her supervisor, who supports Buck's insubordination. By the most basic character descriptions, these men both show the makings for brutish masculinity.

Their work on earth calls for this sort of masculinity, especially as it is consistently framed as "war" or "battle," and God's servants on earth are called "soldiers," who fight on behalf of the Tribulation Force. Rayford explains to another character that opposing evil (the antichrist) necessarily entails battle. "When you got the mark you became his archenemy," Rayford says, "so now you're on the front lines."[102] When he and the group's doctor rush Hattie to the hospital to deliver her stillborn baby, Rayford later refers to their work as "the heat of battle."[103] And when he and Ken fly to Israel to evacuate three trapped Tribulation force members, Rayford exclaims, "Hoo, boy, back in the battle!"[104] This battle oriented language is hardly unique to Rayford; even the group's spiritual leader, Tsion Ben-Judah, calls out to a mass rally of the faithful, "we shall be here in Israel two more full days and nights, preparing for battle. Put aside fear!"[105]

Given this war-oriented framework, the series' plot is dominated by violent, action-oriented missions. The characters' typical adventures include flying helicopters and fighter jets, running from legal authorities, chasing operatives who have uncovered too much information, and shooting high powered rifles, grenades, and directed energy weapons. Thus, the venerated heroes of these books are the ones who can run, fight, shoot, fly, re-wire computer systems, and do other similarly masculine things. On these missions, the heroes consistently commandeer the most sophisticated technology, which they revere for its own brand of masculinity. The story opens with Rayford, while his "fully loaded 747" is "on autopilot above the Atlantic."[106] Later, he flies a 757, which is "different from the huge, bulky feel of the 747, but Rayford managed. When he received clearance, he throttled up and felt the unusually responsive thrust from the aerodynamic

wonder."[107] Over the course of the series, Rayford flies both the 747 and 757, including Carpathia's 757. Mac McCullum gives him a refresher on flying a helicopter, which the two fly throughout the Middle East. Ken Ritz flies a Lear jet, and Albie gets them access to a fighter jet. Buck, although he does not fly planes or helicopters, does buy the most expensive and best equipped Land Rover ever designed, and he drives assorted Hummers and stolen GC army vehicles on missions. Just like Rayford and the other men with the planes, these tank-like vehicles become an extension of Buck's masculinity. When he steals a Hummer and drives it for the first time, he celebrates the power it gives him:

> Buck pulled away slowly, the gigantic Hummer propelling itself easily over the jagged terrain. He wanted to get used to the vehicle, the largest he had ever driven. It was surprisingly comfortable, predictably powerful, and—to his delight—amazingly quiet.... He couldn't wait to compete with whatever toy the GC was using..."[108]

In addition to planes, helicopters, and tanks, Tribulation Force members gain access to equally sophisticated computer technology. For instance, the group's technology mole secures "handheld electronic organizers" that are "solar powered, satellite connected, and contain geographic positioning chips. You can access the Internet, send and receive, use them as phones, you name it."[109] All of this technology—planes, tanks, computers—is instrumental to the characters' battle missions, through which it becomes an extension of their already-unimpeachable masculinity.

Upon his Second Coming, even Jesus's character displays this masculine strength as he marches into battle. The books make clear that Christ's ultimate purpose in coming to Earth is to bring peace, but they never depict Christ the peacemaker. Instead, Christ-

the-demon-slayer rules the Earth with a "rod of iron,"[110] killing the enemy in droves by his words alone, which are described as "that sword from his mouth" that can "slice through the air, reaping the wrath of God's final judgment."[111] Upon Christ's first words spoken on earth,

> tens of thousands of Unity Army soldiers fell dead, simply dropping where they stood, their bodies ripped open, blood pooling in great masses... with every word, more and more enemies of God dropped dead, torn to pieces. Horses panicked and bolted. The living screamed in terror and ran about like madmen—some escaping for a time, others falling at the words of the Lord Christ.[112]

Beyond killing the masses simply with his words, this living Christ has come to earth with a mission to enact vengeance upon all those who have made his followers suffer, especially the antichrist. When he finally comes face-to-face with the five most evil men—the antichrist, his false prophet, and three other "froglike demonic creatures"—he forces them all to bow and proclaim his Lordship before sentencing each one. He contends with the trio of demons first, and, as he sentences them to death, "their reptilian bodies burst from their clothes and exploded, leaving a mess of blood and scales and skin that soon burst into flames..."[113] With the antichrist and the false prophet, Jesus excoriates them for their transgressions, makes them bow down, and sentences them to 1000 years consigned to the lake of fire.[114] Through his ultimate triumph over Nicolae Carpathia, the man who has spent seven years as the most powerful and destructive force the world has ever known, Jesus Christ demonstrates his total dominion over the Earth. For all of the machismo that the books' characters (both good and evil) have shown over

the course of the series, Jesus's masculinity trumps them all. His followers worship him for this show of strength as Enoch, for instance, rejoices in the knowledge that Jesus "was slaying the enemy in the Holy Land."[115]

As battle scenes dominate the books' plots, this masculinity becomes the necessary civic activism performed by faithful Christians, which means that female characters share in the men's bravado. The women who work for the Tribulation Force, although they sometimes fulfill traditionally feminine roles in the private sphere—nursing and childcare, especially—also participate in missions alongside the men. Annie Christopher, for instance, works with David Hassid as a mole inside the GC Palace, where they steal equipment and information from Carpathia's operation. Ming Toy Wong works as a prison guard at the GC's women's prison in Belgium until her Christian identity is compromised and she must escape the antichrist's employ. The starring female character—Chloe Steele Williams—the only woman in the core group of Tribulation Force members, takes on one after another battle-oriented mission, her masculine swagger matching the men's. Spirited though Chloe may be in joining Tribulation Force missions, however, her skills always fall just short of what is needed to complete a mission successfully. She never performs the masculine tasks quite as well as her male counterparts.

If Chloe had failed to anticipate the Rapture because she inherited too much of her father's rationality, she becomes a valiant soldier for the Tribulation Force because she also inherited his courage. Chloe is "as brave and as strong as the men," so self-assured that, upon meeting Buck, "she looked directly at him and gave a firm handshake," unlike the women who Buck usually meets, who "felt it was feminine to offer a limp hand."[116]

She is outspokenly independent, occasionally defiant, and always bent on demonstrating her strength. At the outset of one mission, as she and Buck begin to choose among the cars abandoned in a parking garage, Buck refers to a car with a female pronoun, and Chloe immediately protests his gendering cars female. After a long discussion about cars and other inanimate objects and their genders, Chloe and Buck settle on a Hummer, which Buck notes is a "muscle car," and he suggests they call it "Chloe." As is typical, Chloe has spoken her mind, gone head-to-head with one of the men, and ultimately demonstrated her strength.

The spirited Chloe seeks opportunities to participate in the group's missions, as, like the other members, "she wanted to be where the action was."[117] Occasionally she persuades the group leader—her father, Rayford—to send her on official Tribulation Force missions, but more often, Chloe invents, engineers, and executes her own missions. On her biggest officially commissioned mission, Chloe travels with Hannah Palemoon and George Sebastian to Greece to rescue two believers who Buck and Tsion had helped sneak out of prison. Her first individual mission takes her from the group's safe house in the Chicago suburbs into downtown Chicago, where she follows a tip about a highrise that could potentially be used as a safe house. Later, when the group is living in that downtown Chicago office building, Chloe detects a light elsewhere in the desolate core of office buildings and she sneaks out the safe house to investigate the light. There, she discovers another group of believers, also hiding out, that the Tribulation Force is able to incorporate into their community. Finally, when she and the others are living in yet another safe house in San Diego, Chloe detects movement outside during one of her night shifts, and she follows her instincts to discover that GC police are patrolling the area

around the safe house. Each of these smaller missions parallels the types of missions that the group's men perform on a routine basis. Chloe cannot fly planes or helicopters, and she does not commandeer the large ground vehicles, but she still undertakes missions that require her to run, fight, and evade, outsmart, and embarrass GC police.

Lest there be any doubt, however, Chloe's missions always find her wanting as a Tribulation Force operative. During the mission to Greece that she undertakes with Hannah and George, the three are fooled by GC police, who manage to catch and torture George (who ultimately overpowers the GC guards and wins his way out of captivity). Thus, that mission is unsuccessful, and only George's military training saves him. None of Chloe's three solo missions brings unqualified success. In her first mission, Chloe performs a helpful service to the group by scouting and securing a new safe house. Because she foolishly ventures out in the daylight and makes a series of other costly errors, however, Chloe ultimately finds herself trapped in downtown Chicago, and her father must come rescue her. Her second mission is equally successful, as not only does she locate the source of the light that she has seen, but she finds another group of believers to add to the community. That mission's success is tempered when it turns out that Chloe has endangered her safe house's secrecy. And her third mission's success is even more mixed. She is successful because it is her early discovery of a GC patrol outside the safe house that allows the others to escape in time to evade capture, but Chloe herself is captured. She faces days of torture in a GC prison and demonstrates her valor by resisting nearly all of the GC's torture devices and refusing to divulge any information about her fellow believers. With an angel's protection, she even resists a truth serum. Living in an all-metal jail cell with no pure water, Chloe endures full days with less than

250 calories, her cell lights glowing around the clock, the television at full volume blasting lie-filled news stories about her, her family, and her capture, and the incessant playing of the international anthem, "Hail Carpathia," in her cell. Finally, when she proves totally useless as a prisoner, displaying absolute resilience against her captors, Chloe is sent to the guillotine.

Upon her death, when Chloe is celebrated by Christians the world over as a martyr, she is praised for the same sort of femininity that defined her raptured mother. Unlike the muscular military hero George Sebastian, who endured GC prison tortures and then overcame the prison guards to win his escape, Chloe ultimately assumes the martyr's role. Her GC captors subjected her to the most extreme tortures they could devise, knowing that, as a leader of the international Christian movement, Chloe had access to all the information they needed to be able to eliminate this powerful band of opposition. As the GC officials tried to bargain with Chloe—offering to commute her execution in exchange for information about her family—Chloe protected her father, husband, and son by guarding the secret of their whereabouts, even when it meant sacrificing her own life. She tried to escape by overpowering the guards, but such a display of masculinity was just beyond Chloe's capabilities. Ultimately, for *Left Behind*'s lead female character, performing masculinity—the venerated expression of faithful citizenship—is untenable, and her only recourse is to the femininity that served her mother and other pre-Rapture Christians so well.

Conclusions and Implications

To the persistent question that haunts millennialism—can Christians exercise agency in their predetermined earthly world?—*Left Behind* answers with an unequivocal "yes." The nature of agency depicted in these books complicates the typical assumption that premillennialist belief entails a tragic worldview. Even if human history follows a predetermined script and even if Christ's Second Coming will soon bring an end to the human era, *Left Behind*'s characters demonstrate that humans can and must continue to do God's work on earth. Not only must they secure their individual futures—an obligation that premillennialism has always recognized—but they also must work as God's agents to bring about the events foretold in scripture. They do as much, *Left Behind*'s soteriology suggests, not in order to earn salvation, but rather in response to their salvation. That is, because these believers have committed their lives to God in Christ, they have no choice but to work as God's agents on earth. Their commitment to God does not allow a resignation to do nothing, but instead it creates an obligation to accept God's plan and the individual's role within it. *Left Behind* puts contemporary Christians into an unfamiliar narrative frame—one that is neither tragic nor comic—where Christians must accept the foreordained unfolding of events but also must pursue active participation in those same events.

Because *Left Behind* depicts Christians working in their civic world, it provides a model for Christian citizenship.[118] *Left Behind*'s characters orient themselves to the public sphere, and, through the Tribulation Force, they mobilize as a public that serves as a check against the ever-growing tyrannical power of the state. They carve out a public sphere not far removed from the one Habermas idealizes: a space free from the influences of both the state and the market, where individuals bracket their personal interests in

order to advance the good of the whole. Of course, even if this public sphere is free of ties to the state and economy, it is never ideologically neutral like the one Habermas envisions, as Tribulation Force members always operate from their religious orientation. In that way, their public resembles the ones that Habermas's critics, including Michael Warner and Nancy Fraser, argue are more plausible and common within "actually existing democracies."[119] Through these publics—which are self-organized networks of people within a shared discursive field—citizens come to engage other members of the public, but they also operate from their own public as they engage members of other publics and counterpublics. In the case of *Left Behind,* as the antichrist takes over the global government, the global public of Christians becomes the most powerful group countering his tyranny. Their mode of citizen engagement with the state, however, is far removed from the rational-critical deliberation that Habermas praises as well as from the more broadly defined discursive practices of citizenship—such as civil disobedience and street theatre—common to other publics and counterpublics.[120] Instead, *Left Behind* models a practice of citizenship that is anti-intellectual and non-discursive and that prizes violence over any other type of engagement; it is a performance of citizenship I have called "brutish masculinity." If brutish masculinity is *Left Behind*'s "manner" of citizenship, then the "deeds" that necessarily follow (to use Asen's terminology) are fighting, shooting, killing, and other acts of violence.[121]

The three binaries that define the social order in the *Left Behind* world facilitate the novels' manner of citizenship. Even though *Left Behind*'s model of government does not translate flawlessly to contemporary American politics—the novels depict a global dictatorship, whereas its readers largely live within a democracy—these binaries speak

across contexts. That is, even if the novels' readers do not live in the Tribulation era, even if the antichrist has not yet taken over their world, the binaries speak to things that do exist in twenty-first century American life—good and evil, truth and persuasion, etc. Collectively, the binaries organize the world in a way that ultimately facilitates brutish masculinity as the natural performance of citizenship.

The good and evil binary organizes the world into distinct publics: if the global government that has come to take over the world is "evil," then citizens who band together to resist that government are necessarily "good." This fundamental binary does the important work of clearly dividing the world into distinct camps, and this dividing line then facilitates the most suitable mode of engagement between these two camps. That is, if there are only two groups of people in the world—good and evil—and, if evil is the tragic, irreversible, and essential nature of some people's souls, then the only possible mode of engagement with evil is aggression. If evil cannot be changed into good, and there is no middle ground to be found between the two positions, then there is no reason for good citizens to engage the other with any means beyond violence. Unlike other modes of citizenship that might encourage "people to step out from familiar and comfortable situations to encounters in which our beliefs and values will be tested," this polarized worldview leaves no space for "genuinely engaging difference."[122] Instead, with the battle lines permanently drawn, masculine aggression becomes the only natural mode of citizenship in a polarized world.

The binary opposition between good and evil does not only lead to brutish masculinity within the confines of the *Left Behind* novels. Instead, this worldview has come to dominate U.S. foreign policy at the beginning of the twentieth-century. When

the world can be divided into good and evil, and when the unredeemable evildoers threaten the freedom and the existence of "good" people everywhere, then the only possible solution is to eradicate evil from the earth. George W. Bush proclaimed this approach to foreign policy in the fall of 2001, beginning almost immediately after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. In his September 20, 2001 address to a joint session of Congress, the president famously put the world on notice; "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," he declared.[123] With that simple phrase, Bush divided the world into two clear camps, where "us" signified the defenders of freedom and democracy who were at war against the "enemies of freedom": those who "hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."[124] These enemies of freedom bore the face of evil—they were "evildoers"—and enemy nations became the "axis of evil."[125] These clearly-drawn battle lines between good and evil have produced in our foreign policy a mode of global citizenship that mimics the mode of citizenship produced by that same binary in the *Left Behind* world. Just like Tribulation Force operatives who model brutish masculinity as the suitable way to engage evil, United States foreign policy has taken on this same swagger of brutish masculinity. As a manner of global citizenship, brutish masculinity has produced wars as its defining acts—conventional wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the overarching "War on Terror"—rather than diplomacy, a deed that might have followed naturally from a different manner of global citizenship. The parallelism between U.S. foreign policy and the *Left Behind* novels does not rest on a simplistic view of media effects for its significance; after all, surely the Bush administration does not take its foreign policy cues from fiction novels. Instead, the

parallel cases demonstrate how naturally a polarized worldview produces brutish masculinity as a mode of citizenship. And the dismal failures of the U.S.-led wars demonstrates the dangerous implications of the citizenship of brutish masculinity.

The other binaries that give shape to *Left Behind*'s polarized world also influence the manner in which citizenship is performed. Just as the good/evil disjunction facilitates the citizenship of masculinity, the other disjunctions—truth/persuasion and reality/appearance—naturally facilitate a model of citizenship that is both anti-intellectual and non-discursive. The reality/appearance binary develops its salience because of the lurking dangers of intellectualism. That is, prior to the Rapture, intellectualism, or Rayford's "academic pretense," separated real from apparent Christians. Thus, becoming a real Christian requires stripping away that intellectualism in favor of faith. The beauty of the reality/appearance dissociation for believers is that it eliminates the need for thinking, assessing, or judging—especially the character of other citizens. The moment that citizens become real Christians, they are marked with the seal of the believer on their foreheads, which means that they can and should be trusted, while anyone who lacks that symbol can be assumed to be loyal to evil.

The truth/persuasion binary underscores this anti-intellectualism while also paving the way for a markedly non-discursive practice of citizenship. The truth/persuasion binary renders communication both useless and dangerous. Evil dwells in the realm of persuasion, which is indistinguishable from deception, and both rely on communication for their powers. Truth, in contrast, is so pure, so clear, so transparent that it does not need the tools of communication or representation to be shared among good, faithful Christians. The echoes of Plato ring through here—there is a universal

truth, and it stands opposed to public rhetoric, which is only capable of trickery. There is no possibility for persuasion that is any more virtuous than deception. Unlike Plato, however, the books' proponents of Truth believe that it is simple and self-evident, rendering intellectualism as useless as communication. If ultimately the only truth that matters is Jesus Christ's saving grace, and believers acquire that grace through a one-step transaction, then even the matters of faith require no intellectual work. Thus, this truth/persuasion binary, in association with the reality/appearance binary, is directly responsible for producing the anti-intellectual and non-discursive performance of citizenship that defines the *Left Behind*'s characters' actions.

The implications of the truth/persuasion and reality/appearance binaries, plus their attendant unintellectual and non-discursive citizenship, are particularly troubling. Within this worldview, evaluating public discourse rests on discerning the nature of the rhetor—good or evil, reality or appearance—instead of the discourse itself. That is, if *real* Christians have ownership of universal truth, and if they are incapable of producing deceptive persuasion, then their discourse can always be trusted and need not be evaluated on its merits. This type of thinking has certainly already influenced presidential politics as the authenticity of candidates' faith is tested again and again. On the campaign trail in 2004, when George W. Bush shared his personal conversion testimony and John Kerry touted his church attendance records, both men were implying that their character as *real* Christians made them suitable for office. Their rhetoric became more trustworthy because of their character. When the world can be divided into truth and persuasion, and the authentically Christian candidate necessarily operates within the realm of truth, then the performance of citizenship for voters need only entail

discerning the authentic Christian among the candidates. Once the authentic candidate is identified, the performance of citizenship need not involve critical listening or judging that person's discourse. Furthermore, if the authentic Christian is elected, then his authenticity certifies his actions while in office. When George W. Bush claims to act in God's interest or as God's messenger, the *Left Behind* model of Christian citizenship would entail trusting the president only because he is an *authentic* Christian; regardless of the merits of his policies, this logic assumes they are trustworthy because the president himself is trustworthy.[126]

The *Left Behind* world is simultaneously foreign and familiar to the twenty-first century American context. Set in a future fictional time, the books' global politics are completely unknown to readers; the U.S. president is Gerald Fitzhugh, the United Nations is the Global Community, and the dollar is a global currency. At the same time, however, global politics are dominated by divisions, such as good versus evil, that translate easily into contemporary terms. These divisions, in turn, produce a model of citizenship—brutish masculinity—that is equally salient for twenty-first century American readers.

Chapter 4

"Bone of my Bones, and Flesh of my Flesh"[1] : *The da Vinci Code*'s Privatization and Sexualization of Faithfulness

At the start of 2003, Dan Brown was a little-known mass market fiction writer. His three novels, *Angels and Demons, Deception Point,* and *Digital Fortress,* had sold only marginally well. Yet, none of that mattered in March of that year, when *The da Vinci Code* was launched with an aggressive marketing campaign—including 10,000 advance copies sent out to reviewers and opinion leaders.[2] It arrived in bookstores with a bang, began its ascent up the *New York Times* bestseller list immediately, and stirred up more than its share of controversy along the way. By the time the film version was released in May 2006, 60 million copies of the book had been sold,[3] for a total of $210 million in profit.[4] The book had been translated into 44 languages and was issued in hardcover, illustrated, large print, audio, two paperback editions, and a traveller's guide.[5] It had spent 162 weeks on the bestseller list—the full three years since its release.[6] The movie, produced by Sony Pictures, directed by Ron Howard, and starring Tom Hanks and Audrey Tatou, would only add to the revenue totals—grossing 77 million dollars when it opened on 3,735 screens and a total of 218 million dollars through its three months in the theatres.[7]

With 28.5% of Americans claiming to have read *The Da Vinci Code* (*TDVC*), the novel's readership represents a diverse cross-section of the American public.[8] Men and

women, married and unmarried, young and old all picked up the novel in roughly equal proportions. Yet the book's readership divided along the axes of race, education, income, and religious participation. It drew more of a following among whites than blacks, college educated more than high school educated, and upper income more than lower income. Importantly, there was a ten percentage point difference between those who attend church more than weekly, among whom 23.7% read the book, and those who never attend church, among whom 33% read the book. The readership further differed by religious tradition: the novel drew more readers among Catholics and Mainline Protestants and fewer among Evangelical and Black Protestants.

There is little wonder the novel became so popular. Although it may not be a work of great literary or artistic merit, the book's combination of romance, suspense, and conspiracy theory, along with its very short chapters ending with one cliffhanger after another as well as its relative brevity (just over 450 pages), make *TDVC* a natural "page turner."[9] The novel maps two narratives, one immediate and one historical, on top of each other. The immediate story takes place over twenty-four hours as eight characters—individually and in groups—follow a trail of clues across Europe. The historical narrative unfolds over thousands of years as the book discloses secrets that the Church has kept since its fourth century founding.

TDVC opens with the Paris murder of Louvre curator Jacques Saunière. When the murderer, an albino monk named Silas, leaves the museum murder scene satisfied that he has extracted valuable information from his victim, the dying Saunière uses the blood draining from his stomach to leave a cryptic message for Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu. Langdon is awakened in his Paris hotel room and summoned to the

murder scene by the French Judicial Police. A Harvard University professor of symbology, he had been lecturing in Paris that night and had plans to meet with Saunière following the lecture. Escorted to the Louvre by police, Langdon embarks upon what is presumably his task—decoding the symbols Sauniére had left. Langdon is an obvious resource for French police, as his academic interests match Saunière's artistic ones, and his name had shown up on the curator's agenda for that night. With the entrance of police cryptologist Sophie Neveu, however, it becomes clear that Langdon is wanted not as an expert witness but as the primary suspect. Not only was he scheduled to meet with the curator at the time of the murder, but Saunière's cryptic stanza ended with the line, "P.S. Find Robert Langdon." Neveu has arrived on the scene as a cryptologist, but she discloses to Langdon that she is also the murdered curator's estranged granddaughter, and she believes that the last line of the stanza was intended to bring the two of them together: "Princess Sophie," as her grandfather had called her, "Find Robert Langdon." Almost immediately, the two divert the Paris police in order to gain exclusive access to the murder scene. After they decode the clues that the dying Saunière left around his body, they escape the museum with the key that he had left for them to find. That key takes the pair to a safe deposit box where they find a rosewood box with a cryptex inside. Fleeing the Swiss bank with the French police on their tail, Langdon and Neveu contemplate the cryptex—a cylinder sealed with a five letter code. If Saunière built it following Leonardo da Vinci's design, as they trust he did, the characters know that the cryptex will contain a vial of vinegar and an inscription on papyrus; any effort to break it will result in spilling the vinegar and dissolving the papyrus.

Still believing that Langdon is the murderer, and guessing that Neveu must be an accomplice, the French police pursue the two across Paris. Bezu Fache, the chief of this law enforcement unit, is a strong man, known as "the Bull," and a proud Catholic who announces his faith through his jewelry. He is assisted by Lieutenant Collet, whose initial bumbles suggest him to be the French Barney Fife but whose instincts ultimately prove invaluable to cracking the scheme behind the entire chase.

