

ALIENS AND APOCALYPTICISM:
CHRISTIAN END TIMES AND ALIEN CONSPIRACY THEORIES

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family for supporting me, my church for praying for me, the rest of the Mizzou grad students for their advice and help, and Lauren and Scott for reading this four times through. I couldn't have done this without any of you.

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ALIENS AND APOCALYPTICISM:
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ABSTRACT

The new millennium has brought with it new forms of Christian premillennialist thought. The rise of the Internet and self-publishing has allowed for new strands of theology to develop and flourish without having to answer to a wider Christian body. Developing biotechnology has also raised concerns about the way technology can impact the individual. In particular, a certain milieu has been arguing that these evolving technologies are a spiritual threat to believers, potentially stripping them of their role as a child of God.

This thesis will look at a handful of modern Christian authors who combine the Bible with apocrypha, books on the occult, and other sources rejected by fundamentalist Christians to argue that mankind is endangered by demonic forces who puppeteer society. They also warn about transhumanism, which they read as a dangerous ideology that threatens human's genetic purity. This thesis will look at their interpretation of the End Times, their theology of spiritual warfare, and their anti-transhumanism, as well as how they differ from the wider culture of premillennialist Christianity, placing them within a broader context of improvisational millennialism. It will argue that these ideas are a continuation of long-running trends in premillennialism, while highlighting the aforementioned differences. It primarily looks at the works of five authors, but also branches out to other members of this milieu.

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, transhumanism and Christianity are not likely to mix. A proponent of one is unlikely to endorse the other, except in a way that supporters would not recognize. Extraterrestrials and ufology are other fields that are unlikely to find much traction in church sermons. Most would claim ignorance of the former and while they might be a bit vague on the latter, most conservative Christians would see aliens and Christianity as contradictory, since they are never mentioned (in conventional theology) in the Bible. However, there is a group of authors who not only see a connection between these ideas but see them as an active threat to Christians.

This thesis focuses on a milieu of apocalyptic bioconservatives, a selection of premillennialist Christian authors who combine Christianity with opposition to transhumanism and genetic modification, aliens, and other esoteric concepts. Philosopher Allen Porter defines transhumanism as, “an intellectual and socio-political movement that is concerned with a cluster of issues in bioethics, in particular, issues involving the use of technology to transform the human organism radically.”¹ These transformations can range from Google Glass to cyborgs to uploading one’s brain into a computer. I use the term milieu to refer to them throughout this paper in part because it fits better than others; while some like Thomas Horn loom larger than other members, there is no leader or leaders in this group dictating what is and is not acceptable.² As scholar S. Jonathan O’Donnell explains, these authors “share platforms and themes but

¹ Allan Porter, “Bioethics and Transhumanism,” *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine* 42, no. 3, (2017), accessed May 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmp/jhx001>.

² It should be noted that Thomas Horn, at the very least, has no issue describing himself and his fellow authors as a “milieu,” even titling a collection of essays by himself and others by that name.

lack [...] strict formal organizational affiliation.”³ These authors agree on the broad strokes of their beliefs, but often disagree on the particulars.

For this paper, I have focused on five authors in particular: Thomas Horn, Cris Putnam, Derek Gilbert, Dr. Michael Heiser, and Timothy Alberino. Horn is a leading figure in this milieu and one of the most prolific writers. He is also the CEO of SkyWatchTV, an online news site that is the “mothership” for Horn’s other “subsidiaries including Defender Films and Defender Publishing.”⁴ Putnam (who died in 2017) was a Christian apologist who co-wrote four books with Horn. Gilbert is a host for SkyWatchTV. Heiser is in some ways an outlier from the rest of the milieu: while his writings on spiritual warfare are a major influence on them, he breaks from them in other key areas. For example, he is deeply skeptical of the existence of aliens, demonic imposters or not.⁵ Alberino has directed documentaries starring milieu members and promoting their beliefs. His book *Birthright* (2020) is both a best-seller and the most concise summary of the milieu’s beliefs.

My goal in this paper is to examine this milieu’s beliefs and explain how they are different from “traditional” premillennialism. However, I will also explore how, in spite of the science-fictional coating, these beliefs are continuations of long-standing premillennialist traditions. In many ways, the fears that these authors express are reflections of wider concerns held by other parts of American society. This work is divided into three chapters. The first will

³ S. Jonathan O’Donnell, “Secularizing Demons: Fundamentalist Navigations in Religion and Secularity,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 51(3), (2016): 643, accessed May 17, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/27764358/Secularizing_Demons_Fundamentalist_Navigations_in_Religion_and_Secularity.

⁴ “Who We Are,” SkyWatchTV, accessed June 6, 2022, <https://www.skywatchtv.com/about/>.

⁵ Michael Heiser, “Review of *The Greys Have Been Framed: Exploitation in the UFO Community*,” December 31, 2016, <https://drmsh.com/review-of-the-greys-have-been-framed-exploitation-in-the-ufo-community/>.

look at this milieu's End Times beliefs. They are primarily premillennialist, meaning that they believe that Christ will bodily return before a thousand-year reign (referred to as the "Millennium").⁶ However, they differ from "traditional" premillennialists in key ways. For one, they challenge certain premillennialist doctrines, such as the location of the Battle of Armageddon. They also put more emphasis on a demonic deception that takes the form of apparent extraterrestrial visitation. The next chapter will look at this milieu's emphasis on spiritual warfare. In this they share similarities with Pentecostalism and charismatic movements; O'Donnell even refers to them as "neo-charismatic."⁷ They believe that Satan is actively working to manipulate human history for his own ends, and they attribute the rise of ideas they oppose to his influence. Finally, I will examine their bioconservatism, the most distinctive feature of this milieu. They present themselves as some of the few Christians talking about this issue, warning their readers about the spiritual danger of transhumanism, and how it is a corrupting force that degrades them as humans. This milieu presents this type of modification as something that threatens the Christian's standing as a child of God. As I will show, these concerns are not limited to them, but have traction among more liberal Christians as well.

I would argue that this milieu promotes what political scientist Michael Barkun calls "improvisational millennialism." "Religious" and "secular" millennialism, according to Barkun's definition, are meant to fit in with an already existing tradition—even though its proponents often say they are opposing an already existing orthodoxy—and are based on writings "(e.g., the Bible or Marx's writings)," that claim to be authoritative about how the world works. By contrast,

⁶ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2.

⁷ O'Donnell, 644.

improvisational millennialism grabs freely from multiple traditions, weaving together, for example, occult New Age beliefs, UFO conspiracy theories, and extreme forms of Buddhism.⁸

Barkun further goes on to explain that these ideas can only flourish when there is a wide variety of material to be incorporated into the system and when already existing authorities have eroded to the point where these ideas can be presented and gain traction.⁹ Improvisational millennialists gain inspiration from rejected knowledge, the cultic milieu, and stigmatized knowledge. The former refers to knowledge, often occult knowledge, that has been rejected by the Christian mainstream. The second is a milieu within a larger belief system that rejects certain beliefs of that system but has not broken away from it. This also goes beyond occult beliefs and includes the interactive systems, such as organizations or media channels, that make this more than just idle belief. The final term is defined as knowledge that has been suppressed/forgotten/ignored, etc., and that believers think can be proven by empirical evidence. Most of these ideas are present in this milieu.¹⁰ However, I will argue that this milieu does not *completely* fit under the definition of improvisational millennialism. I will demonstrate how this milieu promotes what is recognizably premillennial Christianity, although incorporating ideas that are rejected, looked down upon, or are unknown among “mainstream” believers. This milieu certainly embraces rejected and stigmatized knowledge, and there is a cultic milieu present, but it has merely updated long-held beliefs among premillennialist Christians about all-consuming and dominating institutions as well as the dangers of technological advancements.

⁸ William Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 1st ed., (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 2003, 10-11.

⁹ Barkun, 19.

¹⁰ Barkun, 23-29.

This milieu has not received much attention from scholars. Paul Thomas, Sean O’Callaghan, James J. Hughes, and, most prominently, S. Jonathan O’Donnell are among the few who have looked at this milieu in any detail. However, while most of these writers have focused on Horn, they have not focused on the other authors this project analyzes.¹¹ Similar to Boyer, I argue that this milieu, while not as widespread as the premillennialism that he looked at, does have a wide reach.¹² No longer do believers have to buy books; they can get all the material they need from YouTube.

While these authors might be dismissed as being fringe, they do have followings. Horn, for example, “has been featured heavily on popular right-wing conspiracist website WorldNetDaily (wnd.com), and has close ties to other parts of the Christian right through his ally Chuck Missler, serving as faculty at Missler’s Koinonia Institute[.]”¹³ He is also the CEO of Defender Publishing, which publishes most of this milieu’s writing. In the summer of 2022, SkyWatchTV hosted an online conference boasting over two dozen speakers which were associated with this milieu. While there might be variants in their personal beliefs, most of those speakers will spread the general beliefs of the milieu.¹⁴ For example, one of the speakers at the conference was Jonathan Cahn, the author of *The Harbinger* (2011), the first of a series of fictional books that compare Israel to America and prophesize about the latter. *The Harbinger* has been sold in well-known chains like Wal-Mart and Barnes and Noble, and the book currently sits at almost ten thousand reviews on Amazon (and over 18,000 star ratings). Even though he

¹¹ O’Callaghan briefly discusses Putnam and O’Donnell briefly discusses Gilbert, Carl Teichrib, and a handful of others

¹² Boyer, 15-17.