On the run from the French police, and knowing they need time and safe harbor to decode Saunière's clues, Langdon and Neveu escape to the home of Sir Leigh Teabing, a British royal historian, who has taken up residence outside Paris to pursue a Holy Grail quest. Teabing initially helps Langdon and Neveu, foiling the efforts of the albino monk, Silas, to steal the cryptex. He then facilitates safe passage to London for Neveu and Langdon, along with himself, his manservent Rémy, and the captive albino monk. Once they arrive in London, this coalition crumbles. Langdon and Neveu have unlocked the first cryptex, only to discover a clue and another cryptex inside. While this clue sends them looking for a knight's tomb, Rèmy and Silas steal the cryptex, and it soon becomes clear that Teabing has masterminded this entire chase. Upon discovering that the powerful Vatican prelate, Opus Dei, had been told that it would lose its institutional standing within the Church in six months, Teabing had contacted the group's leader, Bishop Aringarosa, to offer him information about the four leaders of the Priory of Sion who were known to hold information that would damage the Catholic Church. Bishop Aringarosa agreed to pay Teabing for that information, believing that upon unlocking the Priory's secrets, he could blackmail the Catholic Church to allow Opus Dei to keep its standing as a Vatican prelature. Teabing, however, never had any intention of allowing

Aringarosa to use the information as blackmail but was instead using Aringarosa and his devotee, Silas, as henchmen in a plot to reveal the Church's hidden secrets. He sent Silas to force secret information out of the Priory's top four leaders, which resulted in the murder of all four. Ultimately, so desperate is Teabing to unlock the trail of clues himself that he even turns against Langdon and Neveu. The two are saved at the last minute by the French police, who have uncovered Teabing as the mastermind. With his arrest, Neveu and Langdon are left to finish the quest themselves.

Langdon and Neveu's journey ends at the historic chapel at Rosslyn. There, Neveu discovers her long lost grandmother and brother, whom she believed had died in a car accident when she was a young child. They have been in hiding, it turns out, to protect the most powerful and hidden bloodline in Western history: Neveu and her brother are the most direct living descendants of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. Neveu completes her journey by uncovering the secret of her family that her dying grandfather had left for her. Langdon completes his journey just days later when he finds a second meaning hidden in the last clue left by Jacques Saunière. This clue takes him back to the Louvre, where he kneels at what he believes to be the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene.

As *TDVC*'s immediate narrative depicts these characters racing across Europe, the secondary narrative is the secret history of the Catholic Church that their journey discloses. It shows how the Church has suppressed the venerated role of the "sacred feminine" and "goddess worship" in pagan societies and early Christianity. It has done so in order to defame Mary Magdalene, who was Jesus Christ's companion throughout his ministry, the heir designated to lead his church, and his wife and the mother of his

child, Sarah. Born after the crucifixion, Sarah was immediately taken to France, where she and her mother lived out their lives in secrecy because of the threat posed by the jealous male disciples. These men wrested control of the church from Magdalene immediately following Jesus's ascension, thus laying the groundwork for the male-dominated institution it would become and remain throughout its history. In the successive centuries, the church fathers mounted an increasingly aggressive smear campaign against Mary Magdalene. With the codification of Christianity under Constantine's rule—specifically, at the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E.—early church leaders agreed on the doctrine of Christ's divinity, which required erasing any record of his humanness, including his marriage to Mary Magdalene. In the process of discrediting her, the church fathers eviscerated the pagan respect for sexuality that had carried over into early Christianity as well as the traditions of goddess worship and the sacred feminine. Or so the story goes.[10]

Through the centuries, however, the Priory of Sion has protected these traditions. The characters explain that when the Church suppressed the sacred feminine, this secret society—through leaders like Leonardo da Vinci and Jacques Saunière—celebrated it through art, architecture, and other symbolism. They have also been the keepers of the Holy Grail and the ancient ritual of Heiros Gamos, two of the biggest secrets of Western history, both of which pay homage to the lost sacred feminine. The novel's revelations are sealed with the imprimatur of historical veracity found in the "fact" statement on the novel's first page. "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate," that page claims.[11] Since the artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals revealed within the novel form the backbone of its historical

narrative, this "fact" statement indirectly suggests the veracity of the historical narrative itself.

Given the revelations contained within the pages of *The da Vinci Code,* as well as this promise of historical truth, there also is little wonder that the novel has drawn so much controversy. Initial book reviews in the mainstream press were largely positive; for instance, the *New York Times*' Janet Maslin called the book a "gleefully erudite suspense novel." She praised its plot, prose, and characters, avoiding the issues of Christian history and theology that would soon come to dominate public discourse about the novel. In the months following *The da Vinci Code*'s publication, as the book held steady at the top of the bestseller list, the mainstream evangelical periodical *Christianity Today* published multiple responses in their print magazine and on their website. Other responses could be found on websites for smaller Christian publications like www.cruxnews.com, the Institute for Religious Research, *Culture Wars*, and *Crisis* magazine.[12] These initial reviews are unabashedly polemical, sharing a common belligerence toward the novel, its author, and its audiences. In *Culture Wars,* Anne Barbeau Gardiner says that Dan Brown means "to entrap young and uneducated readers," offering "an indoctrination into Gnosticism. The reader is intended to swallow the Gnostic poison while enjoying the murder mystery," and she even goes so far as to offer a psychiatric diagnosis, claiming that his "obsessiveness of association is deviant and could well be a symptom of mental disorder."[13] Within a year of its publication, more thoughtful and systematic reactions to the book began appearing, and, by now, at least 34 books[14] and another 23 television and DVD specials[15] have responded to *TDVC.* As they explicitly take issue with the novel's characterizations of art history, church history,

theology, and more, they do so on the grounds that the book is radical and dangerous. It "is nothing less than a conscious effort to obscure the uniqueness and vitality of the Christian faith and message," Darrell L. Bock accuses.[16] At "a time when catechesis and basic knowledge of the faith are so poor," the book proves especially dangerous, Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel assert, because it influences non-Christian readers and raises "difficult questions in the minds of many Christians."[17]

At the heart of this controversy is *TDVC*'s purportedly feminist message. The *Washington Post* explains that the book has set off a controversy over "women, sex, feminism, and the church."[18] The author's website claims that *TDVC* "is very empowering for women," and the *St. Petersburg* (Florida) *Times* notes how the novel has won "kudos for tackling women's lib issues."[19] The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* assesses that the novel "may represent the tipping point for the far cosmic wing of modern feminism and predicts a tsunami of goddess-ness for the foreseeable future."[20] In contrast, its critics are concerned that *TDVC* is "laced with passages celebrating feminism" because it is "another infiltration by liberal cultural warriors."[21] According to Msgr. T.W. Young, writing in the newspaper of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, the novel includes "a radical feminist tirade." Some of the book's critics even trace the entirety of its historical revision and theological challenges to a New Age ideology that emphasizes feminism, along with homosexuality, paganism, gnosticism, and other radical ideas. Olson and Miesel, for instance, claim that the "sexual revolution" is what divides the culture from "serious Christians," and "*The Da Vinci Code* has more to do with abortion and homosexuality than it does with the origins of Christianity" because it

invites people "to invent their own history, to replace the Gospel of Jesus Christ with scriptures that cater to contemporary preoccupations like feminism."[22]

To anyone who has read the novel, it should come as no surprise that the descriptor "radical feminism" became so common among the book's critics. Issues of gender, sex, and sexuality saturate the novel's story lines, and, indeed, the book's persistent celebration of women builds upon the important tradition of cultural or difference feminism. Yet, at the same time, the novel undercuts its own feminist potential in two ways: it limits its celebrations of womanhood to the private sphere, and it reinscribes binary notions of gender as well as a concomitant heteronormativity. I conclude by arguing that the novel does not provide a model of citizenship. In direct contrast to the legacy of American feminism, which orients itself to the public sphere, and which offers multiple modes of citizenship, *TDVC*'s exclusive concern with the private sphere renders the novel incapable of modeling public citizenship.

da Vinci's Utopian Herland?

When critics decry *TDVC*'s radical feminism, they especially note its preoccupation with goddess worship and the sacred feminine. *TDVC*, it seems, celebrates all things feminine, and, in doing so, it joins the important tradition within feminist thought of discerning and valuing what is uniquely tied to women and women's experience. Since its nineteenth century advent, American feminism has always had one ideological strain committed to celebrating women, women's difference, and ostensibly unique female values such as collaboration, nurturing, care-giving, pacifism, cooperation, and the harmonious regulation of public life.[23] As this strain of feminist thought has

often found itself at odds with other feminist thinking that stresses equality or sameness rather than difference, Ann Snitow notices how this divide has replicated itself throughout feminist history. She sees it in the divides between maximizers and minimizers, cultural feminists and radical feminists, essentialists and social constructionists, cultural feminists and poststructuralists, motherists and feminists, and difference and equality feminism.[24] In each of these cases, one strain of feminist ideology is committed to discovering and celebrating women's uniqueness while the other wants to deny, negate or transcend any such uniqueness. Those who celebrate women's difference, Snitow notes, "argue that women have a special morality, or aesthetic, or capacity for community that it is feminism's responsibility to maximize."[25]

The final divide Snitow names—equality versus difference—has endured the longest as it defines the very basic split that Aileen Kraditor has identified in the nineteenth century—between natural rights and expediency feminism.[26] Whereas natural rights feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony led a movement concerned with securing rights for women based on their fundamental equality as human beings, other suffragists sought the vote in particular because women were uniquely moral beings whose access to the vote would prompt social reform. When those expediency feminists participated in the host of other reform movements that defined the Progressive Era—including temperance, child labor, sanitation, and prison reform—they presumed that, as the moral leaders of society, women had a unique investment in these issues.[27] Beyond justifying women's public activism, this difference feminism grew into a celebration of women specifically and the potential of a woman-led society.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 utopian novel, *Herland,* for instance, portrays a fictive world where women live peacefully and collectively, according to women's values.[28]

This womanhood rationale influenced social activism throughout the twentieth century, and it resurfaced as a major strain of feminist thinking in the 1970s.[29] Alice Echols argues that cultural feminism emerged at that moment as the natural consequence of radical feminism's continuously radicalizing tendencies.[30] That is, as radical feminism's critiques of patriarchy became sharper and the tasks of revolution steeper, resorting to woman-identified safe havens—both ideological and literal—became a natural progression. When feminists devoted their attention to celebrating women, their ideas about women's difference resonated in popular culture, especially in the areas of psychology, motherhood, and religion.

Two books published in the 1980s challenged the field of psychology from the position of women's difference. Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* and Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule's *Women's Ways of Knowing* both claimed that, by only studying men, male psychologists had, first, produced theories that were uniquely explanatory for men and then, by extrapolating their findings to women, they had consistently found women lacking. Thus, assuming that women might differ from men, both of these projects tried to repair women's status within psychology by making women the focus of their investigations and thus making women's psychology normative on its own terms. In Gilligan's research on morality, she displaced male bias and devoted her attention to women—focusing on conflicting responsibilities rather than competing rights, contextual and narrative thinking rather than formal or abstract thinking, the activity of care rather than issues of fairness,

and responsibility and relationships rather than rights and rules.[31] In their research on "ways of knowing," Belenky et. al. identified "aspects of intelligence and modes of thought that might be more common and highly developed in women," including silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge and constructed knowledge.[32] In both cases, this research on women had the effect of exposing the male bias within the field of psychology while also arguing that women are unique and that women's difference should be celebrated as a strength rather than mourned as a lack.

Gilligan and Belenky et. al. note that there are many possible explanations for women's difference, and both projects find Nancy Chodorow's work on childhood socialization at least partially explanatory.[33] In contrast, Sara Ruddick's influential essay, "Maternal Thinking," explains women's difference in terms of the common experience of motherhood. Even though she never asserts that all women must be mothers, and at one point even tries to disclaim a natural link between women and motherhood, she still assumes that motherhood is a unique experience that defines "roughly half of society."[34] Maternal thinking is a product of the tasks that define motherhood—"preservation, growth, and acceptability"—that is, keeping the child alive, fostering his or her growth, and shaping the child into a being that will prove acceptable to the community.[35] "Out of maternal practices," Ruddick argues, arise "distinctive ways of conceptualizing, ordering, and valuing."[36]

The idea of women's difference found one of its most outspoken proponents in Mary Daly, and through her influence, this brand of feminism found its most direct route into religious circles. Trained as a Thomist theologian with PhDs from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, Daly used her position as a tenured faculty member at Boston

College to become one of the most public critics of patriarchal religion—first Christianity in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* and then all established religion in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism.* Although her first two books—*The Church and the Second Sex* and *Beyond God the Father*—might be associated with liberal or radical feminist thinking, beginning with *Gyn/Ecology,* Daly focused exclusively on creating woman-oriented theology, developing sisterhood, and facilitating women's journeys. Calling her work "anti-male," Daly argued that all men are responsible for patriarchy. She exposed that patriarchy, especially in religion, and encouraged women's "weaving world tapestries *of our own kind,*" as well as "dis-covering, de-veloping the complex web of living/loving relationships *of our own kind,*" and "living, loving, creating our Selves, our cosmos."[37] In addition to the controversy generated by her books, Daly has received as much infamy for her very public forced resignation from Boston College in 1999, when the school finally declared unacceptable her 20-year-old policy of teaching women-only classes.[38] In line with the cultural/difference feminist impulse, Daly had used her classroom as a space to develop and promote specifically female energy.

For Daly and her contemporaries like Gilligan and Ruddick, as well as their historic foremothers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the central feminist goal is to repair centuries of patriarchy and male domination by celebrating women. Although they attend to different aspects of womanhood—morality, motherhood, and spirituality, for instance—the commonality among cultural feminists is that they assert that because patriarchy has suppressed women's gifts, feminism's task is to "dis-cover" those gifts. Even if the high points of cultural feminism were the 1910s and the 1980s, this type of

thinking persists. In the twenty-first century, Susan Fraiman has encouraged feminists who have been derailed by efforts to undermine the notion of woman to return instead to that very central concept. Feminist theory, she argues, must retain its focus on the unique embodied experience of women.[39]

Sexism and the Single Girl

When *TDVC* purports to uncover the Church's centuries-old suppression of the "sacred feminine" and "goddess worship," it echoes the feminist politics common to Gilligan, Daly, and their nineteenth century predecessors, all of whom seek to rescue the suppressed gifts of womanhood. For its explicit effort to reclaim women's central role in religion, which I discuss below, *TDVC* has surely earned its reputation among conservative critics as "a radical feminist tirade." Additionally, on top of this historical recovery effort, *TDVC* graphs a primary narrative equally explicit in its feminism. The lead female character, Sophie Neveu, is depicted from her entrance as strong, smart, and capable, and the novel's villains are unabashed in their sexism.

Neveu arrives on the murder scene, her presence unrequested, striding in with a "haunting certainty to her gait," only to interrupt the calculating interrogation session that Bezú Fache has underway with his primary suspect, Robert Langdon.[40] Although Neveu has justified her interruption on the grounds that she, a police cryptologist, has broken the numeric code that Saunière sketched in blood, she simultaneously has engineered Langdon's escape. Insisting that the U.S. embassy has a message for Langdon, she gives him the number and the access code and directs him to a voice message she has recorded for him. It explains that he is the suspect and provides detailed instructions to escape to the nearest bathroom. Then, when she meets him in the

bathroom, Neveu exposes the surveillance chip that has been planted in his coat pocket. Throwing it out the window, she buys Langdon time to escape the French police. When Langdon realizes Sophie has just won his freedom, he "decided not to say another word all evening. Sophie Neveu was clearly a hell of a lot smarter than he was."[41] Neveu demonstrates her capabilities repeatedly as she and Langdon work together to complete the puzzle her grandfather left. The numeric code she cracked initially was simply the Fibonacci sequence, which she assumes Saunière had included to make sure that her cryptology department would be part of the investigation. Then, after Langdon solves the first two anagrams Saunière left, Sophie gets the third: "So dark the con of man" leads them to the painting *Madonna of the Rocks.*

Sophie Neveu, this confident and capable young woman, is the modern day Mary Magdalene. The resemblance between the two is undeniable: not only does Magdalene's blood pulse through Neveu's veins, but the two share a common appearance. Neveu is everything the novel's men dream Magdalene to be; she is "healthy with an unembellished beauty and genuineness that radiated a striking personal confidence." And, "her thick burgundy hair fell unstyled to her shoulders, framing the warmth of her face."[42] Neveu's burgundy hair is no coincidence, as the *TDVC*'s characters make the case that the red-headed disciple to Jesus's right in the *Last Supper* is Mary Magdalene. In case these physical markers did not prove the similarity sufficiently, the novel describes Neveu's life-long connection with Magdalene. As a child, Neveu recalls, when she played Tarot cards with her grandfather, she always drew a pentacle as her indicator card. If her grandfather was stacking the deck, he was doing so to ensure that Neveu

always drew the indicator card that signified the sacred feminine and, by extension, Mary Magdalene. "An apropos inside joke," Langdon acknowledges.[43]

While Sophie Neveu, the modern day Mary Magdalene, demonstrates the capabilities of a smart woman, her foes consistently underestimate women's potential. Police Chief Bezú Fache is disgusted by Neveu from the moment she arrives at the Louvre, as he thinks "women not only lacked the physicality necessary for police work, but their mere presence posed a dangerous distraction to the men in the field."[44] He is the caricature of a sexist: a stocky man who his inferiors call "the bull," Fache carries himself "like an angry ox with his wide shoulders thrown back and his chin tucked hard into his chest."[45] An immediate obstacle to the novel's protagonists, his sexism underscores his dislikeability and sets him up to be the fool proved wrong by this strong duo that he underestimates as only a "female cryptologist and a schoolteacher."[46] Additionally, Silas, the albino monk, demonstrates similar sexism, at least by association. This monk-turned-murderer is a member of Opus Dei, a Catholic group known for its sexist practices. Before Silas ruthlessly kills the nun who keeps watch over the Church of Saint-Sulpice, she exposes her hesitations with Opus Dei, as "their views on women were medieval at best... female numeraries were forced to clean the men's residence halls for no pay while the men were at mass; women slept on hardwood floors, while the men had straw mats; and women were forced to endure additional requirements of corporal mortification."[47] And the narrator describes that the organization has just built new headquarters in New York where not only do men and women come into the building through separate entrances, but they are "acoustically and visually separated" throughout the building.[48] By associating this sort of gender-based inequality with the calculating

murderer and the ox-like police chief, the novel makes little secret of its contempt for sexism.

Adoring the Magdalene

TDVC might have been called feminist based on this primary narrative alone, pitting a strong central female character against sexist villains. The novel's secondary narrative, the one concerned with re-writing Christian history, however, has done even more to win the book infamy for its feminism. Through information disclosed by the murdered Jacques Saunière, the heroic Robert Langdon, and even the vilified Sir Leigh Teabing, the novel exposes the secret history and symbolism of the sacred feminine, offering an alternative to the hegemonic narrative of Christian history. Jesus Christ, *TDVC* explains, "was the original feminist."[49] The characters describe that he had included women in the innermost circle of his ministry, and, drawing on passages from the gnostic gospels, specifically the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, they even assert that Jesus had left Mary Magdalene "instructions on how to carry on His Church after He is gone."[50] Jesus's plan to leave her in sole control of his ministry was never fulfilled, however, as Peter "was something of a sexist."[51] Peter never felt comfortable "playing second fiddle to a woman," so he wrested control of the church from Mary Magdalene.[52] Then, following Peter's lead, the sexist church fathers erased and even defamed Mary Magdalene's reputation as an early church leader. In their smear campaign, more than simply Mary Magdalene's history and legacy were lost: these men also managed to eradicate the fundamental respect for the feminine that had defined pagan and early Christian communities. In fact, by Teabing's description, Christian doctrine as we know it today was not formulated until Constantine's Council of Nicea in 325 C.E., when the

church fathers settled on a canon of scriptures that excluded the gnostic gospels that told Magdalene's story, such as the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. By the conclusion of that Council, the church fathers had completely distorted Jesus's original feminist vision and erased the feminine from Christian theology.

Thus, the novel's heroes—Jacques Saunière, as Louvre curator and Priory of Sion Grand Master, and Robert Langdon, as professor of symbology—do the important work of preserving the early Christian traditions of goddess worship and the sacred feminine. Saunière was "the premiere goddess iconographer on earth," and he had a "passion for relics relating to fertility, goddess cults, Wicca, and the sacred feminine"[53] As curator, he had devoted his twenty-year tenure to helping "the Louvre amass the largest collection of goddess art on earth."[54] Langdon is, in many ways, both Saunière's heir and apprentice. Although the two never met—their scheduled meeting the night of Saunière's murder would have been the first time—Langdon was well aware of Saunière's work to preserve the sacred feminine, and Langdon had come to Saunière's attention as the result of Langdon's book manuscript about the sacred feminine. Langdon's book, once published, would explain "the iconography of goddess worship—the concept of female sanctity and the art and symbols associated with it."[55]

Through these characters, *TDVC* celebrates the hidden ways that goddess imagery lives on in Western art and history. Two very common symbols—the rose and the five pointed star—both represent the feminine, and *TDVC*'s characters show how they are found repeatedly in Western art. The five pointed star, Langdon explains, embodies the principle of PHI, or the Divine Proportion. This magical number, 1.618, recurs throughout both art and nature, defining the proportion of female and male honeybees in

a hive, the ratio of spirals on a sunflower's face, and the proportions of the human body. In the case of the five-pointed star, the ratios of the line segments necessarily equal PHI, "making this symbol the *ultimate* expression of the Divine Proportion. For this reason, the five-pointed star has always been the symbol for beauty and perfection associated with the goddess and the sacred feminine."[56] Thus, upon his death, when Jacques Saunière arranges his naked self with his arms and legs extended, his body forms a pentacle and pays tribute to the sacred feminine. Like the pentacle, the symbol of the rose further embeds the sacred feminine throughout Western art. Through its "five petals and pentagonal symmetry," the rose embodies these same characteristics of femininity.[57] Jacques Saunière thus filled his life with rose symbolism, including protecting the Grail secret "sub rosa" under the sign of the rose in a rosewood box. The sacred feminine also lives on in the very architecture of Christian churches, where the entrance represents a woman's genitalia "complete with labial ridges and a nice little cinquefoil clitoris above the doorway."[58]

Above all else, the sacred feminine is preserved through the work of Leonardo da Vinci. No friend of the Catholic Church, the painter hid subversive symbolism in many of his most famous paintings, including *Madonna of the Rocks*.[59] Even the *Mona Lisa* offers a subtle tribute to the sacred feminine, Langdon explains. As the left is historically associated with the feminine and the right with the masculine, by skewing the Mona Lisa so that she looks much larger from the left side than from the right, Da Vinci offered homage to the feminine.[60] In his most subversive move, da Vinci painted Mary Magdalene into his *Last Supper* fresco, situating Jesus's closest disciple in her rightful place at his side. Like Jacques Saunière, Leonardo da Vinci had also served as Grand

Master of the Priory of Sion, so Saunière's work to preserve the sacred feminine is an extension of da Vinci's sixteenth century efforts. Through its frequent expositions on all of these symbols and artwork—the pentacle, the divine proportion, the rose, the *Mona Lisa*—*TDVC* pays tribute to its concept of the sacred feminine. It constructs a primitive Christianity and a subversive tradition within later Christianity that both demonstrate respect for the feminine.

With its celebration of Leonardo da Vinci's life and artwork, *TDVC* also wins its reputation for promoting homosexuality. The novel shows no reluctance to expose that Leonardo da Vinci was gay; it describes him as a "flamboyant homosexual."[61] *TDVC* further celebrates da Vinci for challenging traditional gender ideology. According to Langdon's account, the artist was invested in finding the male and female in everything, as "the human soul could not be enlightened unless it had both male and female elements."[62] He encoded male and female elements in harmony in his paintings, including the Mona Lisa. Although Langdon refuses to settle on one interpretation of the painter's best-known work, he suggests that whatever the painting may be, it is certainly androgynous. He entertains the possibility that *Mona Lisa* may be a self-portrait of da Vinci in drag, but suggests that, at the very least, it is a "fusing" of male and female. The name "Mona Lisa," he explains, is an anagram of "Amon" and "L'Isa," the Egyptian god and goddess of fertility.[63]

With all of this attention to women, femininity, and sex, it should come as no surprise that the novel's conservative critics labelled it a radical feminist danger. The book joins the work of cultural and difference feminists over the last two centuries who have argued that, because patriarchy has suppressed women, women and femininity must

be rescued from their denigrated roles. Resuscitating a lost tradition of goddess worship, in particular, *TDVC* grants the feminine the cultural legitimacy that comes with religious sanction. With its provocative revisionist history, *TDVC* has suggested an alternative role for women within Christian tradition that has certainly merited the public controversy it has provoked.

da vinci's Private Patriarchy

As valuable as celebrating femininity may be, and as much public controversy as this seemingly-feminist move has inspired, *TDVC* simultaneously undercuts its own feminist potential in two ways. On the one hand, the novel's feminist efforts still fall short of the standards set by cultural feminism itself. On the other hand, *TDVC* falls into the traps that critics of cultural feminism have argued are endemic to that feminist project. *TDVC*'s feminist impulses fail on the first count because of the novel's consistent recourse to the biological and the private. When cultural/difference feminists have venerated women, they have paid special attention to women's supposedly unique social and interpersonal attributes, not simply the biological qualities that define women's difference. They celebrate women's caring, nurturing, pacifist tendencies, recognizing that these traits may be tied to women's unique biology or they may be cultural constructs, but, in either case, they are larger than biology. Thus, Gilligan suggests that women's morality is attentive to relationships and responsibilities more than rights and rules, and Ruddick argues that maternity attunes women to issues of preservation, among other things.

Moreover, as cultural and difference feminists have celebrated women's unique attributes—pacifism, collaboration, etc.—they have always done so with their eye trained to the public potential of those attributes. Acknowledging that women's culture has been fostered in the domestic sphere, cultural/difference feminism assumes that introducing it to the public sphere can transform politics. That is, cultural/difference feminism suggests that feminine values, like cooperation, care-giving, and nonviolence, that have served women so well in the domestic sphere, "should be valued for their positive application in the public sphere."[64] Cultural/difference feminism has long informed feminist utopian fantasies like *Herland*, but on an even more modest scale, contemporary cultural/difference feminists "hold that women's political value system may be derived from traditional women's culture and applied to the public realm,"[65] even the "public, androcentric world."[66] With this focus on the public sphere, cultural/difference feminism shares the more general feminist impulse toward publicity, given that American feminists have always struggled to gain women wider access to the public sphere.[67] In the nineteenth century, that meant access to the legal sphere, including the rights to vote, practice law, and sit on juries. And in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the move toward publicity has meant women's greater access to education and the professions. In twentieth century feminism, the tendency toward publicity has been encapsulated by the most pithy statement of movement ideology—"the personal is political." Even what seemed like the most private, individual matters for women, such as household distribution of labor, gendered socialization of children, and domestic violence, have social bases and public import. And the more recent gay liberation movement echoes this emphasis on publicity. Even the most individual, personal act, the

act of coming out, is ultimately a celebration of publicity—the prerogative to be publicly gay.

TDVC further undermines its feminist potential when it falls into the traps so common to cultural feminism: it further reifies binary gender and the associated heterosexuality. At every turn, cultural/difference feminism has found itself at odds with other strains of feminist thinking that question the possibility and the necessity of the category women. For instance, even during cultural feminism's most recent heyday, the 1980s, feminists of color launched public critiques of the very possibility of celebrating women's experience.[68] For far too long, they argued, feminism had assumed an unproblematic category of "woman" that ignored or negated differences between women based on race, ethnicity, and class, in particular. Given the complexities introduced by these other axes of difference, celebrating an always-identical entity called "woman' is no longer possible.[69] Judith Butler has built on this critique to suggest that "woman" or "women" cannot be an unproblematic starting point for feminist politics; instead, this category is a product of the power regime that feminism needs to resist.[70] Instead of embracing woman as the subject of feminism, "feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of 'women,' the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought."[71] Butler's interrogation of the category "woman" has developed into a queer politics that seeks both to trouble the traditional categories of gender and sexuality (i.e. woman and man) but also to investigate the structures that keep those labels in play. These are the structures that give us not only the binary gender system, but, as its seemingly-natural entailment, what Adrienne Rich has called "compulsory heterosexuality."[72]

TDVC, for all of its explicit nods to feminist thinking, simultaneously undermines its cultural/difference feminism through its pervasive recourse to the private. Moreover, it reinscribes the category "woman" in binary relationship to "man," buttressing the resulting heterosexuality as well. Telling the story of Christian history through Sophie Neveu's individualized, romanticized quest tailors the revised Christian history to the personal, obliterating its potential public import. And the novel's revelations about Christian history always turn on the dualism of male and female, ultimately celebrating heterosexual reproduction and men's sexual fulfillment above all else.

Sophie Neveu and the Quest for Personal Fulfillment

From the moment that the immediately-sympathetic Sophie Neveu enters the story, the narrative confines itself to the private sphere. Even though the novel begins with the murder of Jacques Saunière—one of the most public men in Paris, who held all the shocking information about the Church's historic sins—his granddaughter's entrance into the story transforms his death into a private matter. His trail of clues becomes a private message for Neveu, who embarks upon a journey toward personal fulfillment. The afternoon of his death, Jacques Saunière had left his estranged granddaughter a phone message that intimated that their lives might be in danger and offered to provide information about their family. She ignored her grandfather that afternoon, as she had been doing for ten years. Upon arriving at the murder scene, however, Neveu is filled with a sense of loneliness. Saunière had been her last remaining relative, as her parents, brother, and grandmother had been killed in a car accident when she was a young girl. Thus, when Neveu discovers that her grandfather has left clues for her, she hopes these clues will take her to the family secrets that his phone message that afternoon had

promised. There is a "motivation still burning within her. *The truth about my family.* Sophie still sensed something deeply personal entwined within this mystery..."[73]

Neveu's instinct is proved correct when Saunière's trail of clues leads these grail seekers not to some grand new truth about the holy grail, but rather to private truths about Neveu's family—that her grandmother and brother are still alive, and that she and her brother are the most direct living descendants of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene's bloodline. The final cryptex even takes Neveu and Langdon to the chapel at Rosslyn where she reunites with her long lost grandmother and brother. Along the way, Saunière's clues offer Langdon and Teabing plenty of opportunities to pontificate about the lost history of the Holy Grail, but these grail secrets always work in service of Neveu's private quest. Langdon and Teabing never uncover the documents proving Jesus and Mary Magdalene's bloodline, which threaten to discredit and destroy the Catholic Church if made public. Instead, the ultimate result of their grail quest, and the conclusion of Saunière's trail of clues, is Sophie's family and the sense of fulfillment that finding them brings to her.

This personal narrative centers on Sophie Neveu, but the cast of characters around her make the story even more personal. In the case of Sir Leigh Teabing, the blasphemy of this villain's public quest demonstrates by contrast the sanctity of Neveu's personal quest. Whereas Neveu only seeks individual fulfillment, Teabing wants to expose a public truth that could discredit the Catholic Church. During their journey, the two quarrel over whether or not to publicly reveal the grail truth they expect to find, which Teabing assumes will be a genealogical record of Jesus and Mary Magdalene's bloodline. Neveu's instinct is to follow her grandfather's reverence for secrets and to keep the grail

legend private.[74] Teabing, however, cannot comprehend any option other than making the grail truth public. As possession of the holy grail makes Neveu "the keeper of a truth that man has sought for centuries," Teabing believes that she "will be faced with the responsibility of revealing that truth to the world."[75] By the end of the novel, as the only truth revealed has been a personal one, Neveu does not end up holding the public power Teabing had anticipated. Even still, her newly-discovered grandmother reaffirms Neveu's secrecy instinct. She knows that "the Priory has always maintained that the Grail should *never* be unveiled," as "it is the mystery and wonderment that serve our souls, not the Grail itself."[76]

TDVC's grail quest also becomes personal because it is framed as a love story. The romance between Neveu and Langdon is subtle but undeniable. Neveu is a lonely female seeking fulfillment, and even Langdon admits that his "lifelong affinity for bachelorhood" had been "replaced by an unexpected emptiness."[77] It should come as no surprise, then, that these two single lead characters find solace in their affection for one another. Initially, Langdon recognizes Sophie for her beauty,[78] but, as their journey together progresses, their mutual attraction grows deeper. They fall into a routine of complementarity in which their unique skill sets make them a formidable clue-deciphering duo. Where Langdon knows symbolism and art history, Neveu's facility with letters and numbers helps her crack anagrams and codes. Along the way, both characters demonstrate gratitude for the other's role in this grail quest. As the two sit together en route to London, for instance, Langdon "watched her for a long while and felt an unexpected upwelling of contentment. Despite his troubles tonight, Langdon was thankful to have landed in such good company."[79] Later, Neveu verbalizes her

appreciation for his role in their work together, and Langdon "felt an unexpected flicker of attraction between them."[80] The end of the narrative brings closure to this romance, in addition to the closure it brings to Neveu's search for her family. The final action of the story itself (before the epilogue) comes in a romantic exchange between the two. They agree to meet again soon, and "Sophie leaned forward and kissed him again, now on the lips. Their bodies came together, softly at first, and then completely. When she pulled away, her eyes were full of promise."[81]

The narrative concludes just as the romance must: the protagonists defeat their foe and find their treasure. This treasure is not the ordinary bounty of a grail quest—the cup from the last supper. Nor is it even the promised bounty of the revised grail legend—the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene and the written records of Jesus and Magdalene's bloodline. Instead, these victors acquire the treasure of wisdom—which Northrop Frye notes is one of the ideal forms of wealth in mythopoeic romance.[82] They have become wise to the true nature of the grail, and Neveu has discovered her grandmother, a wise old crone. Together, Langdon, Neveu, her grandmother, and her brother settle into the safe space that Frye calls "cuddle fiction." The family home at Rosslyn "exuded a warm and inviting aura. The smell of bread wafted through the opened screen door, and a golden light shone in the windows."[83] There, outside the house on a bluff overlooking the Scottish countryside, the two share the kiss that consummates their romance. At that moment, all the elements of the story have been resolved—the villain had already been revealed and the victims of his plot (the Bishop, the monk, the police chief) had been redeemed. Now, with the kiss, the two central characters have found fulfillment through

family and romance. That kiss marks the completion of the personal, private journey that defines this grail quest.

Mary (Magdalene) the Mother

Just like her twenty-first century descendent Sophie Neveu, Mary Magdalene is also the object of a romantic quest. Hers is the grail quest that has captivated men for centuries, through which she has become Sir Leigh Teabing's "favorite mistress."[84] Moreover, the reconstructed story of her historic role always centers on her private sphere significance—her place as Jesus's wife and the mother of his children. *TDVC* makes the shocking assertion that the Church has erased the revered place Mary Magdalene originally held in Christ's earthly church. By Langdon and Teabing's rendering, however, not only was Mary Magdalene Jesus's travelling companion in his ministry and the heir apparent designated to lead his church, but she was also his romantic, marital, and sexual partner. The two men tell her history by first introducing Mary Magdalene as Jesus's companion, as the two were "a pair."[85] Only after Magdalene is identified as Jesus's marital partner do the characters go on to explain her leadership role in the church. As they talk about her, these men consistently frame Mary Magdalene's standing in early Christianity in terms of her role as matriarch of Jesus Christ's bloodline. The early church was only troubled by Mary Magdalene, and only inspired to denigrate her publicly, because of her sexual relationship with Jesus and the offspring it had produced. Thus, she is a woman who derived her religious power through sexual relations with a man.

Magdalene's devotees throughout the years, even as they oppose the church for its smear campaign, revere her for the same quality that the church so feared: her

motherhood. The Holy Grail, so long thought to be the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper, is not actually a cup at all but a chalice that the characters explain has long been the symbol for womanhood. According to Teabing, "When Grail legend speaks of 'the chalice that held the blood of Christ'... it speaks, in fact, of Mary Magdalene—the female womb that carried Jesus's royal bloodline." The chalice becomes simultaneously both more and less literal than it has customarily been. It is no longer the literal cup that held Jesus's metaphoric blood—out of which disciples drank at the Last Supper—but now the chalice becomes the metaphoric cup that held Jesus's literal blood. In the process, Mary Magdalene's symbolic significance is reduced to her reproductive functions. "Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel," Teabing explains. "She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. She was the womb that bore the lineage and the vine from which the sacred fruit sprang forth."[86] The simple verb construction here makes Mary Magdalene's role plain: she *was* simply the womb. All that Magdalene could have been as Jesus's companion in his ministry, as the heir to his church, has been reduced to the three predicate nouns that follow each iteration of the verb "was": the Holy Vessel, the womb, and the chalice. Langdon suggests that the idea of a "chalice," so firmly ensconced in grail legend, is simply a metaphor for Mary Magdalene.[87] But it might be more fair to call the relationship metonymy: the chalice does not simply stand in for Mary Magdalene; rather, she has been reduced to the blood-carrier, the chalice.

Thus, by both her friends' and enemies' account, Mary Magdalene was and is dangerous to Christ's church because of her maternal qualities. Those maternal qualities are nothing but the biological ability to reproduce, a reduction that separates *TDVC*'s celebration of motherhood from cultural/difference feminism's interest in motherhood.

Not only do cultural/difference feminists, like Sara Ruddick, celebrate motherhood for its social and psychological as well as biological attributes, but they also posit that those attributes should be applied beyond the private sphere. Indeed, Ruddick urges, "all feminists must join in articulating a theory of justice shaped by and incorporating maternal thinking."[88] *TDVC* never allows Magdalene or the maternal to venture outside the private sphere. Her maternity is always, simply, the vehicle for Jesus's bloodline.

Male and Female Complementarity

TDVC further undermines its own feminism through its unreflexive privileging of a male and female gender binary. The ancients, who da Vinci, Saunière, the Priory of Sion, and by extension Langdon and Teabing, all celebrate, "envisioned their world in two halves—masculine and feminine. Their gods and goddesses worked to keep a balance of power. Yin and Yang. When male and female were balanced, there was harmony in the world."[89] Even the Hebrew scriptures' name for God embodies this perfect balance. The tetragrammaton "YHWH," Langdon explains, is the combination of the masculine "Jah" (as in Jehovah) and the feminine "Havah," the pre-Hebraic name for Eve.[90] Art and symbolism also embody this principle of male and female balance, as in iambic pentameter, a favorite poetic rhythm of Jacques Saunière, which is formed by the successive coupling of balanced pairs.[91] Indeed, Saunière had a "passion for dualism." When the characters discover that he had nested a black cryptex inside a white one, it makes perfect sense:

> *Two cryptexes.* Everything in pairs. *Double entendres. Male female. Black nested within white.* Langdon felt the web of symbolism stretching onward. *White gives birth to black.*

> *Every man sprang from woman.*
>
> *White—female.*
>
> *Black—male.*

Saunière, like the ancients whose legacy he worshiped and protected, believed that a perfect harmony could only be created when the male and female elements of the universe were in balance.

This dualistic thinking defines the ritual of Heiros Gamos, which becomes the book's most enduring mystery and outlasts even its revealing of the true nature of the Holy Grail. At least seven times the characters use vague terms to refer to a ritual. For Neveu, it is something shocking she once witnessed, and for Langdon it is a secret he must disclose to Neveu at the proper moment. Exactly two-thirds of the way through the novel—on page 307—Neveu and Langdon finally compare notes, letting their audience members in on the secret of the ritual called Heiros Gamos. Given all of this buildup, revealing the ritual is one of the novel's climaxes, thus heightening its importance to the historical narrative being unveiled. As Langdon and Neveu explain it, Priory of Sion members observe this two-thousand-year-old ritual each spring. Neveu describes the Heiros Gamos ritual she witnessed upon arriving at her grandfather's vacation house over spring break:

> Everyone in the circle rocked back and forth and chanted in reverence to something on the floor before them... the chanting grew steady again. Accelerating... Thundering now. Faster. The participants took a step inward and knelt.[92]

They knelt toward the sex act that was being performed at the center of the circle. As Grand Master of the Priory, Jacques Saunière was the celebrant of this ceremony, so he and a female partner were engaged in this focal sex act. Following the tradition of the Egyptians whose ritual was being replicated, these Priory members "celebrate the reproductive power of the female."[93] Like their Egyptian models, Priory members use the Heiros Gamos ritual to celebrate the human body.

The ritual of Heiros Gamos, and the characters' veneration of it, reinscribes the heteronormative binary of male and female. When Priory members perform Heiros Gamos, the men wear black tunics, black shoes, and black masks, and the women wear white gossamer gowns, white masks, and golden shoes, and they hold golden orbs. Participants are entirely covered up by these costumes, so that they are *only* distinguishable by sex. They have no other demographic characteristics—race, class, nationality—and they also have no personalities, no individual attributes, no distinguishing characteristics beyond gender. In this ritual, the most spiritual of all, each participant is categorized by her gender alone. Moreover, the participants are partnered in opposite-sex pairs, and the celebrated sex act also is between a man and a woman. The ritual itself is definitively heterosexual, and presumably even the "flamboyantly homosexual" Priory Grand Master Leonardo da Vinci would have celebrated Heiros Gamos with a female partner.

As it reinscribes the male/female binary, Heiros Gamos also gives men and women distinct roles in the sex act. For men, Heiros Gamos is a spiritual act and women become their spiritual/sexual vehicle. As Langdon explains it, Heiros Gamos was the

ancients' route to glimpsing God, and the Priory has maintained that tradition. Heiros Gamos is based on the belief that

> The male was spiritually incomplete until he had carnal knowledge of the sacred feminine. Physical union with the female remained the sole means through which man could become spiritually complete and ultimately achieve *gnosis*—knowledge of the divine...By communing with woman... man could achieve a climactic instant when his mind went totally blank and he could see God... Physiologically speaking, the male climax was accompanied by a split second entirely devoid of thought... A moment of clarity during which God could be glimpsed.[94]

There can be little doubt that Heiros Gamos venerates the feminine, but, in doing so, it only celebrates the female body. Even then, it celebrates the female body specifically as a spiritual route to God only for men. Men need women's sexuality in order to see God. Within Langdon's lengthy description of Heiros Gamos, there is no attention to what the ritual might mean to women or how it might provide some spiritual or sexual satisfaction for them. Instead, women, reduced to their bodies, become physical instruments for satisfying men's spiritual needs.

As the Christian Church showed blatant disregard for the sacred feminine and the principle of male-female harmony, all credit for preserving these traditions throughout the centuries is due to the Priory of Sion. These heroes have subversively perpetuated Heiros Gamos and the Holy Grail legend, and they have used their artistic influence to celebrate the sacred feminine and male-female balance. This art they prize, such as the fertility Goddess art that Saunière has collected for the Louvre, is largely focused on

women's bodies. In combination with the way that the Holy Grail legend and the Heiros Gamos ritual both reduce women to their bodies and celebrate their reproductive sexuality, the Priory's objectives are remarkably focused on guarding women's bodies and women's sexuality.[95] Importantly, the Priory members doing all this protecting are largely male. One character explains that women can be Priory members and four have even served as Grand Master, but the *sénéchaux,* the "guardians," have traditionally been men. Thus, when *TDVC* reveals and reveres the historic work of the Priory in protecting the legacy of the sacred feminine, it is celebrating a group of men who have reduced Mary Magdalene and all women to their wombs, and who have used women's sexuality for their own spiritual fulfillment. Thus, women have been reduced to their sexuality, which has then been left in the hands of men. The Priory of Sion is virtually indistinguishable from the patriarchal control that women have known throughout Western history.[96]

Conclusion and Implications

For at least the three years between *The da Vinci Code*'s publication in March 2003 and the film version's theatrical debut in May 2006, the book was read, enjoyed, and critiqued by millions of Americans. It captured public attention as only a novel about Christianity and sex can do. And, as could be expected of a novel about Christianity and sex, it earned widespread criticism as a "radical feminist tirade." In some sense, the association of *TDVC* with feminism was warranted. The book explicitly celebrates the "sacred feminine" and "goddess worship," and it claims to be opposing patriarchal Christianity in doing so—much like the feminist project that has defined Mary Daly's

career. In the case of *TDVC,* celebrating the feminine entails featuring a strong female lead, disgracing her foes for their sexism, and recovering the lost feminism of the early church as well as the symbolism that has preserved the feminine through the centuries.

These explicitly feminist moves, however, are undercut by the novel's persistent recourse to the private sphere. Celebrating Mary Magdalene only as a mother and situating Sophie Neveu as the subject of a personal quest for fulfillment, *TDVC* limits its feminist potential to the private sphere. Furthermore, its celebration of women's difference is remarkably underdeveloped, revering woman exclusively for her biology. For as many times as the characters refer to the "sacred feminine" and "goddess worship" and to how these things have been suppressed by the church, they rarely suggest what exactly either term might signify. The only aspect of the "sacred feminine" that the novel explores is her biology. For instance, the all-important rose symbol "has always been the premiere symbol of female sexuality, of female life—birth, menstruation, motherhood, menopause, and death... the blossoming flower resembles the female genitalia, the sublime blossom from which all mankind enters the world."[97] Importantly, the five elements of womanhood symbolized by the rose are all biological. After all, in this mythology, women are sacred only because of their bodies, which can fulfill men's spiritual needs and perpetuate the bloodline of Jesus Christ.

The novel's feminism further encounters the problem so common to cultural/difference feminism: it recreates binary gender and heteronormativity. In its primary narrative, the novel depicts the perfect complementarity of Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu, whose skills as a formidable clue-deciphering duo imply the positive potential of harmonious and balanced bi-gendered pairings. More explicitly, however,

the novel's celebrations of male-female pairings in art and ritual reinforce the bi-gender system. This bi-gender system "imposes a duality and a uniformity on bodies in order to maintain reproductive sexuality as a compulsory order."[98] Thus, the novel's celebration of male and female not only locks men and women into these fixed categories, but it further ensures the perpetuation of heterosexuality as a compulsory norm.

Because of its confinement within the private sphere, *TDVC* does not offer a model of citizenship. Without a model of citizenship, the novel stands in sharp contrast to the other case studies in this project, which depict conflicts in the public sphere that necessarily entail citizenship. *The Passion*, for instance, centers on the public event of torture and crucifixion in ancient Jerusalem where the governor performed his leadership over his subjects in the public plaza. Jesus's death becomes this most public moment, with citizens, their religious leadership, and their state in conflict. In *Left Behind*, the narrative's central conflict also takes place in the public sphere—in the interaction between a tyrannical global ruler and his citizen-subjects. Although those two texts celebrate different modes of citizenship—feminine submission in *The Passion* and brutish masculinity in *Left Behind*—their similar attention to the public sphere leads naturally to clear models of faithful citizenship. Because of its relentless attention to the private sphere—to Neveu's personal journey, to Magdalene's sexual history, to ancient sex rituals—*TDVC* never offers a vision of the public sphere, and, thus, there is no image of citizenship.

Of course, there is no reason to assume that the novel should concern itself with the public sphere or model citizenship; after all, there are plenty of novels and Christian-themed media texts that focus on the private sphere. The novel's failure to model

citizenship is ironic only because it has been so frequently associated with feminism. Indeed, without a model of citizenship, the novel stands in sharp contrast to the tradition of American feminism which has developed multiple models of citizenship in its two centuries of organizing. Its most protracted political battle—the suffrage movement—assumed a model of citizenship wherein civic duty could be performed by voting. The suffragists who made expediency arguments for women's access to the franchise offered a uniquely feminine model of citizenship. They suggested that, for women, voting would entail "home protection."[99] Women could apply the skills they had developed in running their homes to creating a moral public sphere. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* modeled utopian citizenship as collectivist and pacifist—attributes she suggested inhered in women. As cultural feminists have continued to develop theories of women's difference, and as they have asserted that women's unique attributes can have positive public applicability, they offer uniquely female models of citizenship. They suggest that women's maternity, morality, or spirituality could provide useful lessons for public engagement. *TDVC*, however, negates this tradition of feminist modes of public engagement, and still it gets labelled a "radical feminist tirade."

Moreover, celebrating women's bodies and calling it "feminist" obscures the genuine issues of gender injustice that still persist within the church. The Roman Catholic Church still does not ordain women to the priesthood, and the Southern Baptist Church repealed women's right to ordination in 2000.[100] The Episcopal Church just elected its first female Presiding Bishop in 2006, and not without significant controversy.[101] Even in the denominations that ordain women fully, there is a measurable "stained glass ceiling." The *New York Times* has reported that female clergy

earn less money, are less likely to serve as senior pastors of large churches, and are more likely to seek employment outside the local church than their male counterparts.[102] Outside the ranks of the clergy, women still experience differential treatment in Christian churches. Heather Hendershot, for instance, details the differences between Christian sexuality tracts for adolescent girls and boys, which encourage passivity and purity on the part of girls, but not boys.[103] And, more than twenty years after the introduction of the Inclusive Language Lectionary, Christian worship services are still filled with gender exclusive language, praying to god the "Father" of "mankind," for instance.

If Christianity remains saturated with gender injustice that cries out for feminist intervention, then conservatives win important ground by calling *TDVC* "feminist." When *TDVC* becomes the feminist agenda, then Christianity can make reparations for gender injustices by appreciating women's bodies and enjoying their role in sex. The church need not own up to its gender-based leadership disparities. Nor need it think twice about the ways that its gender exclusive language teaches little girls that they bear the likeness of God less than their brothers do. With *TDVC* as the standard-bearer of the Christian feminist agenda, the real, ongoing issues of gender injustice are obscured in favor of an ideology that preserves the status quo.