¹³ O’Donnell, 643.

¹⁴ “Speakers,” Defender Conference, accessed June 14, 2022, <https://defenderconference.com/speakers/>.

has not given any strong support for or against extraterrestrials or transhumanism, he is often associated with milieu-led conferences on these topics, going back to long-before his best-seller status, and could be a “bridge” for his followers to those other ideas. His presence at these conferences lends the milieu legitimacy among his followers, spreading the milieu into broader premillennialist movements. Putnam used to be closely associated with Horn, and the two of them co-authored four books. Derek Gilbert and his wife Sharon are also heavily associated with Horn and SkyWatchTV and have hosted multiple shows on there. While Alberino has only published *Birthright*, it has almost one thousand reviews on Amazon, and, like Horn, he has a wide public profile; his YouTube channel has videos with tens of thousands of views at minimum, and he is both a director of and star of documentary films promoting the milieu.

Another member of this milieu, Gary Stearman, runs a website, prophecywatchers.com, which promotes and sells the milieu’s books and films, and whose ministry was praised by well-known premillennialist Tim LaHeye, one of the minds behind the *Left Behind* series of premillennial novels. (Although it must be said that those books do not cross over with this milieu’s ideas.)¹⁵ The site’s YouTube channel also hosts multiple members of this milieu, with views ranging from the low thousands to around a hundred thousand views; videos starring Alberino or Horn often range from 50-60 thousand to the previously mentioned hundred thousand (or more, one video from February 2022 starring Alberino boasted 229K views). These authors might be “fringe,” but what they are not is *isolated*.¹⁶ They support and promote

¹⁵ “Kind Words from Our Friends,” The Prophecy Watchers, accessed June 5, 2022, <https://prophecywatchers.com/>.

¹⁶ “The Deliverance of the Administrative State: Deep State Conspiracism, Charismatic Demonology, and the Post-Truth Politics of American Christian Nationalism,” *Religion* vol. 50, no. 4 (2020): 707, accessed June 13, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/44552078/The_Deliverance_of_the_Administrative_State_Deep_State_Conspiracism_Charismatic_Demonology_and_the_Post_Truth_Politics_of_American_Christian_Nationalism.

each other, and while they may not command mainstream attention, they have a wide audience, and that audience could expand greatly. As transhumanism and genetic engineering, to say nothing of advanced concepts such as AI (artificial intelligence), continue to grow in the public sphere, Christians will be looking to know how they should respond to them. These authors provide a possible answer to that.

This milieu argues that they are filling in a gap in conservative Christianity. They claim that transhumanism has not been properly addressed by other Christians, that even conservative Christianity downplays the supernatural, and that some common understandings of the End Times are flawed. In spite of the skepticism coming from multiple Christian viewpoints, this milieu makes the case that they are the only ones discussing human modification and warning other Christians about the risks it represents. It would be wrong to say that they dominate the discussion, but they provide a counterargument to pro-transhumanism narratives. By focusing on these aspects, they set themselves apart from other premillennial fundamentalists.

It is difficult to judge this milieu's influence on the wider world. Their influence mostly comes from books published by independent presses (most notable Thomas Horn's Defender Publishing) and from online videos. There are sometimes conferences catering to this milieu, but on the whole, it is a disconnected phenomenon. As Barkun explains, part of the way conspiracy theories spread is through bridging, where a fringe idea comprising of stigmatized knowledge is connected into a wider, more politically acceptable group. In this case, people would possibly be drawn in by premillennialism or UFOs and then be pulled into the other group, as well as the wider conspiracy that this milieu claims ties them together.¹⁷ Gaylene Goodroad, an author on a fundamentalist blog, mentions attending an unnamed prophecy conference where Horn and his

¹⁷ Barkun, 181-183.

wife Nita's then-newest book was being promoted by one of the speakers. This is only a single incident, but it illustrates the way these authors can spread their teachings to groups who would otherwise be unreceptive via appealing to these groups' concerns or by trying to fill a niche that the wider group is leaving unaddressed. Goodroad discusses how this milieu's teachings on spiritual warfare were promoted by addressing concerns about spirituality and transhumanism.¹⁸ As mentioned above, figures such as Jonathan Cahn can also serve as a "bridge." He is another speaker on the Prophecy Watchers YouTube channel, and it is likely that some of his followers might find him there, then check out the other videos on the channel, and hence find themselves nodding along to Gilbert or Horn.

While this milieu is not in the public eye, they do have an impact. As Boyer notes in his study of premillennial apocalypticism, while the average believer might not be devouring this content, devoutly reading all the books, driving to seminars, etc., they are still influenced by these ideas, and they might impact how they respond when these issues enter their everyday life.¹⁹

This milieu gives us some insight into issues that trouble modern Americans. People would not be drawn to these authors if they did not present something of value. In this case, they speak to longstanding fears about technology, individualism, and the allure of forbidden and esoteric knowledge. They provide a grounding in complex topics that their readers might feel are being unaddressed by their communities. Because their theology is similar to "traditional" premillennialism, they are able to make inroads and appeal to broad audiences who might otherwise be skeptical of some of their claims. Like all premillennialist writers, they are

¹⁸ Gaylene Goodroad and The Discernment Research Group, "Militant Prayer," *Herescope*, September 13, 2011, <https://herescope.blogspot.com/2011/09/militant-prayer.html>.

¹⁹ Boyer, 2-3.

attempting to answer hard questions about mankind's role in the world and how they should respond to spiritual challenges. Part of that involves addressing the end of the world and the forces responsible for it.

CHAPTER 1

END TIMES AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

In this chapter, I will look at how these authors interpret the End Times. By “End Times,” I refer to the end of the world that fundamentalist premillennialists see foretold in the Book of Revelation. These authors do not tend to focus on the events themselves, but instead on what they see as the conditions that will make the rise of the Antichrist and his consolidation of power possible. This crosses over with conspiracy theories that have been part of premillennialist discourse for decades, if not centuries. They also challenge other conservative fundamentalists regarding how these events should be interpreted. I feel that it is best to open with this chapter to give context to some of the arguments these authors will make in later chapters, and why they view certain events with so much concern. These theories are important, as they not only give insight into how these writers view the world but also allows us to see how they continue the traditions of previous writers.

Premillennialist Christianity has often wrestled with conspiracy theories. Paul Boyer details how conspiracy theories were able to take root among twentieth-century evangelicals due to their hostility and “acute sense of alienation” towards the surrounding culture. Some evangelicals, already believing that the current world order was sinister and corrupt, found it easy to believe that “cohesive and powerful forces” dominated the world, and it was easy to see the rise of a single figure within that worldview.²⁰ As new world organizations and advanced technology developed, the Antichrist came to be seen less a single figure and more of cog in a machine of

²⁰ Boyer, 270-271.

control that dominated and dehumanized man.²¹ This is not to say that prophecy writers lost the idea of the Antichrist as an evil and manipulative individual, but that they now tried to place him in a wider system that would facilitate his rule. This fear of an all-consuming force that controlled the world and sought to destroy the individual can be seen in their writings.²²

Tying into this fear, a major concern among prophecy writers has been the rise of the one-world religious system predicted in Revelation 17. The fear of a one-world religion—perhaps consisting of a fusion of the Catholic Church, liberal Protestantism and the World Council of Churches—has been a long-held fear of prophecy writers (although Boyer notes how they “intensified” in the 1970s and 1980s “as evangelicalism thrived and the more liberal denominations faltered”), who have warned of merging denominations into a bureaucratized, anti-individualist whole.²³ The authors under discussion echo those warnings. The Catholic Church in particular comes under criticism.

Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam argue that the Catholic Church is “paving the way for the final, one-world, ecumenical faith prophesied in Revelation 17.”²⁴ They further accuse the Catholic Church of being the red dragon of Revelation 12 that chases and persecutes Israel.²⁵ They also allege that the Church has fallen under the influence of “a formidable Illuminati-Masonic group,” Satanists who desire to use the Church “as a political vehicle for an occult

²¹ Barkun, 43-44.

²² Boyer, 263-265.

²³ Boyer, 263, 278.

²⁴ Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam, *Petrus Romanus: The FINAL Pope is Here*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2012), 376.

²⁵ Horn and Putnam, 361.

World Order.”²⁶ They often reference the work of Malachi Martin, who said that the Church was under the influence of pedophilic Satanists who had worked to enthrone Satan himself in the Roman Catholic Citadel.²⁷ Horn has recently argued that the Church is being used as a pawn by powerful leaders in media, technology and finance who want it to endorse the Beast.²⁸ In this worldview, if the Church is a pawn, the Pope is the one pulling the strings.