Associating *TDVC* with a "homosexual agenda" limits progressive Christian politics in a similar manner. American Christianity at the turn of the twenty-first century is embroiled in a controversy over human sexuality. In nearly every denomination, liberal Christians encourage their churches to open their doors to gay and lesbian Christians, to welcome them into membership, to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies, and to ordain them into the ranks of the clergy. In those same

denominations, conservatives try to block all of these avenues of participation. In 2005, the United Methodist Church's highest court upheld a clergyman's right to deny church membership based on sexual orientation.[104] The United Church of Christ found its efforts to air gay friendly commercials stymied by CBS network executives.[105] The Episcopal Church has allowed local congregations to celebrate same-sex unions and the national denomination has even consecrated an openly gay bishop, but these progressive stances have created a rift between the denomination and the Anglican Communion.[106] That global body has asked its U.S. branch to discontinue same-sex marriages and the ordination of gay clergy or disaffiliate from the Anglican Communion by September 2007. Other Protestant denominations have replicated these same arguments, and the National Council of Catholic Bishops offered their public position on the issue in their 1998 pastoral letter, *Always our Children.*[107] Human sexuality is the defining issue of contemporary Christianity, posing the greatest threat to denominational unity since slavery—an issue that produced schisms from North from South across Protestant sects.

With American Christians divided into such clear camps of liberals and conservatives, and with such clearly divided turf and starkly defined issues, it becomes problematic for progressive politics whenever conservative critics start labelling what might be "feminist" or have a "homosexual agenda."[108] In the case of *TDVC,* the radical "homosexual agenda" works to reinscribe the gender binary that is ultimately troublesome for gay liberation. At this moment in Christian history, gay and lesbian Christians would be much better served by a narrative that did not provide spiritual credence to the idea of male and female harmony and balance, or one that did not recreate a male-female sex ritual as the most authentic sexual experience. Gay liberation within

Christianity would be better served by narratives that acknowledged the multiplicity of human sexuality, that celebrated individual freedom in sexual practice, and that, above all, offered God's affirmation for all forms of human sexuality. When conservatives assign *TDVC* the position of "homosexual agenda," they realign the otherwise-clear dividing lines between liberal and conservative, thus redefining progressive politics. Progressive Christians invested in both gender justice and gay rights must resist these conservative moves to realign political divides. Furthermore, they must resist the privatizing impulse that associates faithful Christian discipleship with normative sexual behavior.

Chapter 5

"I Went to the Gate of the City and Took My Place in the Public Square"[1]: Negotiating Christian Citizenship in the Twenty-First Century

This project has endeavored to elucidate and interrogate the models of citizenship constructed by mainstream Christian-themed mass media. I began with the premise that, at the advent of the twenty-first century, evangelical Christians have emerged into popular consciousness as both a lucrative consumer demographic and a potent political force. As I noted in chapter one, not only have they fueled the popularity of Christian-themed media, but they were also reported to have swung the 2004 presidential election in President Bush's favor, in addition to passing statewide ballot initiatives banning same-sex marriage in states throughout the union. Beyond partisan politics, their levels of civic participation have been remarkable by almost any measure. Even the skeptic Robert Putnam, who decries declining levels of civic participation across sectors, credits evangelical Christians for bucking the trend. Among regular churchgoers, he concludes, "we find the strongest evidence of an upwelling of civic engagement against the ebb tide" common to other groups.[2]

As Robert Asen has noted, however, schemes like Putnam's are limited in the types of civic engagement they consider legitimate. I have followed Asen's lead in taking a broader view of citizenship and trying to account for the myriad ways citizens might engage with their communities. Given that evangelical Christians are flocking to

the Christian-themed texts at the movie theatres and bookstores while also performing citizenship in such a public way as to capture journalistic attention, I have looked to those popular media as sources that discipline—both construct and constrain—available models of Christian citizenship. In doing so, I have resisted Putnam and Jürgen Habermas's basic presumption that mass media are responsible for the demise of civic participation.[3] They have assumed that, by their form, mass media (and for Putnam, it is television in particular) have transformed citizens into passive consumers. I argue that, by their content, these media texts construct competing models of citizenship that encourage their audience members to be more than passive consumers. I have identified three distinct models in my case studies: *The Passion* depicts citizenship as submissive femininity, *Left Behind* depicts citizenship as brutish masculinity, and *The da Vinci Code* offers no model of citizenship, instead celebrating reproductive heterosexuality in the private sphere.

Yet, as evangelical Christians have emerged into popular consciousness as a citizen and consumer demographic, their newfound cultural power has not gone unchecked. Instead, evangelical Christians' growing cultural influence, often thought to be the product of three decades worth of organizing by Christian leaders incensed after the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, has prompted internal discord within American Christendom.[4] Some Christian clergy, scholars, and elected officials have publicly objected to the model of political power that grounds the Christian Right's organizing.[5] This internal backlash against the power of the Christian Right opens important questions about both the most faithful and the most pragmatic possibilities for Christian citizenship. In this concluding chapter, I use this recent backlash as a way to consider the implications

of the many available models of Christian citizenship, including those offered in *The Passion of the Christ, Left Behind,* and *The da Vinci Code.* After detailing the failures of the Christian Right that have prompted these criticisms, I introduce Gregory Boyd's two kingdoms thesis and its citizenship of self-sacrificial love as well as discuss two other models of citizenship—citizen protest and loving charity—common to these critics. I conclude by reflecting on the limitations of all of these models and offering some basic principles for twenty-first century models of Christian citizenship.

Where the Christian Right Went Wrong

That a backlash would greet a movement with the cultural power enjoyed by the twenty-first century Christian Right may be unsurprising; that this backlash is led by other Christians is significant. Distressed in part by substance and in part by tactics, these critics offer sharp rebuke to the members of their own faith who they claim have misappropriated the teachings of the scriptures for partisan political ends. Their most frequent targets are Jerry Falwell (founder of the Moral Majority and Liberty University), Pat Robertson (whose 1988 presidential bid helped lead to the creation of the Christian Coalition), and James Dobson (founder of Focus on the Family).[6] Although these three have not always worked together, their collective efforts have built the movement commonly known as the Christian Right.[7] And that Christian Right, its critics assert, has distorted the Christian faith for partisan ends. For instance, in *The Christian Right is Wrong*, liberal United Church of Christ clergyman Robin Meyers expresses his anger, "because I have watched as the faith I love has been taken over by fundamentalists who claim to speak for Jesus but whose actions are anything but Christian."[8] Randall

Balmer, in *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America*, laments that "the evangelical faith that nurtured me as a child and sustains me as an adult has been hijacked by right-wing zealots who have distorted the gospel of Jesus Christ, defaulted on the novel legacy of nineteenth-century evangelical activism, and failed to appreciate the genius of the First Amendment."[9] Ultimately, their criticism of the Christian Right narrows in on two complaints: its near-exclusive attention to two issues—abortion and homosexuality—and its obsequious devotion to the Republican Party.[10] Christianity, they object, has sold out to the Republican Party, allowing itself to fall prey to divisive partisan politics that rely on wedge issues to create and maintain voter loyalty. Selling out to partisan politics in such a fashion, these critics fear, has been and will continue to be harmful to both the faith and the nation.[11]

Inherent in this backlash is an effort to reclaim *true, real,* or *faithful* Christianity. As they argue that the Christian Right has commandeered the faith, these critics suggest that those leaders have distorted it for their own purposes. Thus, critics of the Christian Right offer what they consider a more *authentic* expression of the scriptures, Jesus' message, and God's calling for our contemporary world. Meyers explains that this is "precisely the moment in history when the qualities of authentic faith are most desperately needed," and Jim Wallis, in *God's Politics*, concurs that "a more authentic social witness is desperately needed."[12] He wants to rescue the "true meaning" of the Christian faith and return "to a historic, biblical, and *genuinely* evangelical faith."[13] Wallis and Meyers defend their progressive version of the faith by dissociation, much like Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins's conservative *Left Behind* characters do. Meyers even recognizes this strategy in Christian Right discourse; he claims that they send a

message that "'real' Americans and 'real' Christians support the troops and keep on shopping," for instance.[14] As fundamental as this dissociation may be to contemporary Christian rhetoric, it is not so simple as two sides both claiming to be the *real* and accusing the other of being only *apparent*. Instead, even Meyers and Wallis would probably have a hard time agreeing on the *true* Christianity they both seek. Although the two share a common political orientation, Wallis identifies as an evangelical and Meyers is a mainline Protestant, two traditions often wanting for theological common ground.

This dissociation haunting American Christendom is ultimately irreconcilable. For as many calls as there may be to the *true, faithful, real* Christianity, there is no universally satisfactory way to arrive at this *authentic* faith. Frustration with this impossibility may be what has always driven Americans to John Nelson Darby's concept of the Rapture and the "invisible church." With these two ideas, American Christians trust that there *is* an authentic performance of the faith, known to God, that will be revealed in one climactic instant. Until then, however, Christian communities on earth continue to argue about the true nature of Christianity while they wait and hope for God to prove them right. Although the eschatological appeal to the Rapture may sometimes provide solace to individual believers, it does not temper these arguments because it only intensifies the demand to discern the truest nature of faith that is most likely to secure heavenly reward. Taken to their limits, these arguments over the true nature of Christianity can be so all-encompassing that they cause irreparable rifts within Christianity and leave the indelible mark of cognitive dissonance on the believer's psyche. It is hard to see sufficient earthly benefit to this unceasing quest to prove the most authentic expression of the faith.

The backlash against the Christian Right has developed a remarkable consensus regarding the Christian Right's wrong-doing—especially given the diversity of political and theological positions of these critics. Their prescriptions for redeeming the faith, however, are significantly more multi-vocal. For some, redeeming the faith demands that Christians broaden their political attention. Noting that abortion and homosexuality have demanded all of the Christian Right's political efforts, these critics caution that the gospel calls Christians to a larger social reform program. The National Association for Evangelicals, for instance, has reaffirmed its commitment to environmentalism, which it calls "creation care," among other social justice issues.[15] Jim Wallis defines Christian perspectives for a laundry list of issues—terrorism, war, poverty, the federal budget, capital punishment, family values, and racism.[16] In *Letters to a Young Evangelical*, Eastern University sociologist Tony Campolo tackles some of these issues but adds to them concerns for Muslim-Christian relations and women's rights within the church.[17]

Switching issues from abortion and homosexuality to war and environmentalism, or even shifting opinions on those issues, however, may not be enough. The Christian Right has so thoroughly entangled Christianity and partisanship that for many critics a more faithful engagement with politics entails rethinking the very grounds of Christian citizenship in this world. At the center of this debate is this most basic question: what obligations do Christians have to their earthly world? After all, the scriptures offer a mixed message. The Gospel of John tends to minimize Christians' obligations to their earthly world. It records, for instance, Jesus's exchange with Pilate, where Jesus proclaims, "My kingdom is not from this world...," as well as his prayer for his disciples who must remain on earth after his death, in which he acknowledges that they too do not

belong to this world.[18] Like the author of John, the apostle Paul was taken by the promise of membership in a heavenly kingdom, and his letter to the church in Rome encouraged his fellow Christians, "do not be conformed to this world."[19] In contrast, the synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—present an image of Jesus much more concerned with earthly matters. Those gospels record the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees, where the religious teachers tried to trap Jesus by asking him whether or not his followers should pay taxes to Caesar. Pointing out Caesar's likeness on the coins, Jesus acknowledged that his disciples should "give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."[20] Moreover, the synoptic gospels provide powerful testimony of Jesus calling his followers to do ministry within their kingdom of this world. The gospel of Matthew, for instance, records Jesus telling his followers that their entry into the kingdom of heaven is contingent upon their good works on earth. He tells his disciples that when they give the thirsty something to drink or the hungry something to eat, or when they invite the stranger in, or when they clothe the naked or visit the sick, "just as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me."[21] And the Gospel of Luke explains, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required."[22] The Epistle of James adds, "faith, by itself, if it has no works, is dead."[23] The prophetic tradition underscores these New Testament goads to activism. The prophet Isaiah claims he has been "sent to bring good news to the oppressed," "to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners." The prophet Micah answers the question, "What does the Lord require of you?" with the answer, "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."[24] Taken together, the scriptures—from the Old Testament prophets, through the Gospels,

and to the epistles—offer competing images of Christian civic duty. Followers of Christ are simultaneously citizens of their earthly kingdoms and the promised heavenly kingdom, and their obligations are to their earthly brothers and sisters and their God.[25] Even if Christians agree that their first loyalty must always be to God, the resulting nature of earthly citizenship remains less than clear.[26]

The Two Kingdoms Thesis

Critics of the Christian Right exploit this diversity of images regarding Christian civic participation as they offer widely divergent proposals for enacting these scripture lessons in the twenty-first century. Perhaps the most radical proposal comes from Greg Boyd. The pastor of a thriving mega-church, Boyd's conservative and evangelical credentials were unimpeachable prior to his 2004 six-part sermon series, "The Cross and the Sword," and the book into which it developed, *The Myth of a Christian Nation.* Although he still claims to be a conservative on social issues, and thus does not betray the Christian Right by questioning its dogmatic stances on abortion and homosexuality, Boyd casts unrepentant doubt on their political program. In line with the Gospel of John's theology, Boyd argues that Christians must always be members of the kingdom of God primarily and the kingdom of the world only incidentally. He maintains that the two kingdoms are discrete entities that operate according to unique sets of values. Because the kingdom of the world aims to control behavior, its primary instruments are laws and "the sword."[27] The kingdom of God, in contrast, aims to transform lives, and, as such, its primary instruments are self-sacrificial love and "the cross."[28] The kingdom of the world is defined by a "power over" logic, whereas the kingdom of God employs "power

under."[29] The kingdom of the world operates by "tit-for-tat" logic that demands retribution.[30] It is characterized by intense tribalism that thrives on the dualism of good and evil. A tribe sees itself as "good" and all other tribes as "evil" to be exterminated. The kingdom of God differs in that it is welcoming and inclusive. It "looks like Christ—self-sacrificial and loving. It looks like grace."[31]

In *Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction*, evangelical political operative David Kuo offers tacit support for Boyd's two kingdoms thesis when he recounts his experience working in Republican politics. He joined the George W. Bush White House, after years of working for Bill Bennett and other social conservatives, because he believed in Bush's vision for compassion, specifically through government funding for faith-based charities. Kuo trusts that Bush had the best intentions for his "compassion" agenda, so the president's failure to implement that ambitious program highlighted for Kuo that partisan politics and God's work are incompatible. "George W. Bush loves Jesus. He is a good man," Kuo affirms. "But he is a politician; a very smart and shrewd politician."[32] Bush's ultimate loyalty to the party prevented him from realizing his compassion agenda because that agenda never worked with the logic of politics. "The spirit of Washington is arrogance," Kuo explains, "the spirit of Christ is humility."[33] The spirit of Washington that Kuo encountered in his years there typifies the kingdom of the the world that Boyd describes, just as the spirit of Christ that Kuo identifies is unique to the kingdom of God.

Boyd also uses the Bush administration as a model of kingdom of the world thinking. Like Kuo, he hesitates to blame Republican leaders themselves and instead focuses most of his concern on the dictates of the kingdom of the world.[34] George W.

Bush, he explains, has acted according to the tribalism of the kingdom of the world in the war on terrorism. Noting Bush's use of words like "crusade" and "evildoers," Boyd argues that Bush's rhetoric resonates with the dualism characteristic of the kingdom of the world. This type of language contradicts the inclusive love that characterizes the kingdom of God.

Boyd's two kingdoms are, by definition, incompatible. The kingdom of the world can never become the kingdom of God. Instead, the kingdom of God grows like the mustard seed, which has been sown within the kingdom of the world.[35] Christians grow the kingdom by modeling Christ-like love and self-sacrifice, which brings more people into the kingdom of God. Ultimately, when the kingdom of God reaches full fruition, when that mustard seed becomes the greatest tree in the garden, where "the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches," Christ will return.[36] Boyd's vision here is postmillennialist: Christ will return to earth only once Christians have grown the kingdom of God. His postmillennialism, however, differs from the tradition of postmillennialism described in chapter three. Whereas this system of thought so often has engendered civic engagement—especially the Social Gospel reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Boyd's postmillennialism demands no political activity. If the kingdom of this world cannot be transformed into the kingdom of God, then Christians only waste their energy trying to win elections and reform laws. Instead, Boyd's postmillennialism demands citizenship in the kingdom of God on its own terms: Christians must work to grow the mustard seed through the model of self-sacrificial love that is unique to the kingdom of God.

Even if the two kingdoms are irreconcilable, they must coexist on earth, and Christians are simultaneously members of both. Given that the two kingdoms sometimes make incompatible demands on their citizens, Boyd reminds Christians that they are to be "resident aliens" in the kingdom of God.[37] As such, he encourages a model of Christian citizenship by "distinctly kingdom-of-god means," which includes intercessory prayer, acts of self-sacrifice, and enacting the kingdom.[38] Jesus, he explains, set the example of praying consistently, so Christians can emulate their leader by using prayer as a tool of social change. A Christian's real means of influence in this world, Boyd tells his readers, comes from "your kingdom heart expressed on your knees in loving service to the world."[39] Moreover, kingdom of God citizenship is always defined by this ethic of service, or self-sacrifice. Citizens of the kingdom of God take Jesus's loving sacrifice at Calvary as their model of civic commitment to their brothers and sisters on earth. "The distinct kingdom question," Boyd explains, "is not, How do you *vote*? The distinct kingdom question is, How do you *bleed*?"[40] Ultimately, kingdom of God citizenship concerns itself with actions more than words. Christians are called to "just *do* the kingdom." Rather than talking, voting, or arguing about distinctly kingdom of the world questions, Christians can transcend the kingdom of the world by enacting the kingdom of God. "Our trust, time, energy, and resources must not be centered on improving government, but on living out the revolutionary kingdom of Jesus Christ in every way, shape, and form," Boyd explains.[41]

Boyd is careful to suggest that the self-sacrificial love that defines kingdom of God citizenship is not the same as passivity. It is not a lack of civic engagement but an alternative model of citizenship. This caveat is important in light of Habermas and

Putnam's depictions of late-capitalist citizens as passive consumers. The very disposition that Boyd encourages, this unassuming self-sacrifice, might be otherwise read as civic disengagement, especially from Habermas's Marxist, Frankfurt School worldview. In that reading, Christians who practice citizenship by simply expressing love to each other and the world, all in the interest of advancing the kingdom of God, fail to perform their duties to the civic world. In short, their disengagement allows the kingdom of this world—the state and the market—to advance according to its own dangerous logic rather than according to the interests of the citizenry. Boyd, however, encourages us to read this citizenship not as an abdication of civic power but as the exercise of "power under." Self-sacrificial love is not the failure of citizenship but an alternative form of citizenship.

This citizenship characteristic of Boyd's kingdom of God mimics the model of citizenship that I argue *The Passion of the Christ* celebrates. Boyd makes the case explicitly that his model of citizenship is based on Jesus's loving sacrifice at Calvary, which *The Passion* certainly portrays. Moreover, this loving, prayerful, self-sacrifice also describes the mode of citizenship performed by the faithful disciples—Mary, Magdalene, and John. Distressed as they were throughout the beating and crucifixion of Jesus, they prayed constantly, and they ultimately submitted to the sacrifice of their beloved leader. They did not engage the kingdom of the world powers—Pilate, the Roman guards, the Jewish leaders—rather, they demonstrated faith in God, the ruler of their heavenly kingdom. Boyd's proposed model of citizenship is exactly the performance of discipleship that some feminist theologians claim keeps women from speaking out about abuse in the private sphere. So compelled are they by a calling to follow Jesus's example of self-sacrificial love that they offer their own lives and

happiness for the sake of their husbands and children. Whereas feminist theologians fear the implications of Jesus's model of self-sacrificial love in the domestic sphere, Boyd tries to expand that model so that it defines Christian civic involvement as well. Just like the disciples in *The Passion,* Boyd would have Christians offer themselves in loving submission to all earthly rulers.

Even the femininity that I argued was common to those three disciples resonates with Boyd's description of kingdom of God citizenship. In his formulation, the key distinction between the two kingdoms lies in the kingdom of the world's nature as a "power over" kingdom and the kingdom of God as a "power under" kingdom. In a traditional rendering of heterosexual sex, masculinity is always the "power over" and femininity the "power under." That masculine "power over" in the sex act is characterized by its aggression, especially in contrast to the feminine submission from "under." In suggesting that power can also come from "under," Boyd defines a type of power based on submission and self-sacrifice, which are so easily linked to femininity.

By contrast, Boyd's kingdom of the world looks remarkably similar to the social order that *Left Behind*'s characters operate within. The polarity between good and evil that enables their activism is the same polarity that enables George W. Bush's war on terrorism rhetoric, which Boyd claims is a product of the structures of the kingdom of the world. *Left Behind*'s performance of masculine aggression within a dualistic world demonstrates how well-meaning Christians, whose intentions are to advance the kingdom of God, can be seduced by the kingdom of the world. So concerned are they with their worldly endeavors, *Left Behind*'s characters do just what Boyd accuses the Christian Right of doing: they mistake their kingdom of the world citizenship for kingdom of God

citizenship. They become so consumed by using the tools of the "power over" kingdom—tools like warfare—that they forget that their unique province as Christians is to use kingdom of God tools like self-sacrificial love. According to Boyd's two kingdoms theology and the models of citizenship it entails, *The Passion*'s faithful Christians perform citizenship in accordance with the kingdom of God, and *Left Behind*'s characters lose sight of that kingdom for all of their investment in the kingdom of the world.

Importantly, Boyd never suggests that Christians give up their civic rights in the kingdom of this world; he does not deny that they should vote, write letters, or protest government policies. Instead, he suggests fervently and repeatedly that they should not mistake their kingdom of the world citizenship for work that advances the kingdom of God. When Christians mistake the two, they confuse the trappings of civil religion (e.g. prayer in the schools) for genuine faith, they mistakenly assume that America is a Christian nation and thus its citizens do not need saving, and they hinder the cause of Christianity globally because the faith becomes heavily identified with American misdeeds abroad.

Citizenship in the Consolidated Kingdom

Boyd's two kingdoms thesis and its concomitant mode of citizenship, however, are hardly popular—even among critics of the Christian Right. Others, including Jim Wallis, Robin Meyers, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, and Randall Balmer, agree with Boyd's concerns about the Christian Right, but they stop short of accepting a sharp divide

between the earthly world and a heavenly promise awaiting Christians. Meyers explains the convictions he and like-minded Christians share:

> What we do not believe is that heaven is our home. We believe that *this* is our home and the abode of the sacred. We believe that *this* is the world that Jesus came to redeem and that *these* are the people that he came to save. If we look past each other, to some future reward, we lose everything.[42]

Townsend concurs in *Failing America's Faithful*; whereas Boyd asserts that the kingdom of the world can never become the kingdom of God, Townsend claims that "God's kingdom on earth... [is]...a practicable goal to be realized through politics." Wallis agrees with both Meyers and Townsend, and he puts this position in direct contrast with the values espoused by the Christian Right. In the Bible, he finds "a God who speaks about 'politics' all the time, about what believing in God means in this world (not just the next one), about faith and 'public life' (not just private piety), about our responsibilities for the common good (not just for our own religious experience)."[43] Wallis suggests that too many evangelicals, including the leaders of the Christian Right, have gotten caught up in eschatologies of another life, private piety, and personal spirituality. He calls his fellow evangelicals to come back to earth, to get out of the bedroom and the sanctuary, and to take their faith out into the public sphere, where it can bring about social change for the common good.

Going Public

Instead of shying away from politics, or observing a sharp distinction between the kingdoms, these critics argue churches and Christians must recreate the connection

between faith and politics because doing so will be good for both the faith and the nation. Meyers suggests that such a reconnection affords the potential for "the church to recover its soul."[44] And Kathleen Kennedy Townsend invests faith in a renewed Social Gospel as the antidote to the nation's ills. "Clergy and laity alike," she argues, must "return to the political sphere so that their words can have an impact on the shaping of our nation's future."[45] Townsend, like Balmer and Wallis, waxes nostalgic for the historic power of social movements infused with Protestant and Catholic leadership. They return especially to the nineteenth-century Social Gospel ideology that fueled progressive movements like temperance, woman suffrage, and prison reform.[46] That fusion between faith and politics was equally good for the church and the nation, and they assume that returning to that model would reinvigorate both in the twenty-first century.

When these critics propose a renewed connection between Christianity and politics, they propose one that corrects the failures of the Christian Right. After all, as Meyers claims, the question facing church leaders about Christianity and politics is "not about *whether* they are connected but *how* they are connected."[47] In response to the Christian Right, the voices of this backlash collectively propose a Christianity that is public, non-partisan, countercultural, tied to social movements, and concerned with justice and charity. The models of Christian citizenship they propose grow out of these visions of a twenty-first century church re-engaged with the political sphere.