The idea that the Pope is the Antichrist has a long tradition among prophecy writers, going back to the fourth century. While this identification did fade post-1945, in part due to the Church’s declining political influence and its opposition to Communism, some writers continued to insist that the Church would play a key role in the Antichrist’s rise, although it was now reduced to “a supporting role in the Antichrist drama.”²⁹ For their part, Horn and Putnam also argue that Pope Francis is the “False Prophet” predicted in Revelation who will lead a one-world religion, possibly led by the Church.³⁰ They claim that Pope Francis is promoting “oneism,” the uniting of all religions, as part of this.³¹ They note how, “It is clear from Scripture that the False Prophet will be a powerful and well-respected global spiritual leader, and there is none more powerful or respected in religious matters than the Roman Catholic Pope.”³² To them, he is Petrus Romanus, the “final pope” who was predicted in St. Malachy’s Prophecy of the

²⁶ Horn and Putnam, 466, 468.

²⁷ Horn and Putnam, 91-93.

²⁸ Thomas Horn, *Zeitgeist 2025: Countdown to the Secret Destiny of America, the Lost Prophecies of the Qumran, and the Return of Old Saturn’s Reign*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2021), 85-86.

²⁹ Boyer, 273-275.

³⁰ Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam, *The Final Roman Emperor, the Islamic Antichrist, and the Vatican’s Last Crusade*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2016), 152, 155.

³¹ Horn and Putnam, 183.

³² Horn and Putnam, *Petrus*, 84.

Popes, a prophecy allegedly dating back to the 1100s.³³ While they deny that the Pope is *the* Antichrist that will persecute the church during the Tribulation, they affirm that he is *an* antichrist, one who is opposed to Christ.³⁴ However, in his book *The Messenger* (2020), Horn modifies his prediction to claim that Pope Francis, while illegitimate, is merely a placeholder for the true final pope.³⁵

Furthermore, in their book *The Final Roman Emperor* (2016), Putnam argues that the Roman Catholic Church is manufacturing causes of “just war” in order to bring about “the kingdom of Antichrist,” or a “New World Order.”³⁶ According to him and Horn, every pope since 1963 has “advocated Marxist views akin to liberation theology. This is important,” they note, “because we believe feigned socialism will be behind the False Prophet’s role in implementing a global financial control mechanism (Revelation 13:16).” They see Pope Francis’s calls for economic unity as possibly paving the way for the establishment of the Mark of the Beast.³⁷ For his part, Alberino does not directly implicate the Catholic Church in this new faith, instead saying it will come about in the aftermath of Apollo “rescuing” humanity from extraterrestrials.³⁸ He is not the only one to see a possible connection between extraterrestrials and the Vatican. Horn and Putnam also tie them together, stating that the Vatican is vulnerable,

³³ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor* 151 and *Petrus*, 14.

³⁴ Horn and Putnam, *Petrus*, 75, 263.

³⁵ Thomas Horn, *The Messenger: It's Headed Toward Earth! It Cannot Be Stopped! And It's Carrying the Secret of America's, the World's, and Your Tomorrow!*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2020), 273.

³⁶ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 72.

³⁷ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 163, 165-166.

³⁸ Timothy Alberino, *Birthright: The Coming Posthuman Apocalypse and the Usurpation of Adam's Dominion on Planet Earth*. (Bozeman: Alberino Publishing, 2020), 286-292.

“to evil supernaturalism cloaked in an alien guise.”³⁹ However, while this milieu does repeat some of their predecessor’s claims, they do not uncritically follow them. For example, Barkun mentions how some anti-Catholic conspiracy theories have their roots in the works of Alexander Hilsop, who alleged that the Church was the continuation of the worship of Nimrod and his wife.⁴⁰ Horn and Putnam refer to this same work as “shoddy scholarship.”⁴¹ I did not see any other authors mention the Catholic Church, but it seems fair to assume that they have similar views.

As mentioned above, the Catholic Church, Pope Francis in particular, is seen as promoting a one-world religion. One work that argues this is Putnam’s *The Supernatural Worldview* (2014). In it, Putnam criticizes “oneism,” (a term coined by theologian Peter Jones, although Putnam says they developed their ideas separately) the idea that all religions lead to the same place.⁴² He says that it “is the same as the pantheistic monism asserting ‘Nirvana’ or ‘Brahman’ found in Eastern religions, the ‘Omega Point; of Jesuit mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,” and notably, “extraterrestrial disclosure for the UFO community, and the technological singularity of transhumanism.”⁴³ Putnam claims that so many different beliefs leading to oneism

³⁹ Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana: Petrus Romanus, Project L.U.C.I.F.E.R. and the Vatican's Astonishing Exo-Theological Plan for the Arrival of an Alien Savior* (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2013), 546. Maybe?

⁴⁰ Barkun, 132.

⁴¹ Horn and Putnam, *Petrus*, 232.

⁴² Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 183 and Cris Putnam, *The Supernatural Worldview: Examining Paranormal, Psi, and the Apocalyptic*, ed. by Angie Peters, (Crane: Defense Publishing, 2014), Kindle Location, 1240, 5015. (Page numbers were not included.)

⁴³ Putnam, Kindle Location, 1240.

is not a coincidence, and that it is part of a demonic plan that will eventually set the stage for the return of Christ.⁴⁴

Recently, Horn has focused on the asteroid Apophis. In *The Messenger*, he argues that it is the meteor Wormwood from Revelation 8:10-11. Wormwood is predicted to make one third of the earth's water "bitter." He has been using the meteor to claim that the pre-Tribulation Rapture will come, at the latest, on October 13, 2025.⁴⁵ In *Zeitgeist* (2021) he states this as a certainty.⁴⁶ He bases this on when Apophis is predicted to pass (according to NASA) or strike (according to Horn) the earth: April 13, 2029.⁴⁷ This would be the "time around the middle of the Great Tribulation period when the Trumpet Judgements begin[.]"⁴⁸ He also notes how, "the high holy days of the Feast of Tabernacles will be unfolding on earth. Just a few days before that will be the Feast of Trumpets. Both are strongly tied by eschatologists to the Rapture of the Church."⁴⁹ Although he emphasizes that, "a Rapture or Second Coming could happen at any time[.]" and that all of it could be a coincidence, he still claims "that mankind has likely entered the last decade of history as it has been known."⁵⁰

Surprisingly, considering the importance of the Rapture for most End Times writers, these authors often do not discuss it. The Rapture is taken from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,

⁴⁴ Putnam, *Kindle Locations*, 1240-1247.

⁴⁵ Horn, *Messenger*, 15.

⁴⁶ Horn, *Zeitgeist*, 3.

⁴⁷ Thomas Horn, *The Wormwood Prophecy: NASA, Donald Trump, and a Cosmic Cover-up of End-Time Proportions*, (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2019), 26-27 and Horn, *Messenger*, 14-15.

⁴⁸ Horn, *Zeitgeist*, 3.

⁴⁹ Horn, *Messenger*, 15.

⁵⁰ Horn, 16, 20.

specifically verse 17, which refers to believers being “caught up [the phrase the word comes from] [...] to meet the Lord in the air.” *The Messenger* is the only book where Horn discusses the Rapture at length, but he does not commit to whether the Rapture will happen before or during the Tribulation—just that it will occur before God pours his wrath upon the earth.⁵¹

Alberino does not discuss the Rapture at all. This is likely because there is little to “explain” in the Rapture. It is traditionally seen as a total act of God, an instant event that leaves little room for speculation about *how* it will happen; the focus is instead on how the Earth will look *when* it happens. The Tribulation, meanwhile, allows more room to speculate about its mechanics.

Another distinguishing feature of this group is the role they view Israel playing during the End Times. Most prophecy writers think that there will be a mass conversion of Jews during the End Times, and these authors agree with that. Horn and Putnam emphasize how the church will not replace Israel.⁵² This leads them into conflict with Dominion Theology. Dominionism is essentially postmillennialist, meaning that its followers believe that the Millennium will not come until Christians have established God’s kingdom on Earth. Dominionism was a response to 1970s premillennialist reluctance to enter the public arena, and supporters aimed to elect Christian candidates and, in the long-term, shape world history.⁵³ Derek Gilbert, a major figure in this milieu, explains that Dominionism “teaches that the Church has replaced Israel in all prophecies left unfulfilled.” Furthermore, Gilbert’s theory about how the Antichrist will seize power also ties in with his critique of Dominion Theology, as he argues that this group, due to denying that there will be an Antichrist and believing that

⁵¹ Horn, 176-178, 183.

⁵² Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 205-206.

⁵³ Boyer, 303.

“Christ cannot return until Christians take over the earth,” will accept the Antichrist when he comes.⁵⁴ This is important because Gilbert critiques this group’s influence in conservative Christianity, and because Horn uses his critique of it as a defense against accusations that he is a “Christian nationalist.”⁵⁵ Alberino also opposes Dominionism, both because he sees it as bad theology, and because of his belief that dominion over the earth is granted to all of Adam’s descendants, and Christians have no more right to dominion than the unsaved.⁵⁶ This critique of Dominion Theology is not new; as Paul Boyer points out, prophecy writers have been critical of Dominionism (also known as “Reconstructionism”) since its appearance in the 1970s.⁵⁷ Putnam is also critical of attempts by evangelicals to change the world by earthly power. This is not the only place where this milieu disagrees with other conservative and/or fundamentalist Christians.

Boyer details how different prophecy writers have addressed the role the Jews are supposed to play in the End Times. They have consistently agreed that the Jews will suffer immense persecution at the Antichrist’s hands during the End Times.⁵⁸ This milieu agrees with that. When they do mention Israel in their books, it is in the context of the role Israel is playing in setting up the End Times. Their anti-Catholicism is also present in this narrative. Horn and Putnam have accused the Vatican of trying to seize control of Jerusalem via diplomatic means as part of a plan to combine and control Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, citing history and modern-day investigative reporting into the topic. One can recognize the fear of the Catholic-

⁵⁴ Horn and Putnam, 307-309, 315-316.

⁵⁵ Horn and Putnam, 307-309, and Horn, *Zeitgeist*, 3.

⁵⁶ Alberino, 87-88.

⁵⁷ Boyer, 303-304.

⁵⁸ Boyer, 209-216.

controlled one-world religion in this theory, especially when they cite a claim that the Church had a plan to seize Jerusalem in order to have a stage for a false Messiah to “merge the three monotheistic religions, usher in peace and harmony in the world, and [as noted earlier] solve the Middle East conflict[,]” as well as insist on a “world government.” (Brackets added by writer). They allow that Rome could be unwittingly manipulated, tying into their narrative of the world’s powers being under the control of Satan, but the ultimate thrust of their argument, that Rome is the enemy, remains the same.⁵⁹

This milieu also argues against traditional interpretations of the final battles predicted to take place during the End Times. An example would be the battles described in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. These chapters are traditionally seen to talk about one battle against the nation of Magog, led by Gog. However, these authors argue that, rather than being one battle that is restated in 39, these chapters describe two separate battles. Essentially, the chapters describe, in reverse order, two separate battles with “Gog,” who is the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon and Satan in the battle waged post-Millennium, the latter ending with Israel’s restoration.⁶⁰ They also deviate from tradition regarding the identity of Magog, the land that will invade Israel during the Battle of Armageddon, and its leader, Gog. Among premillennialists, “Gog” has traditionally been identified with Russia.⁶¹ However, Horn, Putnam and Heiser argue that this battle will be between Israel and her Muslim neighbors; Heiser even critiques the “Russia as Gog” interpretation as the result of political feuds.⁶² Furthermore, Gilbert claims that the traditional

⁵⁹ Horn and Putnam, 379-389.

⁶⁰ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 290, 294-295.

⁶¹ Boyer, 154-155.

⁶² Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 291-294.

view is based on “folk etymology,” namely the “fact” that *rosh* (“head”) and Meshech sound similar to “Russia” and “Moscow.”⁶³ This milieu also argues against the traditional location of the Battle of Armageddon from Revelation 16, the final battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan before the Millennium. Most End Times believers say that this battle will take place at Mount Meggido.⁶⁴ Horn and Putnam argue that it will instead take place at the “Mount of Assembly,” Mount Zion.⁶⁵ Heiser concurs, saying that “*the final conflict occurs at Jerusalem, not Megiddo.*”⁶⁶ They argue this based on the facts that Megiddo is a more of a flat plain than a mountain, on the distance between it and the Mount of Olives (where Zechariah 14 predicts the Lord’s victory over massive armies, considered to be Armageddon), and on what is seen as a more accurate translation of Armageddon.

Many of them also argue for the rise of the Antichrist in the form of Apollo/Set/Osiris. This is a more esoteric belief; most people, even Christians, would not be familiar with it. However, it is a very common theme among this milieu. This theory mainly draws from 2 Thessalonians 2:3, which speaks of a “son of perdition,” the Antichrist, which translates to Apollyon/Apollo. Specifically, it has to do with the word, *apoleia*, and the root of it. It is the Greek word for “perdition.”⁶⁷ *Apoleia* is used in both Thessalonians 2:3, which refers to the “son of perdition” and Revelation 17:8, which refers to the Beast/Antichrist “go[ing] into perdition.”

⁶³ Derek Gilbert, “The Second Coming of Saturn Part 33: Return of the Titans,” February 13, 2022, <https://www.skywatchtv.com/2022/02/13/saturn33/> and Boyer, 155.

⁶⁴ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 280 and Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Rediscovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2015), 368-369.

⁶⁵ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 284-285.

⁶⁶ Heiser, 370.

⁶⁷ Etienne M. Graves Jr., *Demons Angels Nephilim: The World That Then Was*, (Bloomington: Trafford Publishing, 2014), 51, and Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 242.

Horn reads *apoleia* as a reference to Apollyon, which he then reads as a reference to Apollo. He cites Aeschylus's play *Agamemnon* as proof of this, specifically the line, "Apollo, thou destroyer, O Apollo, lord of fair streets, Apollyon to me." He also cites W.R.F. Browning, a theologian who wrote the *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible* (2009) with the Oxford University Press, but upon further research, it turns out that Browning sees Apollyon as a jab at the Roman Emperor Domitian, who fancied himself "Apollo on earth."⁶⁸ For his sources, Alberino cites *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992), which also draws this connection, although it still reads it as a reference to Apollo, rather than a literal instance of him.⁶⁹ This might also explain their focus on the Cumaean Sybil and Virgil quoting her in *Eclogue IV*, since she was a prophetess of Apollo. (So the connection is "Apollyon is a reference to Apollo." → "Apollo can be tied to *apoleia*, which in turn is translated into 'perdition.'" → "The 'son of perdition' is the Antichrist." → "Therefore, Apollo is the Antichrist.") Gilbert, while he says he used to believe this, argues in a 2022 book that Apollyon is a separate being, the leader of fallen angels known as the Watchers. He still believes that Apollo is the Antichrist.⁷⁰

This theory is also based on the idea that Saturn is another name for Apollo/Apollyon, who Horn identifies as the spirit of Antichrist. According to Horn, Jupiter was the Roman replacement of Yahweh as the greatest of the gods—a 'counter-Yahweh.' His son Apollo is a replacement of Jesus, a 'counter-Jesus.' This Apollo comes to rule the final New World Order,

⁶⁸ Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam, *On the Path of the Immortals: Exo-Vaticana, Project L.U.C.I.F.E.R. , and the Strategic Locations Where Entities Await the Appointed Time*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2015), 343-344 and W.R.F. Browning, *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), LVI.

⁶⁹ Alberino, 177.

⁷⁰ Derek Gilbert, "The Second Coming of Saturn Part 34: The Rise of Apollyon," February 15, 2022, accessed May 14, 2022, <https://www.skywatchtv.com/2022/02/15/saturn34/>.

when ‘Justice returns, returns old Saturn’s [Satan’s] reign.’”⁷¹ This final quote is from Virgil’s *Eclogue IV*, which has been read by some Christians (such as Constantine) as being a prophecy of Christ. The poem references the Cumean Sibyl, a Roman prophetess.⁷² It should be remembered that Gilbert believes that Saturn is actually the leader of the Watchers.⁷³ I highlight these differences to demonstrate how this milieu is not a monolith where members are made to repeat the group’s orthodoxies.

This take on the Antichrist is unusual and might be original to Horn, if not this milieu as a whole. Horn sees it as important, as he devotes a chapter in both *Emperor* and *Immortals* to restating his arguments in *Zenith* (2013) about the intended resurrection of Osiris, whom he correlates with Apollo, Horus, and Nimrod, and *Zeitgeist* once again reaffirms the argument.

Horn cites Peter Goodgame’s claim that Apollyon can be traced back to Nimrod, the architect of the Tower of Babel.⁷⁴ In Genesis 11, mankind, led by Nimrod, builds the tower “whose top may reach unto heaven;” in order to “make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”⁷⁵ Horn also claims that Nimrod was “deified as Apollo by the Greeks and Osiris by the Egyptians[,]” that “he is Apollo, Cernunnos, Abaddon, Osiris, and Horus,” and that “many theologians [consider him] to be the same ‘spirit’ that will return to Earth in the last days as the Antichrist.”

⁷¹ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 343-344. The final quote is from Virgil’s *Eclogue IV*.

⁷² Derek Gilbert, “The Second Coming of Saturn Part 28: The Return of Saturn’s Reign,” February 1, 2022, <https://www.skywatchtv.com/2022/02/01/saturn28/>.

⁷³ Gilbert, “Rise.”

⁷⁴ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 241.

⁷⁵ From the King James Version.

He also ties this in with beings called the Nephilim. Nimrod is referred to in Genesis 10:8 “as a man who ‘began to be a mighty one in the earth.’” As Horn explains, “[t]he Hebrew word translated as ‘began to be’ is *khalal*, which implies sexual profanity or genetic pollution—and a process.” He uses this as evidence that Nimrod was becoming a “mighty one,” a phrase “which is most often used when referring to giants[,]” a Nephilim.⁷⁶ The Nephilim are the children of the “Watchers,” angels who descended to the earth and had children with human women.⁷⁷ These Nephilim are seen as an antagonistic force during the End Times.

Michael Lake claims that the Nephilim will bring a supernatural delusion on to humanity leading up to the End Times.⁷⁸ As we will see, these writers think that this delusion is the idea of an alien savior. Tying this into speculation about the Antichrist, Horn and Putnam contend that “the UFO mythos” has spread the idea of aliens coming to solve mankind’s problems.⁷⁹ This belief claims that aliens, or demons claiming to be aliens, will present themselves as saviors of mankind. This deception will be masked in the guise of science, as mankind “has elevated scientists as the ultimate arbiters of truth.”⁸⁰ The Antichrist will either be associated with these aliens or will exploit their actions for his own ends.⁸¹

This milieu tries to connect aliens and UFOs to major events in prophecy writing. Horn and Putnam claim that the “UFO phenomenon” exploded just months before the restoration of

⁷⁶ Horn and Putnam, 241-243.