If Christianity and the churches are going to re-engage with politics, above all else, they must reassert themselves as *public* entities concerned with *public* issues. Among the transgressions committed by the Christian Right, its critics consistently cite its privatizing impulse. The evangelical form of Christianity has long been concerned

with individual salvation and the private faith life, wherein believers are encouraged to develop a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ.[48] The Christian Right has taken that tendency to its extreme with its focus on the morals of personal behavior. When faith becomes too private, Jim Wallis suggests, it "degenerates into a narrow religion, excessively preoccupied with individual and sexual morality while almost oblivious to the biblical demands for social justice."[49] The Christian Right has degenerated in just such a fashion as both of its signature issues—abortion and homosexuality—deal with private behaviors that its leaders, based on their reading of scripture, have deemed sinful.[50] The consequence, Townsend suggests, has been ignorance of the public good and communal responsibility in the face of this narrow focus on personal behavior.[51]

The privatizing impulse that I have argued characterizes *The da Vinci Code* parallels the Christian Right's decades-long focus on personal behavior. *TDVC*'s message of heteronormativity and maternalism certainly buttresses the conservative status quo; moreover, it applies faith to the concerns of the bedroom, just as the Christian Right has done for so long. The book itself reduces earthly obligations to "normal" sexuality and procreation, and its critics' label of "radical feminism" diverts attention from larger ongoing issues of gender injustice. *The da Vinci Code* does not offer a model of citizenship; it offers the inverse of Christian citizenship—that the performance of faithfulness can be successfully achieved within the domestic sphere. As active as leaders of the Christian Right have been in local and national politics, their message to individual Christians has been similar to *TDVC*'s: faithfulness begins and ends at home, where Christians should develop a personal relationship with Christ and engage in

procreative heterosexual sex. Thus, far from a "radical feminist polemic," *TDVC* embodies everything about the Christian Right that its dissenters fear.

If the Christian Right has so privatized Christianity that its concerns fit within the bedroom, the secular Left has also privatized Christianity. By excluding faith from the public sphere, Democratic party leaders have also diminished Christianity's ability to speak to matters of the common good. Providing an alternative model of Christian political engagement entails sending churches, clergy, and parishioners out into the public sphere. "There is no doubt in my mind," Tony Campolo claims, "that our Evangelical faith calls us to bring biblical values into the public sphere."[52]

The Countercultural Faith

In direct opposition to the example set by the Christian Right, however, its critics argue that Christianity should enter the public sphere as a stridently non-partisan entity. They have learned from the mistakes made by the Christian Right, whose entanglement with the Republican Party ultimately diminished the church's opportunity to provide faithful testimony about the issues facing the nation. "Whenever Christianity becomes identified with *any* political party," Campolo explains, "it tends to take on the values of that party, rather than remaining loyal to the principles of Scripture."[53] The Christian Right sold its soul to the Republican Party in exchange for promises on limited issues—primarily the appointments of "strict constructionist" judges whom they presumed would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In exchange, the Christian Right delivered voters in election after election who reliably supported Republican Party candidates who pursued a war that met none of the tenets of Christian just war theory, who have failed to be stewards of God's creation, and who have done little to alleviate endemic poverty. Leaders of the Christian

Right became so enamored by the power and influence that their compact with the Republican Party brought them that they forfeited their opportunity to offer prophetic Christian witness when it would oppose the party platform. Balmer indicts the leaders of the Christian Right who "have shamelessly manipulated important issues—gay rights, abortion—for partisan purposes, all the while ignoring Jesus' teachings on other matters. Deeply complicated subjects have become mere political cudgels in the hands of the Religious Right."[54] At the same time, while the Christian Right has mortgaged the church to promote these limited issues, they have realized very small gains.[55] Partisanship, it seems, has not served Christians in advancing the values of the faith or translating them into policy.

Instead, the failures of the Christian Right have suggested that the most fruitful role for Christianity is as a non-partisan actor that retains the capacity to influence all parties.[56] "The best contribution of religion is precisely not to be ideologically predictable nor loyally partisan," Wallis argues. "Both parties, and the nation, must let the prophetic voice of religion be heard."[57] Operating from this non-partisan position has the advantages of allowing Christians to influence both parties, as well as developing ideological positions that do not conform to one party's platform. Based on their studies of the scripture and the faith tradition, Christians might come to support Democratic efforts to repeal the death penalty, and Republican work to fund faith-based charities, and Green party ideas about environmental conservation, while they simultaneously disagree with Democrats who oppose school vouchers, Republicans who propose tax cuts, and Green party candidates who advocate a stricter separation of church and state. Or perhaps some Christians will agree with those stances and others will disagree. This non-

partisan approach allows Christians to provide faithful testimony that challenges both parties and their fellow Christians. It allows citizens to use the faith in productive ways to wrestle with the issues confronting the nation rather than simply assuming that Christ's message demands a party-line vote.

Critics of the Christian Right assert that, more than just remaining distinct from the state, Christianity should also keep its distance from the market. Meyers complains that, under the Christian Right's leadership, "the line between church and state has been blurred, but also between church and commerce."[58] Certainly, twenty-first century Christianity is open to criticism for numerous entanglements with the market—its adherents' financial support of Christian-themed media, for instance—but critics of the Christian Right focus almost singular attention on the "prosperity gospel."[59] Meyers laments that believers have flocked repeatedly to Christian messages that promise personal prosperity in exchange for faithfulness—as exemplified by the extraordinary success of Norman Vincent Peale (*The Power of Positive Thinking*), Bruce Wilkinson (*The Prayer of Jabez*), and Joel Osteen (*Your Best Life Now*).[60] Joel Osteen's prosperity gospel message has grown so popular that he recently moved his Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, into the Compaq Center, a sports arena.[61] Meyers, however, reminds his readers that the prosperity gospel is "contrary to the teachings of Jesus," as in Matthew 6:19-20—"do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth."[62] In response to the unequivocal partisanship of the Christian Right, as well as the "prosperity gospel" and the commercialization of the faith, the church should instead inhabit a public space that is simultaneously separate from the state and the market. Christians should "always be

suspicious of too much concentrated power—politically *and* economically," Wallis urges.[63]

Only when it is separate from both the state and the market can Christianity live out its calling to be countercultural. Following the Apostle Paul's admonition to his followers, "do not be conformed to this world," both Balmer and Wallis state emphatically that the church should be a countercultural force with the capacity to resist and transcend the demons of the world.[64] Congregations are called to be "dynamic countercultural communities whose purpose is to reshape both lives and societies."[65] As a countercultural force, the church holds the "capacity for cultural critique" and the potential to serve as a check against both the state and the market.[66]

Defined as a radically independent space, separate from both the state and the market, the church starts to sound much like Habermas's idealized public sphere. What made the bourgeois public sphere so powerful, he suggests, is that it created a space apart from the state and market. In its initial formation—in table societies, salons, and coffee houses—the public sphere offered the opportunity for private citizens to come together to consider matters of public import. As they did so, they left behind their individual, private concerns of the domestic/economic sphere. Only in this public sphere could citizens deliberate rationally and serve as a check against the actions of both the state and the market. For Habermas, the destruction of the public sphere came about with the development of industrial capitalist markets and democratic states, whose growing encroachment eclipsed the public sphere. Where citizens were once brought together by common artistic and literary interests, and those interests led to rational-critical deliberation on public matters, such interests are now dictated purely by

commercialism.[67] Ultimately, by the influence of state and market, the public sphere has become less a space for opinion formation and more a place where opinions could be molded to fit the demands of the state and market. Rational-critical deliberation has been co-opted, as it so often appears in the form of "professional dialogues from the podium, panel discussions, and round table shows."[68] Even the journalistic media have lost their radically public role, as they have succumbed to the logic of the market.[69]

If literature and art, public deliberation, and journalism have all been co-opted by state and market forces, perhaps religion can open up a newly-public space. Wallis, Balmer, and other critics of the Christian Right suggest as much. The institutional church figured minimally into Habermas's historical narrative of the public sphere, and his Euro-centric focus would not have been able to account for the unique role of churches in American society. Whereas religion would have been indistinguishable from the state in Habermas's bourgeois public sphere, American churches enjoy a legal separation from the government—at least in their ideal, constitutional form.[70] As such, religious institutions may provide exactly the opening that Habermas claims was lost by the state and market's encroachment on the public sphere. Collectively, the churches remain the largest institution that can claim to be distinct from both the state and the market—far larger than other community organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis), and more clearly distinct from the state and market than others (e.g. the PTA or unions). As the Christian Right has demonstrated, churches and Christians can certainly sell out to the forces of partisan politics or the market, but, if religious institutions were to heed the call to maintain radical separation, they might discover the capacity to foster public deliberation that serves as a check against both the state and the market.

Ultimately, religious institutions can never be wholly public and they will never engender radical democracy on their own, as their reach is always limited to believers. As Habermas's critics have usefully pointed out, however, the public sphere need not be a singular entity. Whereas Habermas assumes that the development of multiple publics signaled the decline of the public sphere, Nancy Fraser asserts that "public life in egalitarian, multicultural societies cannot consist exclusively in a single, comprehensive public sphere."[71] She argues that public participation is most successfully facilitated by a system with multiple publics where each public occupies its own space and embodies its own style of cultural expression. In such a system, the church can be one of many publics. Moreover, if it realizes its countercultural goals, it serves as an example of the cultural critique made possible by remaining distinct from both the state and the market.

Citizen Protest as Christian Citizenship

Wallis and Balmer both praise exactly the sort of deliberative participation that defines Habermas's public sphere. Not only is the church a public entity, but individual Christians can and should bring the values of their faith into a public sphere larger than the church. Wallis claims that Christians, and indeed all religious people, "should be invited to participate as *citizens* who have the right and the obligation to bring their deepest moral convictions to the public square for the democratic discourse on the most important values and directions that will shape our society."[72] Wallis's point here may not seem shocking in the context of Christian Right/Republican politics. In the face of the secular Left's attempts to limit the influence of religious belief in public deliberation, however, Wallis offers a radical suggestion—that religious values can and should

influence public debate just as much as any other set of values—capitalist, rationalist, enlightenment liberal, etc.

On this matter, Habermas certainly concurs, and he has responded to John Rawls to say just as much. Rawls has argued that religious rationales are only legitimate for policy arguments if secular rationales can be substituted. That is, people of faith may enter public deliberation with arguments from the perspectives of their respective faith traditions, but those arguments only become legitimate when their faith-based rationales are substituted out or supplemented with universal arguments that appeal to rational grounds.[73] In response, Habermas joins the critics of Rawls who cite the leadership that religious traditions historically have provided to social movements, and he uses that history to suggest that censoring religious language in public deliberation would rob the nation-state of a historically-useful tradition.[74] In short, "the liberal state has an interest in unleashing religious voices in the political public sphere, and in the political participation of religious organizations as well."[75] Moreover, as separating their faith tradition from their political involvement would be psychologically impossible for many citizens, censoring religious rationales would disenfranchise those citizens.[76] Religious citizens, he concludes, "should therefore be allowed to express and justify their convictions in a religious language."[77]

Campolo, Meyers, and Townsend agree that when Christians bring their faith into the public sphere, they model their worldly citizenship after Jesus himself. Jesus, after all, did not shy away from political issues, as the gospels describe him as a radical leader whose prophetic voice posed a challenge to the ruling order of his day. And the movement he started became a counterculture intent on critiquing the state and religious

hierarchies.[78] Campolo reminds his readers that Jesus's radical political activism ultimately led to his death: "they didn't put Jesus on a cross for saying nice things that people in the ruling religious, political, and economic establishment wanted to hear."[79] Indeed, the Gospels record that Jesus violently turned over the tables outside the temple, objecting to the exchange of money customary there.[80] He derided the religious leaders for their "bombastic public prayers."[81] Throughout his life, "Jesus Himself protested the actions of the Roman government under which he lived."[82]

If Christians are called to follow Jesus, and if Jesus was a revolutionary leader, then the obvious practice of Christian citizenship is to speak out and against the ruling order when necessary: a model of citizenship as "vociferous critique." Christians can join "the noble and necessary tradition of citizen protest" that Townsend, Balmer, and Wallis all celebrate in the church-led progressive movements of the nineteenth century and civil rights movement of the twentieth.[83] By their rendering, Martin Luther King, Jr. becomes the touchstone of Christian citizenship capable of challenging the ruling order from the position of faith.[84] Jim Wallis adds other models—Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and Daniel and Philip Berrigan—all of whom used the values of their Christian traditions to publicly oppose unjust government actions. Robin Meyers encourages twenty-first century Christians to take up the manner of citizen protest modeled by these men (and the lack of women cited in this narrative of the bygone days of Christian activism is not insignificant) when he calls for "collective resistance" to take back the country *and* the church from the grips of the Christian Right. Meyers suggests that Christian citizenship requires action more than thoughts; it requires Christians to be "doers of the word, not merely hearers."[85] "Pure cognition cannot save the world,"

Meyers claims; rather, "sometimes intelligent people need to take to the streets because although knowledge is important, it is not redemptive."[86] Only through "constant, unrelenting, proactive engagement" can Christians produce Christ-like social change.[87] If "constant, unrelenting, proactive engagement" is Meyers's manner of citizenship, then the deeds that follow naturally should seem familiar to any student of social movements. He encourages his readers to join a march, write a letter, begin a discussion, and boycott objectionable products and companies.[88]

Self-Sacrificial Loving Charity as Christian Citizenship

The other model of citizenship that emerges from this backlash to the Christian Right is one of self-sacrificial loving charity. This manner of citizenship follows naturally from Boyd's two kingdoms thesis, but, even among critics who reject his depiction of two kingdoms, self-sacrificial love and the resulting charity is a viable model of citizenship.[89] Campolo supports this manner of citizenship when he claims that he and his fellow "Red-Letter Christians" "want to change the world, but *not through political coercion*. Our methodology is loving persuasion."[90] Unlike Boyd's model of self-sacrificial love, however, for many of these critics, this manner of citizenship only becomes meaningful when it engenders charitable acts—such as the acts of grace that Matthew 25 encourages Jesus's disciples to do "to the least of these." Campolo enumerates numerous acts of charity that can be done in loving service. Instead of advocating abortion repeal, he wishes more evangelicals would offer to adopt children. Instead of judging or fearing all Muslims, he suggests that his readers should invite a Muslim couple or family over to dinner—making sure to observe all Muslim dietary customs, of course. More than anything, he hopes young evangelicals will join mission

projects abroad. He suggests a trip to Haiti, in particular, where he believes evangelical youth and the people they serve can be together transformed by the act of charity. Townsend, too, feels this call to charity, especially given her Catholic upbringing. She returns repeatedly to the lessons she learned from the nuns at her parish and school, who showed her "that in the paths we walk we should try to reduce the suffering and sadness of those whom we meet."[91]

Townsend, however, is also the sharpest critic of charity alone. Although she articulates the valuable achievements of Christian charity historically, she claims that "to walk in God's path is not just to pray or give charity, but also to work for *justice* for every creature on His earth."[92] Furthermore, through a series of concrete examples, she claims that work for justice can reap greater rewards than charitable actions. She compares, for instance, the benefits of a program that brings meals to the elderly (charity) versus the work to create the system of social security (justice), concluding that social security ultimately alleviates more suffering than a meals program.[93] Campolo echoes Townsend's point here, when he explains how evangelicals' long tradition of charity work throughout the Third World has inspired their activism for justice. Their exposure to global systems of injustice has convinced evangelicals that something must be done to reform those systems themselves.[94] "Missionary work usually starts as acts of charity," Campolo suggests, "but the more you learn about how political and economic institutions oppress and exploit the poor, the more you realize that charity is not enough. Justice is also needed."[95] Ultimately, Townsend concludes, and Campolo would surely agree, that Christians are called to perform both acts of charity and acts of justice. "The very heart

of Catholic social teaching," she claims, is that "God has called us to pursue both at once."[96]

These critics of the Christian Right, who call for Christianity to reinvent its role in the public sphere, voice the most collective support for these two models of citizenship—vociferous activism for justice and self-sacrificial acts of charity. Certainly, other models of citizenship circulate through their writings. Lon Fendall's book *Citizenship: A Christian Calling*, for instance, provides extensive Biblical evidence for a model of faithful Christian citizenship for public officials. Drawing on the writings of two elected Christians—Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon and eighteenth/nineteenth century British member of parliament William Wilberforce—Fendall argues that politicians should turn to the scriptures for lessons on how to perform their public duties. Jim Wallis provides another model of citizenship in which Christians are called to "change the wind." Rather than simply moving with the currents of political issues and joining contemporary debates on their own terms, Christians should transcend those debates and "change the wind."[97] By and large, however, vociferous activism for justice and self-sacrificial loving acts of charity recur as the two most promising models of Christian citizenship.

Imperfect Models and the Prospects for Christian Citizenship

The models of citizenship as self-sacrificial love and citizen protest both fail to resonate with the constructions of citizenship that I have argued dominate the three media texts considered here—*The Passion of the Christ*, *Left Behind*, and *The da Vinci Code.* Whereas Boyd's idealized model of citizenship simultaneously provides support for the mode of citizenship celebrated in *The Passion* and skepticism toward the one modeled in

Left Behind, other critics of the Christian Right offer models of citizenship largely incompatible with any of these popular media texts. Importantly, their model of citizen protest resonates more clearly with Habermas and Putnam's respective calls to rational-critical deliberation and civic participation than with these popular media images of Christian citizenship.

At first glance, the self-sacrificial love that defines the charity mode of citizenship, much like the self-sacrificial love fundamental to Boyd's kingdom of God citizenship, may seem similar to the feminine submission modeled in *The Passion.* However, if a theory of citizenship works by "placing 'manner' and 'deed' in relation to each other," it becomes apparent that where these disparate models of citizenship share a manner, they diverge when it comes to deeds.[98] That is, where *The Passion* demonstrates no acts of charity, and Boyd shows only passing interest in charity, other proponents of the self-sacrificial love manner of citizenship (e.g. Campolo, Townsend) depict its utility in terms of the outcomes it produces. Self-sacrificial love is only a profitable manner of citizenship because it prompts Christians to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. The closest thing to an act of charity in *The Passion* might be when a woman along the Via Dolorosa tries to offer the suffering Jesus a drink of water. The heroines'—Mary, Magdalene, and John's—self-sacrificial love primarily manifests itself in prayerful silence. Where Boyd argues that this type of submission should not be read as passivity, proponents of a charitable model of citizenship would still find it wanting for deeds. Mary, Magdalene, and John may perform the disposition of self-sacrificial love, but their practice of citizenship falls short when it fails to produce any works. Faith without works, the Epistle of James reminds us, is dead.[99]

If *The Passion*'s construction of citizenship falls short of self-sacrificial, loving charity, *Left Behind* directly contradicts these other models of citizenship. Campolo, Meyers, and Balmer all join the chorus of voices rehearsed in chapter three that assume that premillennial apocalypticism automatically renders humans passive, or at least inattentive to earthly social justice concerns.[100] Campolo worries that the implication of this theology "is that there is no point to working toward peace, social justice, the end of poverty, and the like... John Nelson Darby, Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins all emphasize that the church should not engage in such tasks."[101] Instead, Balmer laments, "evangelicals used premillennialism as an excuse...to devote their full attention to preparations for the Second Coming of Jesus, which entailed cultivating inner piety and trying to convert others to the faith."[102] As I argued in chapter three, however, a close reading of *Left Behind* suggests otherwise: premillennialist thinking can encourage humans to pursue earthly activism, even beyond evangelizing and securing individual salvation. In the case of *Left Behind*, Christians do engage in earthly politics, but their political priorities run counter to the ones laid out by the liberal Meyers and even the more moderate/conservative Balmer and Campolo. Although *Left Behind* models a manner of vociferous activism, both its disposition of brutish masculinity as well as the concomitant battle-oriented deeds fail to resonate with the tradition of citizen protest that Meyers and Balmer, in particular, want to recreate.

Rather, *Left Behind*'s model of citizenship operates from within the dualistic worldview that these critics so fear. The Christian Right, Balmer claims, insists "on viewing the world through the lenses of dualism or Manichaeism," which, Meyers explains, prevents them from ever envisioning a middle ground.[103] Instead, we live in

an "either-or world of the saved and the 'left behind,' the sanctified and the 'heathen,' the Bible believers and the 'secular humanists.'"[104] Meyers and Boyd both relate this dualistic worldview to President Bush's war rhetoric, and Meyers calls the president's "with us or against us" sentiment "the most dangerous false dichotomy ever to fall from the lips of any occupant of the White House."[105] This dualistic worldview produces a model for the United States's global citizenship parallel to the individual citizenship performed by *Left Behind*'s characters. In a polarized world, the natural citizenship behavior of the forces for good is to try to eradicate all forms of evil, by violent means where necessary. This dualistic world and the citizenship it engenders runs counter to the model of the church as a non-partisan public institution that fuels citizen activism for justice and charity.

And finally, *The da Vinci Code,* as I suggested above, fails to offer a model of citizenship that would take Christianity out of the private sphere. Its obsequious fixation on sexuality reinforces the Christian Right's tendency to reduce politics to the bedroom. And its unqualified celebration of heterosexual sex even buttresses the Christian Right's discourse of heteronormativity. In short, even as it is labeled "radical feminist" by its critics, *The da Vinci Code* provides a model of faithful discipleship and heteronormative sexuality that mimics the models constructed by the Christian Right.

More than just failing to resonate with the models of citizenship presumed in Christian-themed films and novels, the models of citizenship proposed by critics of the Christian Right are haunted by their own limitations. For one, they will probably never reach audiences as large as the ones that flocked to *The Passion, Left Behind,* and *The da Vinci Code.* For instance, Jim Wallis's *God's Politics* was among the media texts

considered in the Baylor Religion Survey in winter of 2005. At that time, when 44.3% of respondents had seen *The Passion,* 19% had read a *Left Behind* book, and 28.5% had read *TDVC,* only 1.2% had read *God's Politics.* Released early in 2005, Wallis's book had entered the marketplace much more recently than these other texts—the first *Left Behind* book was published in 1996, *TDVC* appeared in March 2003, and *The Passion* premiered in February 2004—but a non-fiction hardcover's ability to ever catch up to these other texts is doubtful. Thus, a model of citizenship as citizen protest or self-sacrificial charity might have a greater impact if conveyed by a medium more likely to reach large audiences of the faithful. The spring 2007 film, *Amazing Grace,* may have the potential to do just that. Released widely in theatres and touted throughout the evangelical press, the film chronicles British member of parliament William Wilberforce's campaign to end the slave trade. That film models citizenship that prizes education, rational argument, faith, and political deal-making—not a perfect translation from the ideals espoused by Wallis, Meyers, and the others reviewed here, but possibly a closer match than the models of citizenship in *The Passion* or *Left Behind.*

For better or worse, in the twenty-first century the mainstream mass media have an immeasurable capacity to construct worlds and to make sense of the world for their audience members. In chapter one, I noted that mass media had become central to American Christianity because they (1) afford the potential to evangelize to the greatest number of people, and (2) mediate between believers and the divine. Although I acknowledge the significance of these two functions, I have turned away from the instrumentalist orientation that dwells on particular texts' successes in evangelizing or mediating, and my constitutive lens has instead assumed that these texts create worlds for

their audience members. Media texts create worlds with internal logics, value structures, and assumptions, and my analysis has endeavored to come to terms with just one aspect of the created worlds in these texts: their assumptions about the public sphere and citizenship. Of course, their visions of citizenship and the public sphere stem from their theologies, christologies, soteriologies, and eschatologies, so these belief systems have not been absent from my concerns. The constitutive focus, however, has allowed me to move past narrowly theological concerns to consider the broader world-making impact of these texts. In doing so, my focus has been on the texts themselves. Audiences may take these created worlds and accept, reject, modify, or ignore them. They may or may not try to reconcile the worlds created in two or more of these texts. They may or may not model their own practices of citizenship after the heroic exemplars in these stories. Those types of audience questions—although important—will have to be saved for another project.[106] Because textual criticism illuminates the dynamics of the text, it lays the groundwork for interpreting what audiences may do with a given text.