⁷⁷ Heiser, 185.

⁷⁸ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 2-3.

⁷⁹ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 519.

⁸⁰ Horn and Putnam, 232.

⁸¹ Alberino, 256-258.

Israel, a major event among prophecy writers, and that since then, “there has been a near-exponential increase in UFO sightings and related phenomena like abduction.” As a result, some Christians have given more credence to the idea that these aliens will be involved in this mass deception.⁸² By combining UFOs with key moments in prophecy writing, these authors give credence to the former and bridges readers who are drawn to the prophecy aspects of their writings to ufology.

These authors also compare the mythologies of other cultures to show the influence of the Nephilim, noting how multiple cultures have a tradition of serpent beings that share the appearance of the Watchers.⁸³ By doing so, they aim to demonstrate the ubiquity of these entities in other cultures, strengthening their argument that such beings existed and have been interacting with mankind. They argue that ancient cultures were worshipping actual beings, “fallen *Seraphim*, ‘flying fiery serpents.’”⁸⁴ By pointing to the reptilian nature of the Watchers, they are able to argue that the Watchers are actually these ancient beings that the modern world (and modern Christianity) dismiss as mythology.⁸⁵ By doing so, they tie in the history of other cultures into Christianity and strengthen their truth claims for Christianity by showing that it is old and widespread. As O’Donnell notes, fundamentalism is often based in the idea that Christianity, specifically Biblical inerrancy, can be logically proven from evidence.⁸⁶ This group’s efforts to tie their beliefs into world history is part of this tradition, as they seek to show the correlation between other beliefs and Christianity.

⁸² Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 232.

⁸³ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 122. This is Putnam’s theory; the differences between how some members of this milieu see the appearance of the Watchers will be explored in more detail in chapter 3.

⁸⁴ Horn and Putnam, 131-132.

⁸⁵ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana* 93.

⁸⁶ O’Donnell, “Navigations,” 643. Inerrancy is the belief that the Bible is without error in its teaching.

Another major conceit of these authors is that mankind is repeating the conditions that existed on Earth before the Flood. They base this off Matthew 24:37-39, where Jesus warns that it will be like “the days of Noah” on the Earth when the Son of Man returns, bringing judgement and destruction.⁸⁷ As we will see in chapter 3, certain scientific advances are seen as part of this. This prophesied destruction includes America.

Boyer notes how post-1945 prophecy writers have often predicted a terrible end for America, condemning its moral failings in everything from abortion to excess greed.⁸⁸ This milieu has a similarly dim view of America, condemning its social ills and paganism. Of particular note is a claim Horn makes multiple times about pagan influences on the American government throughout his books and that some of the other authors he has published support (although I do not know if all of them have the exact same belief). Horn, citing William Henry and Mark Grey’s *Freedom’s Gate: Lost Symbols in the U.S. Capitol* and the works of Manly P. Hall, claims that the very design of the U.S. Capitol (in conjunction with the Vatican) is meant “to open a doorway or ‘stargate’ that allows Osiris to arise from the underworld to take his rightful place inside every US president,” allowing, “Osiris [to habitually be] ‘born again’ or reincarnated as Horus and constantly direct the spiritual destiny of the nation.”⁸⁹ He also alleges that the Great Seal is a coded reference to Apollo.⁹⁰ Barkun notes how

⁸⁷ George Pember, *Earth’s Earliest Ages, and Their Lessons for Us: Including a Treatise on Spiritualism*, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1876), 134.

⁸⁸ Boyer, 230, 232, 246.

⁸⁹ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 320, 327.

⁹⁰ Horn, 343.

accusations about the Great Seal containing Illuminati symbolism (although Horn claims that it is Freemason) is, “a theme commonly found in conspiracist literature.”⁹¹

In their comments about Catholics and Freemasons, these authors continue in the tradition laid out by Barkun. He notes how Catholics, Freemasons, and Jews are often the target of UFO conspiracists, although, as we have seen, these authors attribute the NWO to the former two. Barkun traces conspirator’s concerns about these groups to the nineteenth century (although their roots go back much further), as the secrecy of the Freemasons and the hierarchal structure of the Catholics led to them being targeted by nativists.⁹² As can be seen, Horn does not agree with the idea that the United States is in any way a Christian nation, seeing the influence of the occult from early in the nation’s history.⁹³ Christianity is not America’s identity; it restrains America’s original and occult identity.⁹⁴ He and Putnam say in *The Last Roman Emperor* that, “the America that we were taught to love as kids is a distant memory (that is, if it ever really existed at all).”⁹⁵ Even the famous “In God We Trust” phrase is interpreted as not referring to God at all, but interpreted as a deliberately vague phrase that allows the reader to project who they think “God” is.⁹⁶ These authors are also willing to criticize America, in the tradition of previous prophecy writers. For example, Horn and Putnam claim that US policy is to keep the

⁹¹ Barkun, 58.

⁹² Barkun, 126-128, 131.

⁹³ Horn and Putnam, 417 and Horn (and Putnam), *Immortals*, 346.

⁹⁴ S. Jonathan O’Donnell, “The Deliverance of the Administrative State: Deep State Conspiracism, Charismatic Demonology, and the Post-Truth Politics of American Christian Nationalism,” *Religion* vol. 50, no. 4 (2020): 707, accessed June 13, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/44552078/The_Deliverance_of_the_Administrative_State_Deep_State_Conspiracism_Charismatic_Demonology_and_the_Post_Truth_Politics_of_American_Christian_Nationalism.

⁹⁵ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 75.

⁹⁶ Horn, *Zeitgeist*, 18.

Middle East unstable.⁹⁷ This is important, as these authors see the Middle East as a means for the Antichrist to seize power.

Horn, Putnam, and Gilbert argue that the Antichrist will gain his following via “seemingly resolv[ing] the Middle East conflict.”⁹⁸ In particular, Gilbert argues that the Antichrist will be widely accepted by Christians, Jews and Muslims after it is resolved. He speculates that Israel will be attacked by a coalition of Arab nations, but that it will be repelled by a powerful military leader, the Antichrist, who will go on to capture territory that will expand Israel.⁹⁹ He argues that Jews and Christians alike will see this leader as a messiah, while Muslims will see him as an Antichrist-like figure.¹⁰⁰ He also argues that the Antichrist’s prophesied resurrection will make it appear that he is fulfilling Jewish eschatology.¹⁰¹ This prophesied resurrection is a key part of Antichrist traditions. It is a traditional belief among prophecy writers, taken from Revelation 13:3-4, that the Antichrist will be fatally wounded halfway through the Tribulation, only to be resurrected three days later in a parody of Jesus’ resurrection. In all this, they fit into the traditional End Times narrative that says that the Antichrist will be a brilliant and charismatic leader. These also fit in with the idea that the Antichrist will seize power in the wake of a worldwide catastrophe, although some prophecy writers believe that this will be the Rapture itself.¹⁰² For example, Alberino claims that the Antichrist will gain his authority after saving

⁹⁷ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 75.

⁹⁸ Horn and Putnam, *Petrus*, 372.

⁹⁹ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 314.

¹⁰⁰ Horn and Putnam, 299, 315.

¹⁰¹ Horn and Putnam, 316-317.

¹⁰² Boyer 279-280.

humanity from extraterrestrials and, later on, being resurrected after a fatal wound.¹⁰³ As can be seen, these authors do push against some traditional interpretations of prophecy belief, but on the whole, they try and fit their own interpretations into these readings.

This group embraces a narrative that ties multiple different factors together to create the all-encompassing conspiracy that they believe is laying the groundwork for the Antichrist's rise. Nothing is truly irrelevant, and evil is constantly working towards its goal of domination. The exact mechanics and methods differ, but this is ultimately a continuation of conspiracy theories about institutions and technologies that have been present for decades and in some cases, centuries. Large institutions are seen as threats to individuality and should be treated with suspicion, and new technologies provide more ways for Big Brother to monitor, if not manipulate, the common man.¹⁰⁴

This milieu does not deviate from "traditional" End Times expectations. The broad narrative of Rapture → Tribulation → Millennium remains intact. Where they differ is in the *mechanics* of what will happen and how it will happen. They attempt to explain exactly how the Antichrist will take power and how he will exercise that power. They contend that the Antichrist will ultimately use a system that has been laid out long before his rise to enforce his rule. Bar codes, microchips, and biological technology are all seen as part of this system. However, there is also a spiritual dimension to this conspiracy, one that has its tentacles in every part of society. The next chapter will look at how these authors view this spiritual dimension and the influence that it has.

¹⁰³ Alberino, 257-258, 286-289.

¹⁰⁴ Boyer, 266-271.

CHAPTER 2

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

One of the most striking aspects of this milieu is its focus on spiritual warfare. Other Christian denominations also incorporate spiritual warfare into their belief systems, but the authors of this milieu emphasize it more literally than most. They believe that the current state of the universe is because of violent conflict millennia ago. They argue that the world is under the influence of demonic supernatural beings, and that the supernatural plays a larger role in the world than most Christians want to admit. This milieu argues that the world is divided into territories, some controlled by God, others controlled by demons in an established hierarchy. They also believe that the supernatural will play a key role in the End Times and the rise of the Antichrist.