Because it is beyond the scope of this project to consider the reach of these models of citizenship, I cannot say for certain that the models depicted in *The Passion, Left Behind,* and *The da Vinci Code* have gained or will gain more cultural force than the models promoted by Wallis, Meyers, and the other critics of the Christian Right. Even beyond inaccessibility, however, the models of citizenship as self-sacrificial charity and vociferous critique prove inadequate alone. These practices of citizenship have allowed Christians great public influence and have advanced significant social reforms, but only in rare historical moments. By tracing its roots back to the nineteenth century Social Gospel reform movements and the twentieth century church-led Civil Rights movement,

Wallis, Townsend, and Balmer all remind us that two centuries' worth of American Christians have pursued public protest as a mode of citizenship.[107] It is telling, however, that critics of the Christian Right cite Martin Luther King, Jr. as the exemplar of Christian citizenship time and time again. King was a great leader, whose faith infused his political reforms, but his example has been replicated only rarely. Indeed, his may not be the model most useful and accessible to twenty-first century Christians. Perhaps because they have grown so commonplace, or perhaps because crowds no longer turn out, or perhaps because today there is no force as threatening as a mob of African-Americans was to white leadership in the 1950s and 1960s, but for whatever reason, the protest marches that served the cause of civil rights no longer win reforms for progressive movements. Critics of the Christian Right do important work by returning to the example set by King because they reclaim Christian politics from their popular association with conservative ideology. Yet, this nostalgia offers no innovations in terms of disposition or practices of citizenship, instead calling Christians back to a model effective in previous eras. The deeds that follow from this manner of citizenship are all traditional social movement tactics, also reflecting the rational-critical discourse characteristic of Habermas's idealized public sphere. Wallis, Townsend, Balmer, and other critics of the Christian Right offer little in the way of novel approaches to negotiate the stalemate caused by the contemporary "culture wars" or to make use of advancing communication technologies.[108]

Moreover, these critics' models of citizenship are problematic because they leave gender unspoken—to their own detriment. It is no coincidence that the historical examples of citizen protest consistently cited are men—Martin Luther King, Jr.,

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Berrigan brothers. In many places and time throughout history and in the present, vocal protest in the public sphere has been a privilege restricted to men.[109] Thus, these critics fail to acknowledge that civic participation is a gendered practice, and they fall subject to the same critique so often leveled at Habermas's *Structural Transformation*: that his bourgeois public sphere is premised on gendered exclusions that go unexamined.[110] If the critics of the Christian Right want to create opportunities for public participation that are radically inclusive, they cannot leave the questions of gender and gendered access to the public sphere unasked, nor should they rely on an exclusively male tradition as the model for civic participation.

This singular attention to male figures historically only further underscores these critics' overly-narrow commitment to one model of activist organizing. As much as they celebrate Protestantism's instrumental role in orchestrating the progressive reforms of the Social Gospel era, it is noteworthy that these critics fail to credit the women of faith who led those movements—such as Frances Willard, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Anna Howard Shaw. Even though these women, who came to leadership of their respective movements in the latter half of the nineteenth century, enjoyed access to the public sphere undreamed of by women of the generations before them, their limitations still demanded a model of citizen activism distinct from men's.[111] When women's exclusion from legislative arenas ironically limited their tools for agitating for suffrage, for instance, the members of the National Woman's Party embarked upon hunger strikes outside the White House fences to draw attention to their cause. Although such civil disobedience tactics would become common to all social movements, their particular role in the female-led woman suffrage movement serves as a reminder of the ways that

limitations created by laws and social norms have forced activists to innovate protest tactics.

Even in the twenty-first century United States, when men and women enjoy nearly-equal legal standing, we cannot assume that social expectations render citizenship genderless. Instead, the cases of *The Passion of the Christ* and *Left Behind* serve as stark reminders of the lingering power of binary gender ideology and its ties to citizenship. I have argued that the model of citizenship in each text is rendered in traditionally gendered terms: faithful citizenship in *The Passion* resonates with the tradition of womanhood, or femininity, and faithful citizenship in *Left Behind* resonates with the tradition of manhood, or masculinity. Importantly, however, *Left Behind* restricts its performance of masculinity to the male body, whereas *The Passion* depicts femininity in both female and male characters. Judith Butler reminds us that there is no necessary and natural connection between male bodies and masculinity or female bodies and femininity; instead, our bi-gendered discursive grammar disciplines us into a world where male equals masculinity and female equals femininity.[112] *Left Behind* performs this disciplinary function. Through its depiction of successfully-masculine men and one particularly unsuccessfully-masculine woman, the novels construct a world where men are uniquely capable of masculinity. In conjunction with its intimation that masculinity is the successful performance of citizenship, *Left Behind* implies that women are less-than-adequate citizens. *The Passion*, in contrast, offers equal opportunity citizenship. Although it models femininity as the faithful performance of citizenship, it demands that performance of both men and women, and it depicts a man—John—enacting femininity as successfully as the women. By their overtly-gendered nature, these constructions of

citizenship in popular culture texts point out how foolhardy critics of the Christian Right are when they propose naively gender-blind models of citizenship.

Ultimately, the greatest limitation of citizen protest as a model of specifically-Christian citizenship is the historically "rational" nature of citizen protest. This model is, after all, the one that resonates most strongly with Habermas's idealized bourgeois public sphere, an entity infused with Enlightenment liberal thinking. His public sphere was a space where individuals came together and bracketed their personal interests so that they could collectively advance the interests of the whole. Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas's status-bracketing ideal points to the general limitation of this model: citizens simply cannot bracket their interests, nor is it necessarily in the best interest of the whole to have them do so.[113] However, this rationalistic framework is especially foolish for a faith-based model of citizenship. Christianity, like all world religions, is not a rationalistic system. If rationalism is a product of the scientific, industrial, and political revolutions of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, then Christianity pre-dates this systematic thinking by at least 16 centuries. Jesus and his followers did not have a rationalistic worldview. Jesus did not make arguments, but rather told stories. He told one of the most famous stories in Western history when asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" First, he advised the gathered crowd that they must "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Then, when asked to define neighbor, Jesus told the story of a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, who was beaten by robbers, then left on the side of the road by a priest and a Levite passing by, until finally a Samaritan helped him.[114] The Samaritan exemplifies what it means to be a "neighbor,"

and thus, Jesus has answered the most important question of his ministry—what his followers should do to gain entrance to God's kingdom—with a story. In similar fashion, the tradition of the Israelites was passed down not with the scientific accuracy of a modern-day historian, but rather in richly-told stories relayed over centuries before they were ever written or codified. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, one of the largest evangelical denominations in the United States, did not have a rationalistic experience of religion; instead, he explained of his conversion, he found his "heart strangely warmed." Wesley and his contemporaries wrote hymns to express their faith, and music continues to be the almost-universal constant in Christian practice. Christian music today comes in multiple styles and genres—from Wesley's hymns played on an organ to contemporary praise music performed by a band—but it continues to speak to Christians' hearts and souls, not simply their rational minds. Even among high-church sects, like Anglicans/Episcopalians and Catholics, where emotional experience is less celebrated, the practice of faith is still about ritual—the sacraments and the liturgy, in particular. Christianity is defined by non-rational thinking.[115]

Christianity is a pre-rational belief system that continues to thrive even in a rationalistic era. Perhaps it does so because it provides respite from the ultra-rational thinking that dominates the realms of law, medicine, education, economics, and production, for instance. If so, forcing Christianity into a rationalistic model of citizenship is both naive and foolish. Faith does not fit easily into that mold nor does it serve the greatest good when confined to the dictates of rationalism. Christianity serves the greatest good when it speaks in its own value-centered emotional terms. These non-rational terms are not incompatible with politics, nor are they counter-productive.

Christians might want to work for environmental protection because they see beauty in God's creation; preserving "beauty" is not easily rendered in rational terms. Christians might seek an end to war because they feel called to love their enemies; again, "love" is not a traditional warrant in a policy argument. People of faith must bring the lessons of the faith into the public sphere, as critics of the Christian Right acknowledge, but they must not be forced to translate those lessons into rationalist frameworks.[116]

Boyd's ideal of self-sacrificial love captures this non-rational spirit. Indeed, the kingdom of God he describes rejects many of the tenets of rationality. In the kingdom of God, there are no cost-benefit analyses and no winners and losers; there is simply love. To enact the kingdom of God, Christians must give themselves up for each other in loving sacrifice. Boyd's mode of citizenship errs on the side of idealism, however, when it does not adequately speak to the constraints of Christians living in the rationalistic kingdom of the world. As much as tribalism and the tit-for-tat logic may be incompatible with the heavenly kingdom, Christians spend their lives in earthly communities defined by these ways of thinking. Transcending the dictates of the kingdom of the world can never be so simple as just *doing* the kingdom of God, which is what Boyd advocates. Christians who give themselves up in willing, self-sacrificial love will find themselves taken advantage of by the rulers of this world. Responding to spousal abuse and other forms of violence, to disrespect in the workplace, to legal disenfranchisement, and to other injustices with self-sacrificial love makes Christians victims in the kingdom of the world. If Boyd's image of the promised kingdom of God and its requisite citizenship allows Christians to suffer on earth for the promise of a coming kingdom, then it does a disservice to Christians in their earthly lives. Boyd's citizenship of self-sacrificial love

proves inadequate when it encourages Christians to exchange justice in the kingdom of the world for happiness in the promised kingdom of God.

In short, none of these models of citizenship—not Boyd's self-sacrificial love, not the other critics' citizen protest or loving charity, not *The Passion*'s submissive femininity, not *Left Behind*'s brutish masculinity, nor *The da Vinci Code*'s heterosexual reproduction—proves adequate on its own. Instead, Christian citizenship must be a flexible ideal that accounts for the diversity of models available in scripture and tradition. Models of Christian citizenship must allow Christians to engage in the earthly politics of this world for all the reasons that Wallis, Townsend, Balmer, and Meyers suggest: it is good for both the church and the nation. They must, however, let Christians draw upon *all* the resources of the faith—scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—in their performance of citizenship. Christians must be able to practice citizenship according to the lessons of their faith in conjunction with the demands and constraints of their unique situations. As such, models of Christian citizenship must be aware of the limitations placed on citizens by the discourses of gender, race, class, and sexuality as well as by other discourses that effectively marginalize citizens. Throughout Christian history, from the countercultural community of the early church through to the progressive reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the civic participation that Putnam observes in present-day regular churchgoers, Christianity has always served as a goad to public activism. To continue that great tradition, Christian churches, leaders, and members must pursue the work of citizenship in the spirit of great leaders in the tradition—certainly including King, but also Susannah Wesley, Dorothy Day and

others—while also remaining open to the spirit of innovation that continues to speak to contemporary Christians.

Notes

Chapter 1

[1] Hab. 2:2 NRSV; (Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations henceforth come from the New Revised Standard Version.)
[2] Boyd, 11-12.
[3] Goodstein, "Disowning Conservative Politics."
[4] Gorski, B-02.
[5] The news media have grown enamored with the term "evangelical Christians" and use it frequently and sloppily. They tend to forget that "evangelical" refers to a theological system not a political agenda. The term may be easily
exploited because it is not a particularly dogmatic theological system, and its ranks include fundamentalist, Pentecostal, holiness, and even some mainline Protestant churches and members. Balmer defines evangelicalism in terms of three fundamental beliefs: the infallibility (not necessarily inerrancy) of Scripture, the necessity of a born again conversion experience, and the imperative to evangelize (xviii-xix). Campolo maintains that Evangelicals believe all the tenets of the Apostle's Creed, they trust that Scripture is divinely-inspired, and they seek a "personal, intimate, and transforming relationship with the resurrected and living Jesus Christ" (24). Both definitions are broad enough that it is easy to see why so many Christian sects might be defined as "evangelical." However, it is telling that when the Baylor Religion Survey asked respondents to label themselves, very few chose the term "evangelical." Among members of the denominations and sects that the researchers had deemed "Evangelical Protestant"—including the Assemblies of God, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and the Southern Baptist Convention—only 32.6% chose the label "evangelical" to describe themselves. Instead, they found the terms "Bible-Believing" and "Born Again" more apt. Based on these response rates, the study concludes that less than eight percent of Americans consider themselves "evangelical" (pp. 9, 17-18).
Throughout this project, I try to use the term as precisely as possible. I use it to refer to the belief system broadly defined by Balmer and Campolo, and I also use it descriptively to talk about the narrative that journalists have created to explain contemporary political developments.
[6] Gayle White, 1D.
[7] Waxman, E1.
[8] Eckstrom, B07.
[9] I use the term "discipline" following Foucault, but also Raymie McKerrow, John Sloop, and others who have introduced Foucault's thinking into rhetorical studies. Tied to his notion of power as always simultaneously productive and repressive, Foucault suggests that discourse disciplines bodies in both productive and repressive ways. In *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, he describes discipline as the mechanisms that simultaneously increase and diminish the forces of the body (p. 138). In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault shows how easily the media became instruments of discipline rather than the expression of the social contract that Rousseau and the other revolutionaries had hoped they would be (pp. 161-162). See also, Sloop, 6-21; McKerrow, 447-450.
[10] Matt. 28:18-20 (see also Mark 16: 14-18; Luke 24: 36-39; John 20: 19-23; Acts 1: 6-8).
[11] Acts 1:8.
[12] Peters, "The Gaps," 123.
[13] Mark 4:20.
[14] Peter Fraser, 4-5.
[15] Peter Fraser, 4-5.
[16] Schultze, "Keeping the Faith," 23.
[17] Ferré.
[18] Hendershot, 5.
[19] Rosenthal, 139.
[20] Rosenthal, 138.

[21] Rosenthal, 141.
[22] Budde, 15.
[23] Budde, 101-104.
[24] Silk, 16.
[25] Silk, 16-17
[26] Olasky, 47; Forshey, 1; Erickson, 1.
[27] Forshey, 1
[28] Erickson, 1.
[29] Harrell, 322-3.
[30] Erickson, 5-7
[31] Piore, 48.
[32] Hendershot, 56-57.
[33] Hendershot reports that this information was true as of 2001; Hendershot, 56.
[34] Harrell, 326; see also Schultze, *Christianity and the Mass Media*, 89-138.
[35] Harrell, 325.
[36] Peck, 1-2.
[37] Harrell, 328-9.
[38] Frankl, *Televangelism*, 17-19.
[39] Frankl, "Transformation of Televangelism," 165.
[40] Frankl, "Transformation of Televangelism," 163.
[41] Harrell, 325.
[42] Peter Fraser, 6.
[43] Hoover and Clark, *Practicing Religion*, ix; Lynn Schofield Clark, "Overview," 8.
[44] Lynn Schofield Clark, "Overview," 19.
[45] Hoover, "Introduction," 2.
[46] Stout and Buddenbaum, "Geneaology," 5.
[47] Buddenbaum and Stout, "Religion and Mass Media Use," 15.
[48] Frankl, *Televangelism.*
[49] Peck.
[50] Schultze, *Christianity and the Mass Media*, 89-138; Rosenthal, 138-162.
[51] Schultze, *Christianity and the Mass Media*, 91.
[52] There are important exceptions, such as the film scholarship by Gerald Forshey, Margaret Miles, and Peter Fraser.
[53] Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*,25.
[54] Asen and Brouwer.
[55] Asen and Brouwer, 2.
[56] Asen, "Multiple Mr. Dewey," 174.
[57] Dewey, 177.
[58] Hohendahl, 99.
[59] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 201.
[60] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 49.
[61] Calhoun, 12; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 30, 31-43.
[62] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 49.
[63] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 49.
[64] Calhoun, 12-13.
[65] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 50.
[66] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 36.
[67] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 54.
[68] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 54.
[69] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 185, 188-195.
[70] Calhoun, 25.
[71] Habermas, "Encyclopedia Article," 54.
[72] Kellner, 12.
[73] Putnam, 48.
[74] Putnam, 27.

[75] Putnam, 19.
[76] Asen and Brouwer, 6.
[77] Calhoun, 33.
[78] For an extended review of historians' treatment of Habermas, see Pinter.
[79] McLaughlin, 600.
[80] Nancy Fraser,117.
[81] Kellner, 7.
[82] Nancy Fraser, 128-132.
[83] Nancy Fraser, 132-136.
[84] Calhoun, 37; Asen and Brouwer, 6; Felski, 155 and Nancy Fraser, 122.
[85] Warner, 67.
[86] Warner, 67.
[87] Squires; Asen, "Seeking the 'Counter'"; Asen and Brouwer, 2001.
[88] Fraser, 1992, 123.
[89] Warner, 117-118.
[90] Asen, "Seeking the 'Counter.'"
[91] Calhoun, 37.
[92] Warner, 65.
[93] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 191.
[94] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 191, 194.
[95] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 194.
[96] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 194.
[97] Hauser, "Prisoners of Conscience," 38.
[98] Maddux, 292-301.
[99] Pezzullo, 347.
[100] Pezzullo, 354-355.
[101] Brouwer, 87.
[102] John Durham Peters, "Distrust," 541.
[103] DeLuca and Peeples, 131.
[104] McDorman, 188, 189.
[105] Foucault; Butler; Sloop.
[106] Butler, 15, 23, 33; Sloop, 6-7.
[107] van Biema, "The 25 Most Influential," 34.

Chapter 2

1 Rom 13:2.

2 Frank Rich, 1.

3 Corliss.

4 "Business/Box Office for *The Passion of the Christ*." Available at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0335345/business>. Accessed March 25, 2007.

5 "Trivia for *The Passion of the Christ*." Available at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0335345/trivia>. It has since been bumped out of the top ten all-time grossing films.

6 Grossman.

7 Wieseltier, 19.

8 Corliss, 65.

9 Van Biema, "Why it's so bloody," 66.

10 Scott, E1.

11 Scott, E1.

12 Denby, 84; see also Ansen.

13 Harrison, 1.

14 Scott, E1.

[15] Karnick.

[16] Neff, 30-35.

[17] Nicoloff, 1-22.

[18] Engel and Thistlethwaite, 1.

[19] Luke 4:18.

[20] Solberg, 85-86.

[21] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 74.

[22] Orchard, 262.

[23] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 41.

[24] Sobrino, 4.

[25] Sobrino, 4 (his emphasis).

[26] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Eschatology and Feminism," 129.

[27] Cone, "God is Black," 103.

[28] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 75.

[29] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 130.

[30] Grant, 216.

[31] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 128.

[32] Brown and Parker, 1.

[33] Gunton, 116.

[34] Brock and Parker, 157.

[35] Brock and Parker, 156.

[36] Fortune, 145.

[37] Bohn, 114.

[38] Brown and Parker, 2.

[39] Bohn, 107.

[40] Brown and Parker, 2.

[41] Only in his crucifixion does Jesus make a transition into the divine world. Once Jesus acknowledges his own death with the words, "it is accomplished," the camera angle changes drastically to an overhead shot looking down upon those gathered around the crosses—the only moment in the film with such a camera shot from above. The people below are like ants scurrying about, and suddenly the image of them is contracted into a bubble, like a drop of water that then falls to the earth, and the camera returns to its earlier position. Only at this point does Jesus join the divine realm, and only for this fleeting moment, as Jesus makes the transition, do we as audience members have access to the divine vantage point.

[42] I base my argument about the film's preferred mode of citizenship in an opposition between "barbarous masculinity" and "feminine submission." In doing so, I assume that femininity and masculinity are only semi-stable constructs, which, as Judith Halberstam notes, are notoriously hard to define. They are rooted in the traditional role performances of women and men as they have been reiterated across time. Masculine behavior thus is strong, commanding, and aggressive, while feminine behavior is weak, timid, and obedient. Masculinity and femininity are not entirely stable because, as Judith Butler notes, these genders are not naturally existing, but rather come to seem normal through their every day iterations. Moreover, they become normative in dialectical opposition to each other—that is, what is feminine is necessarily what is not masculine, and vice versa. *The Passion* creates these gendered identities only in relationship to each other: the guards' masculinity only becomes apparent set in relief to the faithful disciples' femininity, and vice versa. Halberstam, 1: Butler, 3-44.

[43] These numbers are slightly misleading, as there are only 20 shots of Mary, Mary Magdalene, and John, but the camera tends to dwell on those characters longer than it does on the guards or Jesus. In fact, just

one of those shots of Mary lasts a full 34 seconds. Even still, the numbers suggest that the Roman guards receive considerable attention in this scene.

[44] These three characters are also contrasted to the less faithful disciples, specifically Peter and Judas. In this narrative, these two are only depicted in their betrayals of Jesus—Judas turning him over for 30 pieces of silver and John denying him three times before the cock crows. Importantly, these traitorous disciples are depicted as very masculine, at least in comparison to the more faithful disciples. They are both tall, broad-shouldered men, and they have large, unkempt manes of dark, coarse hair with full beards. Moreover, they are significantly more aggressive than Mary, Mary Magdalene, and John. In the garden, for instance, when the Temple guards approach to arrest Jesus, Peter fights back while John runs away to tell the women. When Peter cuts off Malchus' ear, Jesus scolds him, thus suggesting that John's act of running away was more faithful than Peter's violence. Judas's and Peter's performance of masculinity, even if is more subtle than the Roman guards' performance, still offers a pronounced contrast to the more faithful form of citizenship embodied by Mary, Mary Magdalene, and John.

[45] Marcus, A21; Beato, B3.

[46] Tucker, C01.

[47] Karen Armstrong, 189-234.

[48] Macquarrie, 40.

[49] Macquarrie, 40.

[50] See, for instance Longnecker and Gustafson, whose twelve chapter book is divided thematically, each chapter focusing on a different aspect of Mary or of Marianism (such as "Holy Mary, Mother of God" and "Apparitions of the Virgin Mary"), but there is not one chapter devoted to Mary's place at the cross.

[51] Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est.*

[52] Babington and Evans, 108.

[53] Babington and Evans, 108.

[54] Butler, 10.

Chapter 3

[1] Matt 10:34.

[2] Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins's central roles in evangelical Christian circles surely enabled the success of these novels. In 2001, the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals named LaHaye the most influential evangelical of the past 25 years, and in 2005, he and his wife Beverly were among *Time* magazine's 25 most influential evangelicals in America. In addition to developing a San Diego area mega-church and its associated schools, LaHaye was also responsible for grassroots political organizing in California in the 1970s, ultimately leading to his participation in the founding of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Prior to the *Left Behind* books, he was a well-published author of Christian tracts on marriage and family life, as well as non-fiction explanations of end-times prophesy. Although Jerry Jenkins had achieved comparatively less celebrity prior to *Left Behind*, he had ghostwritten and collaborated on various evangelicals' autobiographies, including Billy Graham's. From LaHaye's invitation, the two developed a successful working partnership: Jenkins writes each novel from start to finish, but he works from prophesy charts that LaHaye puts together—70-100 pages of outlines for each novel. The two split the profits from the books 50-50. Gates, 44; Unger, 204; Van Biema, "25 Most Influential," 34.

[3] Frykholm, 22.

[4] see "Box office/business for *Left Behind*," at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0190524/business>.

[5] Bader, et al., 21.

[6] O'Leary, 77.

[7] Throughout this analysis, my focus is exclusively on Christian apocalypticism, and not the varieties of apocalypticism common to other religions and sects.

[8] Boyer, 518-9.

[9] O'Leary, 14.

[10] Reid, 232, 239.

[11] Stein, 496.

[12] Stein, 497-503.

[13] O'Leary, 93-110.

[14] Frykholm, 15-17. The sixteenth-century English prophet Joseph Mede and the seventeenth-century Puritan Increase Mather are most often credited with developing Rapture doctrine. See Smolinski, 441-466.

[15] Tony Campolo claims, astonishingly, that even today the Scofield Bible earns more money for the Oxford University Press than any other title. Scofield; Campolo, 110.

[16] Boyer, 527; The fundamentalist ideology developed at the Niagara Conferences and through the publication of *The Fundamentals* was never univocal, and fundamentalist opinion leaders disagreed sharply on the issue of premillennial dispensationalism. Indeed, that issue and others caused breeches within Christian denominations—Presbyterianism, especially—that have never been repaired. See Sandeen, 19-35.

[17] Boyer, 526.

[18] Kaplan, xv.

[19] Shuck, 5; Lindsey.

[20] Boyer, 537

[21] O'Leary, 180-183.

[22] O'Leary, 15.

[23] Brummett, 11.

[24] O'Leary, 14-19.

[25] Brummett, 9-10.

[26] Reid, 237.

[27] O'Leary, 8-11.

[28] Brummett, 26-27.

[29] Brummett, 31.

[30] O'Leary, 148.

[31] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 309.

[32] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 182.

[33] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Assassins,* 269.

[34] As it turns out here, Jesus's work to separate the faithful from the unfaithful (the sheep from the goats) complicates the good/evil dichotomy slightly. Not only are there sheep and goats, but there are also Jews, who are "Jesus's 'brethren,' the chosen people of God whom the sheep befriended." Jews who have accepted Christ become sheep with special status because of their origins as God's chosen people. LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing: The End of Days*, 376.

[35] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 28.

[36] Brummett, 125.

[37] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Indwelling,* 231-2; LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Mark,* 141.

[38] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 127, 389; see also 166.

[39] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Desecration,* 86.

[40] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 64.

[41] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant,* 123.

[42] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,*196.

[43] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 90.

[44] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 143.

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

[46] Frykholm, 17.

[47] The Pope is one of the very few Catholic leaders who disappears in the Rapture. The novels explain that he was one of the most evangelical Catholic leaders in recent memory.

[48] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 269, 276.

[49] Carpathians also try to employ a similar dissociation in reverse. Peter Mathews, the leader of the Carpathian religion, Enigma Babylon One World Faith, explains, "I consider exclusivist, intolerant, one-way-only beliefs antithetical to true religion." LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 294.