These authors see themselves and their readers in an unusual situation. They simultaneously see themselves as educators of the realities of this conflict, but also believe that they and their readers can do little to actively fight in it; there is almost no discussion of “practical” spiritual warfare. Instead, their readers oppose the darkness simply by taking a side in the conflict. Spiritual warfare is seen as being at the heart of world events, and humans in many ways are simply swept up in it. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how these authors incorporate spiritual warfare into their works, and how they apply it to their worldview. Part of that is countering what they see as errors about the realities of the spirit world.

These authors take very seriously the idea that the supernatural is a real part of people’s lives. They accuse “mainstream” denominations, even ones that emphasize inerrancy, of

downplaying the realities of the supernatural.¹⁰⁵ They argue that many Christians do not take their belief in the supernatural seriously beyond belief in God and the miracles and resurrection of Jesus, and even that is because Christianity is nonsense without them.¹⁰⁶ Heiser claims that this is because “the believing church is bending under the weight of its own rationalism,” and Putnam contends that “many in the church have adopted a form of naturalism that relegates all supernatural activity to the biblical era.”¹⁰⁷ In contrast, these authors claim that their supernatural-focused reading of the Biblical account is more authentic. It is seen as truer to the original intent of the Biblical authors; Heiser argues in *The Unseen Realm* (2015) that Christians need to read the Bible through the worldviews of those authors.¹⁰⁸

As such, their reinterpretation begins with traditional readings of the Bible. According to Heiser, “Spiritual conflict lurks behind a wide range of Old Testament episodes and practices.”¹⁰⁹ As we will see later, Heiser will use examples from the Old Testament, specifically related to the idea of “territory,” to demonstrate that the Biblical authors saw the supernatural in multiple parts of their world. This paper is more focused on modern expressions of spiritual warfare, but it should be noted that these authors apply it to the Bible as a whole.

A major influence on these authors is Heiser’s “Deuteronomy 32 Worldview.” This is taken from Deuteronomy 32:8, which reads, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the people according

¹⁰⁵ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 231, and Heiser, 16-18.

¹⁰⁶ Heiser, 16-18, 186.

¹⁰⁷ Heiser, 17 and Putnam, *Worldview*, Kindle Location 738.

¹⁰⁸ Heiser, 386-387.

¹⁰⁹ Heiser, 230.

to the number of the children of Israel.”^{110 111} In both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint, the phrase “children of Israel” is read as “sons of God,” and its age is implicitly given as a reason to think it more accurate.¹¹² According to Heiser, these verses reference the Tower of Babel and show that God disinherited the nations and let them fall under the domain of other gods. This is how the world was segmented into territories under the control of other gods, or demons.¹¹³

Another major influence on these authors is George Pember, a nineteenth century theologian. His book *Earth’s Earliest Ages* (1876) is often cited by these authors; Horn considers the book to be a “masterpiece.” Alberino also praises the book, calling it a “classic” and saying that—out of all the theologians who argue that Genesis 1:2 shows the earth postjudgement—Pember “was perhaps the most eloquent proponent of the view.”¹¹⁴ Pember references “The days of Noah,” a reference to Matthew 24:37, where Jesus says that, “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Pember believed that “conditions in the late nineteenth century were similar to those prior to the flood.”¹¹⁵ Putnam claims that multiple factors, including “worldwide reports of alien abduction[,]” the account of a contemporary Mayan reporting giants breeding with human women, and “the cultural rebellion against biblical morality” give reason to think that “the days of Noah and Lord’s return are upon us.”¹¹⁶ As noted

¹¹⁰ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 184.

¹¹¹ Heiser, 112-113. He extends this to include verse 9, “For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

¹¹² Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 184 and Heiser, 113, and Paul Thomas, “Meme Splicing Genesis 6:1-4 and the Apocalypse of 2012,” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 24 (2), accessed May 10, 2022, 313.

¹¹³ Heiser, 112-114.

¹¹⁴ Alberino, 43.

¹¹⁵ Thomas, 313.

¹¹⁶ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 126.

in the last chapter, all of this is part of the milieu's goal of proving Christianity by tying multiple, seemingly disparate ideas into one and connecting them. As Paul Thomas observes, "One thing that the apocalyptic alternative histories share is the notion that our understanding of early history is faulty because we have failed to understand the sophisticated level of culture and technology made available to the ancients by the sons of God or other advanced spiritual entities." This milieu sees the rise of genetic engineering as a sign of the technology that these pre-Flood civilizations possessed, a topic that will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.¹¹⁷

These authors cite Psalm 82 as proof of their worldview. This chapter has God condemning a council of gods for their unjust reign. While most conservative commentators read "gods" as referring to human judges, these authors read it literally, according to the "Deuteronomy 32 Worldview."¹¹⁸ They see these "gods" as beings who were set over the nations post-Babel and have failed to justly govern the nations. As we will see, this will not be the only time this milieu claims that other conservative commentators are trying to avoid the literal meaning of a passage.

As mentioned, Heiser elaborates on the idea that the world is divided in territory, and that the supernatural was a major part of the thoughts of the writers, via accounts from the Old Testament, specifically references to the idea of Israel being God's territory and the rest of the world being outside of his territory from 1 Samuel, 2 Kings and Daniel. He argues that post-Babel, "the story of the Old Testament is about Israel verses the disinherited nations, and Yahweh verses the corrupt, rebel *elohim* [gods] of those nations." (bracket added by writer)¹¹⁹ Heiser also argues

¹¹⁷ Thomas, 313.

¹¹⁸ Heiser, 28-29.

¹¹⁹ Heiser, 115-119.

from Paul's use of certain Greek words in Ephesians 6:12 (“*exousia*”=authorities, “*arche*”=rulers), words that “were used both in the New Testament and other Greek literature to denote *geographical domain authority*[,]” that Paul also viewed the spiritual realm as one filled with hierarchical beings. He believes that the world in the post-Gospel New Testament “was one dominated by invisible divine powers transparently described in the vocabulary of geographical rulership.”¹²⁰ Heiser compares the council to a pharaoh's administration, with a tiered system.¹²¹ Tying into the earlier point that these readings are seen as more “authentic,” Horn claims that Scripture only makes sense when “gods” is read literally; “when we understand that God meant what He said[.]” He also emphasizes how this reading, “doesn't change the Bible's overall message of sin and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.”¹²² However, it does change how the Bible is read.

This spiritual warfare is often read as occurring in a noncorporeal realm. However, this milieu sees it as spreading beyond that and into the world we inhabit. For example, Alberino views this spiritual warfare as part of a literal war, and he is explicit about the damages that resulted. He argues in *Birtright* that Earth was devastated by an interstellar war, the rebellion of Satan against God. He justifies this via a translation of Genesis 1:1-2 that changes the wording from, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep[.]” to, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. But the earth became desolate, and empty; and darkness was

¹²⁰ Heiser, 329-331.

¹²¹ Heiser, 25, 332.

¹²² Horn, *Messenger*, 216. In his quote, he is referring to passages other than Psalm 82, but it still illustrates his general views on Scripture.

upon the face of the deep.”¹²³ Horn supports a similar view, claiming in *The Messenger* that the earth was devastated by a major catastrophe between verses one and two.¹²⁴ Derek and Sharon Gilbert also argue that Genesis 1:2 describes the aftermath of a chaotic war.¹²⁵

The effects of this war are said to go beyond Earth. This milieu takes its interpretation and incorporates the depths of space in its worldview. David Flynn argues that the asteroid belt is the remnants of another planet, Rahab. He bases this off references to it in Job 26:11-12, Psalm 89:10, and Isaiah 51:9, which mention a planet called Rahab. Furthermore, he contends that Rahab’s remains bombarded Earth and that the planet’s destruction devastated the solar system.¹²⁶ Alberino supports this idea of an interstellar war that devastated not only Rahab, but every planet in the solar system as its remains bombarded all of them, not just Earth as Flynn says. Furthermore on space, Alberino also argues that Mars “was likely the seat of [Satan’s] dominion and the command center of his confederacy[,]” and that “man’s obsession with Mars is not incidental. Even now, something beckons us to the forbidden gates of its ruined cities.”¹²⁷ There’s a cosmic focus to this milieu as they try to tie even the End Times into cosmic spiritual warfare. To these authors, the End Times is a literal battle between the spiritual forces of good and the spiritual forces of evil. Horn speculates that the Trumpet Judgements of Revelation could possibly be Earth being in the middle of literal warfare waged in the heavens

¹²³ Alberino, 45-47.

¹²⁴ Horn, *Messenger*, 280.

¹²⁵ Sharon Gilbert, “A Long Ritual, a Dark Winter, and the Age of Aquarius,” in *Zeitgeist 2025: Countdown to the Secret Destiny of America, the Lost Prophecies of the Qumran, and the Return of Old Saturn’s Reign*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2021), 159.

¹²⁶ Stephen Quayle and Thomas Horn, *Unearthing the Lost World of the Cloudeaters: Compelling Evidence of the Incursion of Giants, Their Extraordinary Technology, and Imminent Return*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2017), 100-105.

¹²⁷ Alberino, 60-64.

and that “[Wormwood’s] flight path to destruction is *possibly* related to some kind of space war between holy and unholy entities and deities.”¹²⁸

Another key part of this worldview are the Watchers and the Nephilim. According to the Book of Enoch, the Watchers came and taught mankind knowledge of “enchantments,” weaponry, and astrology, among others.¹²⁹ Genesis 6:1-4 mentions that the “sons of God,” known as the “Watchers” in Enoch, took wives of the “daughters of man” and that their children were “giants.”¹³⁰ Heiser’s discussion of these Watchers emphasizes his earlier point that conservative commentators will downplay the supernatural elements of the Bible. He notes how scholars have attempted to get around the idea of angels mating with humans by claiming that the “sons of God” are actually the sons of Adam and Eve’s third son, Seth (an ancestor of Christ) and the “daughters of men” are the daughters of Cain (the first murderer).¹³¹

These authors often discuss the Nephilim and the role they have played in human history. Gilbert, Alberino, and Heiser claim that, while the Nephilim were destroyed in the Flood, “their spirits survived to become demons.”¹³² Putnam and Alberino disagree about their appearance. Putnam argues that the Watchers were reptilian beings, based on how they were described by the ancient Hebrews. In contrast, Alberino argues that, “as sons of God, they bore the semblance of strikingly handsome young men[,]” fitting those who desired to seduce human women.¹³³

¹²⁸ Horn, *Wormwood*, 121, 206.

¹²⁹ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 177.

¹³⁰ Heiser, 104.

¹³¹ Heiser, 94-95.

¹³² Derek Gilbert, *Veneration: Unveiling the Ancient Realms of Demonic Kings and Satan's Battle Plan for Armageddon*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2019), Chapter 3, Heiser, 325, Alberino, 161.

¹³³ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 122 and Alberino, 145-146.

However, they all agree that the Watchers were able to corrupt humanity, and that the Nephilim were a symptom of that. Heiser and Alberino argue that Noah was exceptional because he was not descended from the Watchers. This was important, since it meant that Christ, Noah's descendent, was the son of God and God alone.¹³⁴ We will return to the idea that the Watchers could somehow corrupt humanity, and the importance of Christ coming from an uncorrupted line, in the next chapter.

While Heiser appears to be the major cornerstone for much of this theology, he distinguishes himself by not casting his source net as wide; he sticks primarily to ancient sources, such as ancient literature and scholarly sources discussing them. In contrast, the other authors, Horn and Putnam in particular, draw from multiple other sources, primarily apocryphal books, mainly the Book of Enoch but also the Book of Jubilees.¹³⁵ They also cite Catholic literature and prophecy as well as occult books. They also discuss linguistics, often going back to what they consider to be the original meaning of words to make their point. An example of this would be how Quayle reads Job 26:11-12 not as referring to God smiting the proud, as it says in the King James Version, but “to shatter Rahab.”¹³⁶

Their use of alternative sources has resulted in contention from the few who have responded to these authors using Christian arguments. One writer calls their ideas “a hodgepodge of New Age nonsense,” and two others accuse them of “turn[ing] faulty proof-texting into a refined art, creating an erratic, erotic and exotic mixture of blended spiritualities.”¹³⁷ We have

¹³⁴ Heiser, 109.

¹³⁵ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 105.

¹³⁶ Quayle and Horn, *Unearthing*, 102.

¹³⁷ Bill Kochman, “2012: New Age Deception and Psychobabble,” *Bill's Bible Basics*, last modified July 26, 2020, <https://www.billkochman.com/Articles/2012bab1.html> and Gaylene Goodroad and Sarah H. Leslie, “The

seen the major role Virgil's *Eclogue IV* plays in these author's conception of the Antichrist, and their dipping into works considered to be occult places them in contention with fundamentalist Christians with whom they might otherwise share beliefs. However, they do not use these sources to challenge key doctrines of Christianity, such as the Resurrection, and, as I will argue, these other sources are seen to support Christianity; they are not combined with it to create something new.

One of the areas these authors have crossed over with is a Pentecostal movement called "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare." This movement argues for "spiritual mapping," where territories are seen to have fallen under the control of demonic spirits that must be identified and then cast out via intercessory prayer and political action.¹³⁸ This should sound familiar, as we have seen Heiser present a similar worldview.¹³⁹ It is part of the "Third Wave" of Pentecostalism, a movement that argues that God has granted spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and the power to exorcise demons, to combat "Satan's armies."¹⁴⁰

Sean O'Callaghan, an associate professor of religious and theological studies, notes how spiritual warfare is different from normal prayer: It is "strategic" and while it can be silent or individual, it can also involve "shout[ing] out prayers, scriptures, and affirmations in a warlike manner."¹⁴¹ However, this milieu does not give the reader advice on

Resurrection of Pagan Gods: Mingling Pagan Theology with God's Truth," *Herescope*, November 4, 2013, <https://herescope.blogspot.com/2013/11/the-resurrection-of-pagan-gods.html>.

¹³⁸ S. Jonathan O'Donnell, "The Body Politic(s) of the Jezebel Spirit," *Religion & Gender* vol. 7, no. 2 (2017): 243, accessed June 14, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/36113843/The_Body_Politic_s_of_the_Jezebel_Spirit.

¹³⁹ It should be noted that Heiser disavows the movement for reasons elaborated on below. Michael Heiser, "What is Spiritual Warfare?" accessed June 14, 2022, <https://drmsb.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/What-is-spiritual-warfare-from-Heiser-DEMONS-MS-unedited.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ O'Donnell, 242.

¹⁴¹ Sean O'Callaghan, "Technological Apocalypse: Transhumanism as an End-Time Religious Movement," in *Religion and Human Enhancement: Death, Values, and Morality*, ed. Tracy J. Trothen and Calvin Mercer, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 75.

how to fight these spiritual beings. In contrast to traditional spiritual warfare, they treat these beings as being part of another world that the reader has no ability to fight in; they are instead informed as to what these beings are doing now and what they are planning for the future. Heiser goes into more detail about spiritual warfare than the other authors, but he also does not give the reader an active role in the conflict; he is not meant to directly fight this battle, his mere salvation is enough. Heiser, using I Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 as references, speaks of the Christian as “sacred space,” explaining that the Christian is “the temple of God, both individually and corporately.”¹⁴² Based on Matthew 18:20, he argues that “wherever believers are and gather, the spiritual ground they occupy is sanctified amid the powers of darkness.” As a result, Christians oppose the powers of darkness simply by being children of God.¹⁴³ This passive view is because, in the view of authors like Horn and Putnam, “spiritual warfare is largely in the realm of ideas.”¹⁴⁴ As such, the believer’s role is not to combat demons themselves directly, but to challenge their influence in the world through prayer and through combating the false ideas these forces have injected into society through education and direct action.

It should be noted that there does not seem to be a direct connection between the SLSW movement and this group. While they undoubtedly crossover, these authors are more likely to cite Heiser than a SLSW follower. That has not stopped some from noting (and warning about) the similarities between the SLSW movement and some of these authors, Horn in particular.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Heiser, *Unseen*, 332.

¹⁴³ Heiser, 333. The reference says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

¹⁴⁴ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 519.

¹⁴⁵ Gaylene Goodroad and The Discernment Research Group, “Militant Prayer,” *Herescope*, September 23, 2011, <https://herescope.blogspot.com/2011/09/militant-prayer.html>.

However, there is some crossover with the wider charismatic movement. Putnam approves of the use of spiritual gifts, such as prophesying, and is critical of “cessationists,” those who claim that these gifts have ceased.¹⁴⁶ This milieu does not directly associate themselves with Pentecostalism, but they are still connected to it. For example, while Horn is mostly self-published, Charisma House, a charismatic publisher, published *The Wormwood Prophecy* (2019), making it “among his only non-self-published work in two decades.” He is also “a frequent guest on *The Jim Bakker Show*,” which is still associated with Pentecostalism and charismatic movements.¹⁴⁷ Alberino is very critical of Pentecostalism, but he is the exception, or at least the only one of these authors to condemn Pentecostalism.¹⁴⁸

These authors take the impact of spiritual warfare seriously. According to them, most of human history has been the result of this invisible conflict. Boyer quotes prophecy writer Salem Kirban declaring that events in history have been orchestrated by Satan.¹⁴⁹ Putnam makes a similar claim in *The Supernatural Worldview*: “While [Robert Bork] rightly bemoans increased violence, perversion-saturated media, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, feminism, and the decline of religion as evidence of cultural degeneracy, he does not account for the demonic spiritual assault behind it.”¹⁵⁰ He also attributes Jack Parson and L. Ron Hubbard’s “Babalon working” ritual to “feminism, homosexuality, and pantheistic monism” being “sowed into public consciousness from the ivory towers of academia[.]”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Putnam, *Worldview*, 1548-1561.

¹⁴⁷ O’Donnell, “Deliverance,” 707.

¹⁴⁸ Alberino, 192.

¹⁴⁹ Boyer, 265.

¹⁵⁰ Putnam, *Worldview*, Kindle Location 1189.

¹⁵¹ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 137.