[50] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,*72.

[51] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 111.

[52] Carpathia raised his lieutenant from the dead.

[53] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Soul Harvest,* 307.

[54] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 98.

[55] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 176-7.

[56] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 179.

[57] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 182.

[58] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,*50.

[59] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 309; see also 155, 225, and 327.

[60] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Mark,* 77.

[61] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 65.

[62] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 236.

[63] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 100.

[64] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 246.

[65] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 333.

[66] O'Leary, 174, 180-189.

[67] O'Leary, 68.

[68] O'Leary, 68.

[69] O'Leary, 68.

[70] O'Leary, 67.

[71] O'Leary, 72.

[72] O'Leary 84-85.

[73] O'Leary, 85.

[74] O'Leary, 85.

[75] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 115.

[76] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Mark,* 60.

[77] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 40.

[78] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 26.

[79] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 304.

[80] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Mark,*178-9.

[81] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,*98.

[82] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant,* 45.

[83] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 94; see also LaHaye and Jenkins, *Assassins,* 2.

[84] Marsden, 37.

[85] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 100.

[86] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 68.

[87] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 34.

[88] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 32.

[89] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 146.

[90] Frykholm, 30.

[91] The film version makes this domestic disparity even more extreme. Rayford leaves earlier than expected for a flight, even skipping his son's birthday party over his wife's pleading. On board the flight, not only does Rayford lust after the flight attendant, but he kisses her passionately before the disappearances occur.

[92] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 4, 278, 285.

[93] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 74.

[94] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 172.

[95] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 260.

[96] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 294.

[97] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 19.

[98] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Remnant,* 275.

[99] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Armageddon,* 309.

[100] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 113.

[101] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 210. The significance of Buck's name becomes apparent in the soon-to-be-released thirteenth installment of the *Left Behind* books, where the character has given up the nickname and goes by his given "Cameron" instead, because, in Christ's millennial kingdom, "there's nothing to buck" (available at http://www.leftbehind.com/channelbooks.asp?pageid=1320&channelID=227).

One of the major failures of the *Left Behind* movie came in the tragic miscasting of Kirk Cameron in the role of Buck. Whereas the Buck of the novels and the graphic novels is sturdy and tough, Kirk Cameron achieves little more brawn than Mikey Seaver, the twirpy high school student he earned his fame playing on *Growing Pains.*

[102] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 77.

[103] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 111.

[104] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 160.

[105] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 50; see also 331.

[106] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 1.

[107] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Tribulation Force,* 89.

[108] LaHaye and Jenkins, *The Mark,* 85-86.

[109] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 11. Keeping in mind that this book was published in 1999, this technology was fairly futuristic at the time.

[110] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 218 (from Rev. 12:5).

[111] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 208.

[112] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 204-205.

[113] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 306.

[114] The books explain that the antichrist must be sentenced to the lake of fire, rather than simply being eliminated, because even in Jesus's millennial reign, humans must be able to make the choice for *good,* which means not choosing *evil.* The antichrist will return again at the end of those 1,000 years, and he will be punished again, along with anyone who has chosen to follow him.

[115] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Glorious Appearing,* 206.

[116] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Apollyon,* 89; LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind,* 264-265.

[117] LaHaye and Jenkins, *Assassins,* 183.

[118] By so clearly orienting its characters to the public sphere, *Left Behind* stands in sharp contrast to the myriad Christian books focused on the private sphere. Many of Tim LaHaye's writing credits prior to *Left Behind,* for instance, were marriage and family tracts, specifically targeted to help Christians improve their lives in the domestic sphere. And James Dobson has built the largest para-church organization in the United States—Focus on the Family—by publishing books and movies devoted to promoting a Christian model of family life. With this exclusive focus on the public, *Left Behind*'s masculinity becomes a practice of citizenship, in contrast to, for instance, the practice of masculinity so celebrated in Promise Keepers discourse. When the Promise Keepers movement encourages men to regain the rightful headship of their families, it encourages masculinity as a private subjectivity, or a subjectivity uniquely suited to the private sphere. See, for example: Tim LaHaye and Beverly LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage*; Tim LaHaye, *Sex Education*; Dobson, *Straight Talk*; Dobson *Parenting*; Dobson *Complete Marriage*.

[119] Warner, 67, 90; Nancy Fraser, 121-128.

[120] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 204; Brouwer, 87-90.

[121] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 194.

[122] Asen, "A Discourse Theory," 200.

[123] Bush, "Address to a Joint Session."

[124] Bush, ibid.

[125] Bush "National Day"; George W. Bush, "State of the Union."

[126] see Murphy, 623-625.

Chapter 4

[1] Gen 2:23

[2] Roeser, 18.

[3] Henninger, A10.

[4] Laidlaw, L02.

[5] Laidlaw, L02.

[6] Morris, N11.

[7] "Business Data for *The Da Vinci Code,*" <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382625/business>, accessed November 28, 2006.

[8] Bader et al., 21.

[9] The novel's artistic qualities have been critiqued widely. In *The Times* of London, Peter Millar claims that it "is without doubt, the silliest, most inaccurate, ill-informed, stereotype-driven, cloth-eared, cardboard-cutout-populated piece of pulp fiction that I have read."

[10] The novel's critics cast this entire narrative into doubt. They contest the book's major claims, especially Magdalene's role as Jesus's wife and sexual partner and the authority of Constantine's Council of Nicea in defining Christian doctrine, as well as the book's more minor claims such as the number of witches burned at the stake and the number of panes of glass in the Louvre. I certainly do not presume that the novel's entire historical narrative is true, though the critics' counter-narratives also introduce flaws of their own. My argument does not rest on this narrative's historical veracity or lack thereof, as I am more interested in the story it creates for a contemporary audience and the implications of that story. As such, I treat the narrative in the book's terms, always assuming that it may not be historically true, but still becomes real for the book's readers.

[11] Brown, 1.

[12] Bock, "The Good News of Da Vinci"; Chris Armstrong; Rose; Huggins; Gardiner; Olson and Miesel, "Christ, the Early Church"; Holding; Reidy; Miesel; Hansen.

[13] Gardiner.

[14] Strobel and Poole; Abanes; Duchane; Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*; Garlow and Jones; Witherington; Griffith-Jones; Boa and Turner; Welborn, *De-Coding da Vinci*; Teisch and Barr; Burstein; Hanegraaff and Maier; Burroughs, Easley, and Ankerberg; Lutzer; TFP Committee on American Issues; Olson and Miesel, *The da Vinci Hoax*; Morris; Stephen Clark; Akin; Kellmeyer; Chandelle; Garlow, Jones and Williams; Harra; Gilvin; Strauss; Kennedy and Newcombe; Welborn, *The da Vinci Code Mysteries*; Elbe; Williams; Flory, Monroe and Gasque; Lunn.

[15] Chaudhry; Metzger; Ehbrecht; *Da Vinci Code: Where it all Began*; Gardner; *The Priory of Sion (60 Minutes)*; Cox; *Opus Dei and the da Vinci Code*; *Da Vinci: Tracking the Code*; Priest; Sri*; Origins of the da Vinci Code;* Lincoln; Mahoney; *The John Ankerberg Show*; Campbell; *Challenging the da Vinci Code*; *National Geographic*; Bouson; McKenzie; Carr and Comtois.

Even radio served as a medium for debating *TDVC*: Focus on the Family's James Dobson gave two *TDVC*-related radio addresses on May 1 and 2, 2006, two weeks before the film's release in theatres. Kieran O'Leary, "Clerics Paint a Different Picture of 'Da Vinci,'" *Buffalo News*, 26 April 2006, C1.

[16] Bock, *Breaking the da Vinci Code*, 95.

[17] Olson and Miesel, *Da Vinci Hoax*, 29.

[18] Roberts, D01

[19] FAQ at <http://www.danbrownn.com/novels/davinci_code/faqs.html>, accessed October 17, 2004; Tubbs, 1E.

[20] Parker, 04J.

[21] Goodstein, "Defenders of Christianity," A22.

[22] Olson and Miesel, *Da Vinci Hoax*, 15.

[23] Donovan, 32.

[24] Snitow, 14-28.

[25] Snitow, 24.

[26] Kraditor, 43-74.

[27] Evans, 125-130 ; Dow, 298-307.

[28] Gilman; Donovan, 48.

[29] For instance, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which grew out of the Women's Peace Party after WWI, continues to agitate to this day. See Evans, 190.

[30] Echols, 243-265.

[31] Gilligan, 19.

[32] Belenky et. al., 7.

[33] Gilligan, 7-9; Belenky et. al., 45.

[34] Ruddick, 225, 220.

[35] Ruddick, 224.

[36] Ruddick, 224.

[37] Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 27-29 and 11 (italics original).

[38] Ferdinand, A1.

[39] Fraiman, 122-155.

[40] Brown, 50.

[41] Brown, 87.

[42] Brown, 50.

[43] Brown, 92.

[44] Brown, 50.

[45] Brown, 21.

[46] Brown, 156 (italics removed for clarity).

[47] Brown, 41.

[48] Brown, 28.

[49] Brown, 248.

[50] Brown, 247-8.

[51] Brown, 248.

[52] Brown, 248.

[53] Brown, 23.

[54] Brown, 23.

[55] Brown, 23.

[56] Brown, 96.

[57] Brown, 202.

[58] Brown, 326.

[59] Brown, 138.

[60] Even though historians and art aficionados customarily refer to Leonardo da Vinci as "Leonardo," since "da Vinci" simply refers to his home town, I have chosen to use the name "da Vinci," in keeping with the novel's pattern.

[61] Brown, 45.

[62] Brown, 120.

[63] Brown, 121.

[64] Dow, 165.

[65] Donovan, 62.

[66] Donovan, 59.

[67] Importantly, American feminism has felt a reciprocal pull to protect the private sphere. As it has tried to guarantee women's participation in the public sphere, it has also valued the sanctity of private decisions, including the privacy ideology so basic to the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Safeguarding privacy has been similarly important in the gay liberation movement, as it has celebrated the *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling that sexual privacy is guaranteed by the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

[68] hooks; Moraga and Andaldúa.

[69] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 15.

[70] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 4-6.

[71] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 5.

[72] Adrienne Rich, 26-75.

[73] Brown, 294.

[74] Brown, 101.

[75] Brown, 294.

[76] Brown, 444.

[77] Brown, 33-34.

[78] Brown, 70.

[79] Brown, 287.

[80] Brown, 340.

[81] Brown, 449.

[82] Frye, 103.

[83] Brown, 440.

[84] Brown, 243.

[85] Brown, 244-8.

[86] Brown, 249; see also Brown, 255.

[87] Brown, 238.

[88] Ruddick, 226.

[89] Brown, 36.

[90] Brown, 309.

[91] Brown, 303.

[92] Brown, 142-143.

[93] Brown, 308.

[94] Brown, 308-309.

[95] Brown, 257; The novel even ties Walt Disney into this effort to preserve the sacred feminine, which he has achieved through the films *Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White,* and *The Little Mermaid*. All four deal "with the incarceration of the sacred feminine," which finds liberation through the symbolism in these films. As Snow White's eating of the apple is an allusion to Eve, and *The Little Mermaid* includes "blatant symbolic references to the lost sanctity of Isis, Eve, Pisces the fish goddess, and, repeatedly, Mary Magdalene," these films are yet another way that the sacred feminine lives on in art and symbolism. (Brown, 262)

[96] The Priory is certainly different from other forms of patriarchal control, as this organization explicitly celebrates women's bodies. In contrast, the Judeo-Christian purity laws found in Leviticus also control women, but they do so by consistently showing how women's sexuality makes them "unclean." Even still, simply celebrating women's sexuality does not signal an escape from patriarchy, as contemporary beer commercials also regularly delight in women's bodies.

[97] Brown, 255.

[98] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 15.

[99] Dow, "The 'Womanhood' Rationale," 300-302.

[100] Paulson, A1.

[101] Banerjee, "Woman is Named."

[102] Paulson, A1; Banerjee, "Clergywomen Find Hard Path," A1; Bankes.

[103] Hendershot, pp 87-113.

[104] Cooperman, A03.

[105] Carter and Banerjee, A3.

[106] Goodstein, "Many Episcopalians Wary," A15.

[107] Lynch.

[108] John Sloop notes a similar tendency in conservative uses of the Joan/John case. When David Reimer chose to reverse the sex re-assignment that had been performed at his birth, conservative critics appropriated his decision as a failure for feminism. Claiming that the Joan/John case had been used to buttress feminist arguments for the social constructedness of gender, they used this newest development to disprove those feminist arguments. Feminists cede important grounds when conservatives get to define feminist arguments. Sloop, 43-46.

Chapter 5

[1] Job 29:7.

[2] Putnam, 162.

[3] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 181-235; Putnam, 216-246.

[4] Randall Balmer provides a compelling counternarrative to the pervasive myth that *Roe* spurred this contemporary wave of organizing. By his account, in the months immediately following *Roe*, Christian leaders offered little public concern about abortion rights—with the notable exception of some Catholic

testimony. Two years prior to *Roe* the Southern Baptist Convention had even made a public statement acknowledging the need for access to abortion in certain circumstances. If *Roe* was not the precipitating event, Balmer offers the fight to defend Bob Jones University (BJU) instead. In the mid-1970s, as the executive branch grew more serious about enforcing the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Internal Revenue Service targeted BJU's tax-exempt status, saying that any institution that practiced racial segregation (which BJU did by its policy against interracial dating) could not be considered a charitable organization. Balmer claims that conservative Christians' defense of BJU grew into the movement that we now recognize as the Christian Right. Balmer, 13-17.

[5] Balmer; Boyd; Campolo; Meyers; Wallis; Townsend; Fendall; Kuo.

[6] See, for example, Campolo, 132, 138; Balmer, x, 39; Meyers, xii; Wallis, xxiv-xxv, 17, 62, 65.

[7] I use the term "Christian Right" to refer to the movement that these men have built, even though they do not always use that term, nor do their critics. I choose it for purely descriptive reasons: it is a movement filled with Christians with Right-leaning politics. Others prefer different terms. Randall Balmer, for instance, rejects the term "Christian Right" in favor of "Religious Right" because, he explains, "I don't find much that I recognize as *Christian* in the actions and policies of the Religious Right" (xxviii). I see little value in Balmer's strategy of accusing others of not being properly "Christian" enough. Plus, I find his use of the term "Religious Right" problematic because of two of its implications. First, it suggests that this movement is made up of conservatives from multiple religious faiths, which even Balmer admits is only occasionally true. So, second, if the movement is not ecumenical, then calling it "religious" simply re-centers Christianity as the normative American religion.

[8] Meyers, 5.

[9] Balmer, ix.

[10] Regarding abortion and homosexuality, Campolo admits, "to say that Evangelicals are hung up on these two subjects is an understatement." Campolo, 147. On the slavish attention given to Republican partisan politics, see Balmer, x, 180.

[11] Balmer, xii.

[12] Meyers, 31; Wallis, 3.

[13] Wallis, 3.

[14] Meyers, 21.

[15] Dionne.

[16] Wallis.

[17] Campolo, 174-181, 193-200.

[18] John 18:36; John 17:14.

[19] Rom. 12:2.

[20] Matt. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26.

[21] Matt. 25:34-40.

[22] Luke 12:48.

[23] James 2:17.

[24] Isa. 61:1 and Mic. 6:8.

[25] Given my feminist politics, I have serious reservations about using the term "kingdom." Not only does it imply a male God, but it hearkens back to the most antiquated form of patriarchy, where a male sovereign monarch rules over his powerless subjects. In chapter two, I noted that feminist theologians have experimented with alternative words and spellings—like kin(g)dom—and I did so there when possible. The "kingdom" language is so pervasive in the contemporary debate over Christian citizenship, however, that I cannot avoid it in this chapter without distorting the arguments I consider. Moreover, in this case, I fear that avoiding the term "kingdom" would only obscure the sexism that haunts even the most progressive Christian thinking.

[26] When Jesus is asked which commandment is the greatest, he reiterates the commandment found in Deuteronomy 6:5, when he says "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your

soul, and with all your mind." Matt 22:23-40; Mark 12:28-31. In the Decalogue, the commandment is even more explicit; Yahweh instructs, "you shall have no other gods before me." Exodus, 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7.

[27] Boyd, 17-28.

[28] Boyd, 29-49.

[29] Boyd, 28.

[30] Boyd, 24-27.

[31] Boyd, 33.

[32] Kuo, 229.

[33] Kuo, 241.

[34] Importantly, Kuo places most of the blame for the Bush administration's failure to implement its "compassion" agenda on Bush's senior advisors—Margaret Spellings, Andy Card, Karl Rove, and Karen Hughes. He does, however, finally blame the president himself. Describing that Bush does not micromanage, he acknowledges that the president "may not have known the details of his compassion agenda," but "he knew it was languishing and had no problem with that." Kuo, 169, 229.

[35] The parable of the mustard seed is found in Matthew 13:31-32. Jesus says "the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

[36] Matt. 13:32; Boyd, 30.

[37] Boyd, 61. He alludes to Phil. 3:20, which assures Christians that "our citizenship is in heaven."

[38] Boyd, 117.

[39] Boyd, 119.

[40] Boyd, 146.

[41] Boyd, 125.

[42] Meyers, 114.

[43] Wallis, 32.

[44] Meyers, 113.

[45] Townsend, 154.

[46] Balmer, xxii; Wallis, 19; Townsend, 88-108. Even Kuo describes how he and other Republican Party officials "saw ourselves as heirs to the Christian political tradition that fought against slavery and for a woman's right to vote," 260.

[47] Meyers, 114 (italics his).

[48] Wallis, 34.

[49] Wallis, 35.

[50] A more skeptical reading would suggest that they've deemed these behaviors sinful only because of their power as political wedge issues. See Balmer, 1-34.

[51] Townsend, 3, 18, 23.

[52] Campolo, 212.

[53] Campolo, 191.

[54] Balmer, 33.

[55] David Kuo points out that by 2008, the Oval Office will have been occupied by a conservative Republican for 20 of the last 28 years, and Republicans have controlled both houses of congress for most of the last twelve years. In that time, Republican presidents have filled the federal benches and the Supreme Court with their nominees. And yet, Kuo laments, "Things are hardly better. Social statistics are largely unchanged. Divorces are rampant and more and more children are growing up in a home with just one parent. Nearly a million and a half abortions are performed every year. There are more children in poverty

today than there were twenty years ago. A greater percentage of Americans lack health care than ever before. Educational achievement is hardly soaring. Millions of Americans live in what seems like intractable poverty. We have had great electoral success and marginal political success" (p. 261). See also Balmer, 23.

[56] Balmer, 33; This call for non-partisan Christian activism is popular, but certainly not universal. After all, Townsend was a Democratic elected official (Maryland lieutenant governor) from a Democratic family and Kuo has spent most of his career working for Republican officials. Moreover, although Fendall does not claim a party affiliation, he relies on Republican Mark Hatfield as an example of Christian public service. Even Meyers ultimately calls for the "real democrats" to "please stand up" (p. 169). Even these men and women with clear party affiliations, however, never even intimate that Christian values should be limited to one party or another.

[57] Wallis, xvi; Balmer makes exactly the same point: "Religion functions best *outside* the political order, and often as a challenge to the political order," 182.

[58] Meyers, 179.

[59] Meyers, 50; Townsend, 44; Balmer, 180; Wallis, 4, 31.

[60] Meyers, 50.

[61] Leland; Mahler.

[62] Meyers, 50.

[63] Wallis, 5.

[64] Rom. 12:2.

[65] Wallis, 7.

[66] Balmer, 181.

[67] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 164, 171.

[68] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 164.

[69] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 188.

[70] Balmer characterizes disestablishment as a uniquely Baptist idea, based on that quintessentially American denomination's desire for religious freedom. Of course, there is little question about how Christianity has fared with religious freedom: American churches maintain much higher rates of membership and participation than the historic state churches in Europe (p. 66).

[71] Nancy Fraser, 126.

[72] Wallis, 71; See also Balmer, 186.

[73] Habermas, "Religion," 5-6; he is quoting from and responding to Rawls, 765-807.

[74] Habermas, "Religion," 7.

[75] Habermas, "Religion," 10.

[76] Habermas, "Religion," 8-10.

[77] Habermas, "Religion," 10.

[78] Arendt, 74; Elshtain, 63.

[79] Campolo, 8.

[80] Matt. 21: 12-13; Mark 11:11, 15-19; Luke 19: 45-48; John 2:13-17.

[81] Meyers, 20.

[82] Townsend, 86.

[83] Balmer, xxii; Wallis, 19; Townsend, 88-108.

[84] Boyd, 41; Wallis, 22, 28, 60, 61.

[85] James 1:22.

[86] Meyers, 160.

[87] italics removed; Meyers, 162.

[88] Meyers, 166-8.

[89] Boyd, 120; Importantly, Boyd does not accept the depiction of Jesus as a political radical, claiming that although "Jesus' ministry was socially and politically relevant... he did not allow the society or the politics of his day to define his ministry."

[90] Campolo, 133 (emphasis original). Campolo uses the term "Red-Letter Christians" to describe evangelicals who resist the politics of the Christian Right. Referring to the red letters that signify Jesus's words in many editions of the gospels, this appellation suggests that this group of evangelicals takes especially seriously the call to follow Jesus's teachings.

[91] Townsend, 13.

[92] Townsend, 4.

[93] Townsend, 164.

[94] Campolo, 258.

[95] Campolo, 259.

[96] Townsend, 73.

[97] Wallis, 22.

[98] Asen, 194.

[99] James 2:26.

[100] Campolo, 112; Meyers, 4; Balmer, 146.

[101] Campolo, 112.

[102] Balmer, 146.

[103] Balmer, 10.

[104] Meyers, 21.

[105] Meyers, 19.

[106] Indeed, this close reading of the texts themselves facilitates just such a project. After all, investigating what audience members *do* with a given text matters little if we know nothing about the text itself.

[107] Of course, not all Christians at all times have accepted the model of citizen protest. Jerry Falwell's sermon, "Ministers and Marches," criticized clergy who joined political demonstrations for abandoning their Christian calling to preach the gospel.

[108] Sharon Crowley reintroduces the ancient tradition of rhetoric as the antidote for the communication breach rendered by the culture wars. Crowley, 24-57.

[109] It also, of course, has been restricted by age, class, race, nationality, and religion, among other characteristics, at various times and places.

[110] Ryan; McLaughlin.

[111] See Campbell, 9-15.

[112] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10.

[113] Fraser, 118-121.

[114] Luke 10: 25-36.

[115] I do not use the term "non-rational" to be demeaning, but rather descriptive. "Non-rational" is only an insult if we fail to think outside the strictures of our Enlightenment rationalistic thinking.

[116] Rhetorical critics may find ourselves ill-equipped to deal with non-rational expressions of citizenship, as, like Habermas, our tradition as always prized rational critical discourse. To come to terms with non-rational discourses, like the discourse of faith more generally, rhetorical studies needs to develop a vocabulary for emotional and sensory persuasion.

References

Abanes, Richard. *The Truth Behind the da Vinci Code: A Challenging Response to the Bestselling Novel.* Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2004.

Akin, Jimmy. *Cracking the da Vinci Code.* El Cajon, CA: Catholic Answers, 2004.

Ansen, David. "So What's the Good News?" *Newsweek*, 1 March, 2004.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Armstrong, Chris. "Thanks, *Da Vinci Code*," *Christian History,* 14 November 2003. <www.christianitytoday.com/history/newsletter/2003/nov14.html>

Armstrong, Karen. *The Gospel According to Woman.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1986.

Asen, Robert. "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 2 (2004): 189-211.

———. "The Multiple Mr. Dewey: Multiple Publics and Permeable Borders in John Dewey's Theory of the Public Sphere." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 39 (2003): 174-188.

———. "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics," *Communication Theory* 4 (2000): 424-446.

Asen, Robert, and Daniel C. Brouwer, eds. *Counterpublics and the State.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Babington, Bruce, and Peter William Evans. *Biblical Epics: Sacred Narrative in the Hollywood Cinema.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.

Bader, Christopher, Kevin Dougherty, Paul Froese, Byron Johnson, F. Carson Mencken, Jerry Z. Park, and Rodney Stark. "American Piety in the 21st Century: New Insights to the Depth and Complexity of Religion in the U.S." Unpublished research made available September 2006. <www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/33304.pdf> Accessed March 25, 2007.

Balmer, Randall. *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America, an Evangelical's Lament.* New York: Basic Books, 2006.

Banerjee, Neela. "Clergywomen Find Hard Path to Bigger Pulpit," *New York Times,* 26 August 2006, A1.

———. "Woman is Named Episcopal Leader," *New York Times,* 19 June 2006, A1.

Bankes, Adelle M. "Women in the Clergy Still Hit Stained-Glass Ceiling; First Ordinations Were 50 Years Ago," *New Orleans Times-Picayune,* 14 October 2006.

Beato, Greg. "So Much for that 'War on Christmas': Right-wing Zealots Still Have Visions of Santa-bashers Dancing in their Heads," 17 December 2006, B3.

Belenky, Mary Field, Blyth Mcvicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind.* New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986.

Benedict XVI. *Deus Caritas Est.* 2005. Available at: <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html>.

van Biema, David. "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America." *Time,* 7 February 2005.

———. “Why It’s So Bloody,” *Time*, 1 March 2004, 66.

Boa, Kenneth, and John Alan Turner. *The Gospel According to the da Vinci Code: The Truth Behind the Writings of Dan Brown.* Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.

Bock, Darrell L. *Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everyone’s Asking.* Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2004.

———.. “The Good News of Da Vinci,” *Christianity Today* (online), 5 January 2004, <www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/001/23.62.html>.

Bouson, Michael. *Exposing the da Vinci Code.* TV Movie. Associated Television International, 2005.

Boyd, Gregory A. *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

Boyer, Paul. “The Growth of Fundamentalist Apocalyptic in the United States.” In *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, edited by Bernard J. McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein, 516-544. New York: Continuum, 2003.

Brock, Rita Nakashema, and Rebecca Parker. *Proverbs of Ashes.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Brouwer, Daniel C. “ACT-ing UP in Congressional Hearings.” In *Counterpublics and the State*, edited by Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer, 87-109. Albany: SUNY Press, 2001.

Brown, Dan. *The da Vinci Code.* New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

Brown, Joanne Carlson, and Rebecca Parker. "For God so Loved the World?" In *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown and Carol R. Bohn, 1-30. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989.

Bohn, Carole R. "Dominion to Rule: The Roots and Consequences of a Theology of Ownership." In *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, 105-116. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1989.

Budde, Michael. *The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Culture Industries.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Buddenbaum, Judith M. "Social Science and the Study of Media and Religion." *Journal of Media and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2002): 13-24.

Buddenbaum, Judith M. and Daniel A. Stout. "Religion and Mass Media Use: A Review of the Mass Communication and Sociology Literature." In *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, edited by Daniel A Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

Burroughs, Dillon, Michael J. Easley, and John Ankerberg. *The da Vinci Code Controversy.* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2006.

Burstein, Dan, ed. *Secrets of the Code: The Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries Behind the da Vinci Code.* New York: CDS Books/Squibnocket Partners, 2004.

Bush, George W. "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People." Washington, DC, September 20, 2001. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

———. “National Day of Prayer and Remembrance.” Washington, DC, September 13, 2001. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010913-7.html>.

———. “State of the Union.” Washington, DC, January 29, 2002. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

Butler, Judith. “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism.’” In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, 35-57. New York: Routledge, 1992.

———. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Calhoun, Craig. “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere.” In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun, 1-48. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, vol. 1. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1989.

Campolo, Tony. *Letters to a Young Evangelical*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.

Carr, David, and David Comtois. *Da Vinci Declassified.* TV movie. Beantown Productions, 2005.

Carter, Bill, and Neela Banerjee. “2 Networks Are Accused of Rejecting Ad on Religious Bias,” *New York Times*, 2 December 2004, A3.

Challenging the da Vinci Code. DVD. Crystal Entertainment, 2006.

Chaudhry, Kashaf. *The Real Da Vinci Code.* DVD. Acorn Media, 2006.

Chandelle, Rene. *Beyond the da Vinci Code: The Book that Solves the Mystery.* Book Sales, 2006.

Christians, Clifford G. “Religious Perspectives on Communication Technology.” *Journal of Media and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2002): 34-47.

Clark, Lynn Schofield. “Overview: The ‘Protestantization’ of Research into Media, Religion, and Culture.” In *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture,* edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Clark, Stephen. *The Da Vinci Code on Trial: Filtering Fact from Fiction.* Faverdale North, Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2005.

Cone, James. “God is Black.” In *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, edited by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, 101-114. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

———. *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

Cooperman, Alan. “Lesbian Minister Defrocked by United Methodist Church,” *The Washington Post*, 1 November 2005, A03.

Corliss, Richard. “The Goriest Story Ever Told,” *Time*, 1 March 2004, 64-65.

Cracking the Da Vinci Code. DVD. Allumination, 2004.

Crowley, Sharon. *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.

The Da Vinci Code and the Bible. Ascension Press, 2006.

The Da Vinci Code Examined by Charlie Campbell. DVD. Always Be Ready Apologetics Ministries.

Da Vinci Code: Where It All Began. DVD. BFs Entertainment, 2006

Da Vinci and the Code He Lived By. DVD. A&E Home Video, 2006.

Da Vinci: Tracking the Code. DVD. Delta, 2006.

Daly, Mary. *The Church and the Second Sex.* New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

———. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973/1985.

———. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

Deluca, Kevin, and Peeples, Jennifer. "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the Battle of Seattle." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (2002): 125-151.

Denby, David. "Nailed: Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ,'" *The New Yorker*, 1 March 2004, 84.

Dewey, John. *The Public and its Problems.* Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1927/1954.

Dionne, E. J., Jr. "Christians Who Won't Toe the Line," *Washington Post*, 16 March 2007, A21.

Dobson, James. *Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide.* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2000.

———. *Parenting Isn't for Cowards: Dealing Confidently with the Frustrations of Child-Rearing.* Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1988.

———. *Straight Talk to Men: Timeless Principles for Leading Your Family.* Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2000.

Donovan, Josephine. *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism.* New York: Continuum, 1991.

Dow, Bonnie J. *Prime-time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.

———. "The 'Womanhood' Rationale in the Woman Suffrage Rhetoric of Frances E. Willard," *Southern Communication Journal* 56, no. 4 (1991): 298-307.

Duchane, Sangreet. *Beyond the da Vinci Code: From the Rose Line to the Bloodline.* New York: Sterling, 2005.

Echols, Alice. *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Eckstsrom, Kevin. "In 2004 Christians Stood at Front Lines." *Washington Post*, 1 January 2005, B07.

Ehbrecht, Will. *Time Machine: Beyond the Da Vinci Code.* DVD. Weller/Grossman Productions, 2005.

Elbe, Betsy. *Depth and Details: A Reader's Guide to Dan Brown's* The da Vinci Code. Betsy Elbe, 2004.

Elshtain, Jean. *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Engel, Mary Potter, and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. "Making the Connections among Liberation Theologies around the World." In *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside,* edited by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, 1-29. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

Erickson, Hal. *Religious Radio and Television in the United States, 1921-1991: The Programs and Personalities.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1992.

Evans, Sara. *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.

Exploring the da Vinci Code: Henry Lincoln's Guide to Rennes-le-Château. DVD. The Disinformation Company, 2005.

Falwell, Jerry. "Ministers and Marches." In *God's Bullies: Power Politics and Religious Tyranny,* edited by Perry Deane Young, 310-317. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Fendall, Lon. *Citizenship: A Christian Calling.* Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2003.

Ferdinand, Pamela. "Feminist Ethics Course: No Place for Men," *Washington Post,* 26 February 1999, A1.

Ferré, John P. "The Media of Popular Piety." In *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Jolyn Mitchell and Sophia Marriage, 83-92. London, T&T Clark, 2003.

Flory, Susy, Gini Monroe and W. Ward Gasque. *Fear Not da Vinci: Using the Best-selling Novel to Share Your Faith.* Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2006.

Forshey, Gerald E. *American Religious and Biblical Spectaculars.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992.

Fortune, Marie. "The Transformation of Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Perspective." In *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, 139-147. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1989.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction.* New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

———. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, Michel and Colin Gordon (ed.). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977.* New York, Pantheon Books, 1980.

Fraiman, Susan. *Cool Men and the Second Sex.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Frankl, Razelle. *Televangelism: The Marketing of Popular Religion*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1987.

———. "Transformation of Televangelism: Repackaging Christian Values." In *Media, Culture, & the Religious Right,* edited by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage, 163-189. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun, 109-142. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

Fraser, Peter. *Images of the Passion: The Sacramental Mode in Film.* Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Frykholm, Amy Johnson. *Rapture Culture:* Left Behind *in Evangelical America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Gardiner, Anne Barbeau. "Book Review: Dan Brown, The Da Vinci Code," *Culture Wars*, February 2004. <www.culturewars.com/2004/DaVinci.html>

Garlow, James, and Peter Jones. *Cracking da Vinci's Code: You've Read the Fiction, Now Read the Facts.* Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 2004.

Garlow, James, Timothy Paul Jones, and April Williams. *The da Vinci Code Breaker*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2006.

Gates, David. "Religion: The Pop Prophets," *Newsweek,* 24 May 2004, 44.

Gibson, Mel. *The Passion of the Christ.* Icon Productions, 2004.

Gilben, Brandon. *Solving the da Vinci Code Mystery*. Atlanta, GA: Chalice Press, 2004.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*. New York: Harper, 1915/1979.

Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 18 (1982): 214-227.

Goodstein, Laurie. "Defenders of Christianity Rebut 'The Da Vinci Code,'" *The New York Times,* 27 April 2004, A22.

———. "Disowning Conservative Politics, Evangelical Pastor Rattles Flock." *New York Times,* July 30, 2006. http://www.nytimes.com (accessed February 10, 2007).

———. "Many Episcopalians Wary, Some Defiant After Ultimatum by Anglicans," *New York Times,* 21 February 2007, A15.

Gorski, Eric. "Pulpit Partisans Decried." *Denver Post,* September 9, 2004, B-02.

Grant, Jacqueline. "Subjectification as a Requirement for Christological Construction." In *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside,* edited by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, pp 207-220. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

Griffith-Jones, Robin. *The da Vinci Code and the Secrets of the Temple.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006.

Grossman, Cathy Lynn. "View of God Can Predict Values, Politics," *USA Today*, 12 September 2006.

Gunton, Colin E. *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

Habermas, Jürgen. "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." *New German Critique* 3 (1964): 49-55.

———. "Religion in the Public Sphere." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1-25.

———. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962/1991.

Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.

Hanegraaf, Hank, and Paul L. Maier. *The da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* Chicago: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004.

Hansen, Collin. "Breaking the Da Vinci Code," *Good News Magazine*, January/February 2004. <http://www.goodnewsmag.org/magazine/1JanFeb/jf04daVinci.htm>

Harra, Carmen. *Signs, Symbols and Secrets: Decoding the da Vinci Code*. Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2006.

Harrell, David Edwin. "Oral Roberts: Religious Media Pioneer." In *Communication and Change in American Religious History,* edited by Leonard I. Sweet, 320-334. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993.

Harrison, Eric. "The Blood of Christ; Martyrdom Overwhelms 'The Passion,'" *Houston Chronicle,* 25 February 2004, 1.

Hauser, Gerald A. "Prisoners of Conscience and the Counterpublic Sphere of Prison Writing: The Stones that Start the Avalanche." In *Counterpublics and the State,* edited by Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer. Albany, SUNY Press, 2001.

———. *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

Hendershot, Heather. *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Henninger, Daniel. "Holy Sepulchre! 60 Million Buy 'The da Vinci Code,'" *The Wall Street Journal,* 19 May 2006, A10.

Herzog, Frederick. *Liberation Theology: Liberation in the Light of the Fourth Gospel.* New York: Seabury Press, 1972.

Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. "The Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries." In *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* edited by Craig Calhoun, 99-108. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

Holding, James Patrick. "Not InDavincible: A Review and Critique of *The Da Vinci Code*," Answers in Action, 2003. <http://www.answers.org/issues/davincicode.html> Accessed 25 March 2007.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism.* Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981.

Hoover, Stewart M. "The Culturalist Turn in Scholarship on Media and Religion." *Journal of Media and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2002): 25-36.

———. "Introduction: The Cultural Construction of Religion in the Media Age." In *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, 1-6. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Hoover, Stewart M., and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds. *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Huggins, Ronald V. "Cracks in the Da Vinci Code," Institute for Religious Research. <www.irr.org/da-vinci-code.html>. Accessed March 25, 2007.

Jesus: Divine or da Vinci?: A Biblical Response to the da Vinci Code. DVD. Mahoney Media.

The John Ankerberg Show: Answering the Questions Raised by the da Vinci Code. DVD. Ankerberg Theological Research Institute.

Kaplan, Jeffrey. *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Karnick, S. T. "Violence to Scripture?" *National Review Online*, 27 February 2004. Accessed through LexisNexis.

Kellmeyer, Steve. *Fact and Fiction in the da Vinci Code*. Plano, TX: Bridegroom Press, 2004.

Kellner, Douglas. “Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: A Critical Intervention.” Paper available at http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html. Accessed December 13, 2005.

Kennedy, D. James, and Jerry Newcombe. *The da Vinci Myth Versus the Gospel Truth.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006.

Kraditor, Aileen. *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1965/1981.

Kuo, David. *Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

LaHaye, Tim. *Sex Education is for the Family*. Grand Rapids, MI: 1985.

LaHaye, Tim, and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Apollyon: The Destroyer is Unleashed.* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Armageddon: The Cosmic Battle of the Ages.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Assassins: Assignment: Jerusalem, Target: Antichrist.* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Desecration: Antichrist Takes the Throne.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Glorious Appearing: The End of Days.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *The Indwelling: The Beast Takes Possession.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Nicolae: The Rise of Antichrist.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *The Remnant: On the Brink of Armageddon.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Soul Harvest: The World Takes Sides.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

———. *Tribulation Force: The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind.* Wheaton: IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

LaHaye, Tim, and Beverly LaHaye. *The Act of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.

Laidlaw, Stuart. "Even Detractors Can't Resist Adding to the Buzz," *The Toronto Star*, 20 May 2006, L02.

de Lauretis, Teresa. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Leland, John. "A Church that Packs them in 16,000 at a Time," *New York Times,* 18 July 2005.

Lemire, Christy. "At the Movies: 'The Passion of the Christ,'" The Associated Press, 23 February 2004. Accessed through Lexis Nexis.

Leonardo da Vinci: The Code, the Myth, the Man. Spearhead Films, 2006.

Lindlof, Thomas R. "Interpretive Community: An Approach to Media and Religion." *Journal of Media and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2002): 61-74.

Lindsey, Hal. *The Late, Great Planet Earth.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.

Longnecker, Dwight, and David Gustafson. *Mary: A Catholic-Evangelical Debate.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003.

Lunn, Martin. *Da Vinci Code Decoded.* New York: Disinformation, 2004.

Lutzer, Erwin W. *The da Vinci Deception: Credible Answers to the Questions Millions Are Asking about Jesus, the Bible, and The Da Vinci Code.* Chicago, Tyndale, 2004.

Lynch, John. "Institution and Imprimatur: Institutional Rhetoric and the Failure of the Catholic Church's Pastoral Letter on Homosexuality," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2005): 383-403.

Macquarrie, John. *Mary for All Christians.* Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1990.

Maddux, Kristy. "When Patriots Protest: The Anti-Suffrage Discursive Transformation of 1917." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 283-310.

Mahler, Jonathan. "The Soul of the New Exurb." *New York Times*, 27 March 2005.

Marcus, Ruth. "What 'War on Christmas'?" *Washington Post,* 10 December 2005, A21.

Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Maslin, Jane. "Spinning a Thriller from a Gallery at the Louvre," *New York Times,* 17 March 2006.

McDorman, Todd F. "Crafting a Virtual Counterpublic: Right-to-Die Advocates on the Internet." In *Counterpublics and the State,* edited by Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer, 187-209. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

McLaughlin, Lisa. "Feminism, the Public Sphere, Media, and Democracy." *Media, Culture and Society* 15 (1993): 599-620.

McKensie, David. *Unlocking da Vinci's Code.* Starcast Productions, 2004.

McKerrow, Raymie E. "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis." *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91-111.

Metzger, Richard. *Da Vinci Code Decoded Box Set: Totally Decoded.* DVD. Disinformation, 2006.

Meyers, Robin. *Why the Christian Right is Wrong: A Minister's Manifesto for Taking Back Your Faith, Your Flag, Your Future.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Miesel, Sandra. Dismantling *The Da Vinci Code*," *Crisis,* 1 September 2003. <www.crisismagazine.com/september2003/feature1.htm>

Miles, Margaret R. *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

Millar, Peter. "Holy Humbug," *The Times* (London), 21 June 2003, 15.

Moraga, Cherríe, and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981.

Morris, David. *The Art & Mythology of the da Vinci Code.* Lamar Publishing House, LLC, 2004.

Morris, Wesley. "'Da Vinci' Surprise: Both Sides of the Controversy May Win," *Boston Globe,* 14 May 2006, N11.

Murphy, John M. "'Our Mission and Our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11th." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2003): 607-632.

National Geographic—Is It Real? Da Vinci's Code. DVD. National Geographic Video, 2006.

Neff, David. “The Passion of Mel Gibson: Why Evangelicals Are Cheering a Movie with Profoundly Catholic Sensibilities,” *Christianity Today*, March 2004, 30-35.

Negt, Oskar, and Alexander Kluge. *The Public Sphere and Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974/1993.

Nickoloff, James B. “Introduction.” In *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, edited by James B. Nickoloff, 1-22. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, l996.

O’Leary, Stephen D. *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Olasky, Marvin. “Democracy and the Secularization of the American Press.” In *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media*, edited by Quentin J. Schultze, 47-68. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1990.

Olson, Carl E., and Sandra Miesel. “Christ, the Early Church, Constantine, and the Council of Nicaea,” Planet Envoy. <www.envoymagazine.com/planetenvoy/Review-DaVinci-part2-Full.htm>. Accessed 25 March 2007.

———. *The da Vinci Hoax: Exposing the Errors in the da Vinci Code*. Fort Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 2004.

Opus Dei and the da Vinci Code. DVD. BFs Entertainment, 2006.

Orchard, Helen. *Courting Betrayal: Jesus as Victim in the Gospel of John.* Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

Origins of the da Vinci Code. DVD. The Disinformation Company, 2005.

Parker, Kathleen. “Ga-ga over Goddess-ness,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 3 August 2003, 04J.

Paulson, Michael. "Barriers Beyond the Church Door Despite Gains, Female Clergy Still Trail Men in Pay, Advancement," *The Boston Globe*, 16 July 2000, A1.

Peck, Janice. *The Gods of Televangelism: The Crisis of Meaning and the Appeal of Religious Television*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 1993.

Peters, John Durham. "Distrust of Representation: Habermas on the Public Sphere." *Media, Culture and Society* 15 (1993): 541-571.

———. "The Gaps of Which Communication is Made." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11 (1994): 117-140.

Pezzullo, Phaedra. "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performance." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003): 345-365.

Pinter, Andrej. "Public Sphere and History: Historians' Response to Habermas on the 'Worth' of the Past." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 28, no. 3 (2004): 217-232.

Piore, Adam. "A Higher Frequency: How the Rise of Salem Communications' Radio Empire Reveals the Evangelical Master Plan." *Mother Jones*, December 2005.

*The Priory of Sion (60 Minutes).*DVD. CBS, 2006.

Priest, David. *The da Vinci Code Deception: Solving the 2000 Year Old Mystery.* DVD. Grizzly Adams Productions, 2006.

Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Rawls, John. "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64 (1997); 765-807.

Reid, Ronald F. “Apocalypticism and Typology: Rhetorical Dimensions of a Symbolic Reality.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, no. 3 (1983): 229-248.

Reidy, Timothy Maurice, “Breaking the Code,” *Commonweal,* 12 September 2003. <http://69.93.235.8/article.php?id_article=773>. Accessed 19 November 2004.

Rich, Adrienne. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986.

Rich, Frank. “Mel Gibson’s Martyrdom Complex,” *New York Times,* 3 August 2003, sec. 2, p. 1.

Roberts, Roxanne. “The Mysteries of Mary Magdalene: Bestseller Renews Interest in a Misunderstood Figure,” *Washington Post,* 20 July 2003, D01.

Roeser, Thomas. “Potshots Hit Catholics, Again,” *Chicago Sun-Times,* 27 September 2003, 18.

Rose, Michael S. “The Greatest Story Ever *Sold*,” *Cruxnews.com*, 15 October 2003. <www.cruxnews.com/rose/davincicode.html>

Rosenthal, Michele. “‘Turn it off!’: TV Criticism in the Christian Century Magazine.” In *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture,* edited by Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, 138-162. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Ruddick, Sara. “Maternal Thinking.” In *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory,* edited by Joyce Trebilcot, 213-230. Totowa, NJ: Roman & Allanheld, 1983.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. “Eschatology and Feminism.” In *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside,* edited by Susan Brooks

Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, pp 129-142. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

———. *Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power.* New York: Paulist Press, 1972.

Ryan, Mary P. "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America." In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun, 259-288. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

Sandeen, Ernest R. "Toward a Historical Interpretation of the History of Fundamentalism. In *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism,* edited by Martin E. Marty, 19-36. New York: K. G. Saur, 1993.

Schultze, Quentin J. *Christianity and the Mass Media in America: Toward a Democratic Accommodation*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2003.

———. "Keeping the Faith: American Evangelicals and the Media." In *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media,* edited by Quentin Schultze, 23-45. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1990.

Scofield, C. I. *The New Scofield Reference Bible.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Scott, A. O. "Good and Evil Locked in Violent Showdown." *New York Times,* 25 February 2004, E1.

Shuck, Glenn W. *Marks of the Beast: The* Left Behind *Novels and the Struggle for Evangelical Identity.* New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Silk, Mark. *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Sloop, John M. *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

Smolinski, Reiner. "Apocalypticism in Colonial North America." In *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism,* edited by Bernard J. McGinn, John J. Collins, Stephen J. Stein, 441-466. New York: Continuum, 2003.

Snitow, Anne. "A Gender Diary." In *Conflicts in Feminism,* edited by Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, 9-43. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Sobrino, Jon. *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 4.

Solberg, Mary M. *Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist Proposal for an Epistemology of the Cross.* Albany: SUNY Press, 1997.

Squires, Catherine R. "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres." *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4: 446-468.

Stein, Stephen J. "Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream in the United States." In *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism,* edited by Bernard J. McGinn, John J. Collins, Stephen J. Stein, 493-515. New York: Continuum, 2003.

Stout, Daniel A. "Religious Media Literacy: Toward a Research Agenda." *Journal of Media and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2002): 49-60.

Stout, Daniel A., and Judith M. Buddenbaum. "Genealogy of an Emerging Field: Foundations for the Study of Media and Religion." *Journal of Media and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2002): 5-12.

Strauss, Mark L. *Truth & Error in the da Vinci Code: The Facts about Jesus and Christian Origins.* Hastings, UK: Alethinos Books, 2006.

Strobel, Lee, and Garry Poole. *Discussing the da Vinci Code: Examining the Issues Raised by the Book and Movie*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

Taylor, Charles. *Modern Social Imaginaries.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Teisch, Jessica, and Tracy Barr. *Da Vinci for Dummies.* Indianapolis, IN: Wiley, 2005.

TFP Committee on American Issues. *Rejecting the da Vinci Code: How a Blasphemous Novel Brutally Attacks our Lord and the Catholic Church.* Spring Grove, PA: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property, 2005.

Townsend, Kathleen Kennedy. *Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches are Mixing God with Politics and Losing their Way.* New York: Warner Books, 2007.

Tubbs, Sharon. The Gospel According to Dan Brown," *St. Petersburg Times,* 25 January 2004, 1E.

Tucker, Neely. "Have a Holly, Jolly Holiday; Conservatives, Others Angry over Removals of Word 'Christmas,'" *Washington Post,* 20 December 2005, C01.

Unger, Craig. "American Rapture," *Vanity Fair*, December 2005.

Wallis, Jim. *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It.* New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics.* New York: Zone Books, 2002.

Waxman, Sharon. "Fox Unveils a Division for Religion-Oriented Films," *New York Times,* September 20, 2006, E1.

Welborn, Amy. *The da Vinci Code Mysteries: What the Movie doesn't Tell You.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2006.

———. *De-Coding da Vinci: The Facts Behind the Fiction of the Da Vinci Code.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004.

White, Gayle. “2004: God’s Country; Christians’ Support for Bush Illustrates Moral Counterattack,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* November 7, 2004, 1D.

Wieseltier, Leon. “Mel Gibson’s Lethal Weapon: The Worship of Blood.” *The New Republic,* 8 March 2004, 19-21.

Williams, Garry. *The da Vinci Code: From Dan Brown’s Fiction to Mary Magdalene’s Faith.* Ross-shire, Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2006.

Witherington, Ben III, *The Gospel Code: Novel Claims about Jesus, Mary Magdalene and da Vinci.* Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Young, T. W. “‘The Da Vinci Code’ Is All Fiction, Keep in Mind,” *The Georgia Bulletin,* 11 December 2003. <http://www.georgiabulletin.org/local/2003/12/11/Da_Vinci_Code_Is_All_Fiction/> Accessed November 19, 2004.