Alberino makes similar claims about possible Satanic influence on culture. He argues that Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-1833, three volumes) helped to popularize evolution and led to men doubting the Flood of Genesis 7, promoting "geological uniformitarianism."¹⁵² He also argues that the legacies of Alister Crowley and Fredrich Nietzsche, who Alberino claims are the architects of modern thought, have dominated the worldview of the secular world. He ties in Nietzscheism, which he reads as being beyond atheism, beyond denying God and moving to challenging Him, with "Luciferianism."¹⁵³ These ideologies are not seen merely as human ideas, but as the result of demonic manipulation. Both Putnam and Alberino tie the supernatural in with human history, explaining the rise of certain ideas through a lens that allows for the influence of the demonic. As O'Donnell explains, "At its heart, third wave spiritual warfare claims that behind every phenomenal event – from personal sickness to systemic poverty to the rise and fall of nations – is a spiritual cause, either angelic or demonic."¹⁵⁴ The implication is that man has far less control than he thinks over his destiny, and that powers unknown to the average person are often behind dangerous ideas.

As we looked at last chapter, this milieu does not just focus on the conventionally supernatural. It also proposes what some might consider science fiction. This milieu gives considerable attention to extraterrestrials, explaining how they fit into the plan of history. In this, they reflect the interest that many Americans have on the subject.

Americans have long been fascinated by the idea of extraterrestrials. Belief in UFOs is quite common, with close to 50 percent of Americans saying they believe in extraterrestrial

¹⁵² Alberino, 170, 173, 198.

¹⁵³ Alberino, 198-201, 204-208.

¹⁵⁴ O'Donnell, "Politic(s)," 242.

phenomenon.¹⁵⁵ However, these authors are critical of said phenomenon, in spite of the optimism sometimes associated with UFOs, as they argue that “extraterrestrial” encounters are part of a ploy by demons to prepare the way for “aliens” to come and solve the world’s problems.¹⁵⁶ This is not a new idea; Hal Lindsey was warning of the same thing in a 1980 book.¹⁵⁷ Boyer also cites a prophecy writer who warned in 1983 that UFOs were paving the way for a massive deception.¹⁵⁸ This concern about extraterrestrials is tied to their belief that Satan’s kingdom is in the air. Satan is referred to in Ephesians 2:2 as “the prince of the power of the air,” and the same epistle speaks about “spiritual wickedness in high places,” which they read as referring to his kingdom being in the atmosphere.¹⁵⁹ As a result, these authors tend to see the UFO phenomenon as a demonic one, part of the “strong delusion” that Jesus prophesied would come in the last days.¹⁶⁰ Horn and Putnam agree with this, speculating that the increase in UFO sightings is a sign that the end is near, and that Satan is preparing his End Times deception. According to them, extraterrestrials are secular saviors, expected to come in and solve “the world’s spiritual, economic, and environmentalist woes.” To this milieu, ufology is not a belief developed from observation of the natural world and speculation about what might be out in the cosmos, but a deliberate plan “by deceptive supernatural forces.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Barkun, 80-81.

¹⁵⁶ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 222.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*, (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2014), 352.

¹⁵⁸ Boyer, 265.

¹⁵⁹ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 223-224.

¹⁶⁰ Horn and Putnam, 228-229.

¹⁶¹ Horn and Putnam, 231-232.

Heiser offers a variant on this, proposing that “scientists will announce a discovery supporting panspermia that will quickly be extrapolated by the public into belief in extraterrestrials.”¹⁶² This could be presented as “God [using] the extraterrestrials, represented as angels, as His agents in Creation.” He speculates that it could be a way to promote a global faith, as it “could be presented in such a way that does not require one to explicitly renounce his or her faith, but instead, to radically reinterpret it.” Essentially, it could open the door for a fusion of science and faith that allows for “a global religion that honors the cosmologies of all faiths, united as they are under the reality of panspermia and extraterrestrial influence.”¹⁶³

This milieu sees alien abduction and demonic phenomena as one in the same; “the current tradition of ET-human hybridization belongs in the broadest sense to the tradition of incubi and succubi.”¹⁶⁴ Horn and Putnam, for example, note similarities between accounts of encounters with incubi and succubi and alien abduction accounts, a connection that has been noted by scholars.¹⁶⁵ Horn and Putnam support their point by citing secular ufologists who also see a demonic deception lurking behind alien abductions.¹⁶⁶ Even Heiser, while skeptical that all alien abduction is demonic, still admits there are certain cases where he believes that the

¹⁶² Horn and Putnam, 200, 204-205. Panspermia is the idea that life was seeded on Earth from another planet.

¹⁶³ Horn and Putnam, 205.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Pearson Flaherty, “‘These Are They’: ET-Human Hybridization and the New Daemonology.” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 14, no. 2, (2010): 86, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2010.14.2.84>.

¹⁶⁵ Horn and Putnam, 123-129 and Flaherty, 85-87.

¹⁶⁶ Horn and Putnam, 227-228.

abduction was supernatural in nature.¹⁶⁷ We return to the Nephilim as well; the story of the Watchers resembles stories of extraterrestrials coming to Earth, bearing knowledge and having hybrid offspring.¹⁶⁸ Of course, while many ufologists see this as a positive, these authors see these incidents as alarming.

Alberino differs from Horn and Putnam as, while he views aliens as dangerous beings who are a threat to mankind, he does not believe that they are demons, but in fact separate physical beings.¹⁶⁹ He takes the existence of aliens seriously, claiming that “[t]he alien abduction phenomenon is the most important thing happening on Planet Earth.” Alberino argues that what he calls “greys” are abducting humans as part of a breeding program to create hybrids.¹⁷⁰ This idea of an “alien-hybrid scheme as an end-times deception” comes in part from the writings of David Flynn.¹⁷¹

Heiser goes into more detail on his own views on his website, denying the existence of aliens but willing to accept that he could be wrong. He says that he would not be “theologically alarmed” if proof of aliens was discovered, and he argues that Christians should study the topic in order to have an informed view if proof is discovered. He is also less concerned about demonic activity associated with UFOs; he gives other possible explanations for alien abductions beyond demons, and even says that it is not the most likely explanation.¹⁷² He instead says “I

¹⁶⁷ Michael Heiser, “Review of *The Greys Have Been Framed: Exploitation in the UFO Community*,” December 31, 2016, <https://drmsch.com/review-of-the-greys-have-been-framed-exploitation-in-the-ufo-community/>.

¹⁶⁸ Flaherty, 88.

¹⁶⁹ Alberino, 218, 232.

¹⁷⁰ Alberino, 219-220, 228-229.

¹⁷¹ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 169-170.

¹⁷² Michael Heiser, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed May 18, 2022, <https://drmsch.com/frequently-asked-questions/>.

think most of what passes for alien abduction is either natural brain function (e.g., sleep paralysis) or very human (and very sinister) intentional abuse of people.”¹⁷³ He also dismisses the idea of human-alien hybrids.¹⁷⁴ But as we have seen, Heiser is the exception to the rule, and is willing to admit that aliens as demons and associated deceptions are possible.

This focus on UFOs seems absurd, but there is a logic undergirding it beyond how it fits into their End Times narrative. As Heiser observes in *Exo-Vaticana* (2013), most Americans do believe in extraterrestrials and believe that the US government is concealing information about them. To ignore this phenomenon would not only render the Church’s “worldview irrelevant to a large percentage of the culture,” but also limit its ability to combat the occult agenda that these authors see as being behind the UFO phenomenon.¹⁷⁵ Horn and Putnam argue that “in light of the UFO phenomenon and the deceptive behavior of its associated entities, we think that the existence of genuine ETs is, for all intents and purposes, a separate issue.”¹⁷⁶ By this, they mean that the question, “Do aliens exist?” is secondary to the question, “What would Satan do with the idea that aliens exist?” Far from being irrelevant, UFOs are incorporated into their worldview of spiritual warfare, and it is important to them that Christians should be educated about them.

Spiritual warfare is a vital part of this milieu. Not only does it influence their view of the Bible, but it also impacts how they view the world around them. Dangerous ideas are not seen as simply the result of fallen man, but as the result of demonic powers lurking behind the scenes. This at times literal warfare has shaped the physical world and impacts human development. As such, this worldview also impacts how this milieu views technological innovation, such as

¹⁷³ Heiser, “Review.”

¹⁷⁴ Heiser, “Questions.”

¹⁷⁵ Horn and Putnam, 389-390.

¹⁷⁶ Horn and Putnam, 222.

transhumanism. Horn claims that transhumanism adds another dimension to spiritual warfare. He says that “it is an understatement to say that technology often works hand in hand with unseen forces to challenge our faith or open new channels for spiritual warfare.”¹⁷⁷ In the next chapter, I will be discussing how these authors have responded to new technologies and innovations, and how they have confronted the changes that they see these new technologies promising.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Horn, “The Transhuman New Face of Spiritual Warfare,” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 306.

CHAPTER 3

BIOCONSERVATISM

Modern society is becoming increasingly concerned with the role of technology. It is not hard to find think pieces expressing concerns from the replacement of workers by machines to fears that Skynet is right around the corner. Christian premillennialists are no exception to this. This milieu addresses technology in their writings, raising warnings about the role it is playing in society. However, their warnings go beyond simple machinery. They also warn of transhumanism, of blending man and machine, of becoming posthuman.

This fear of modern technology and advances is not a new phenomenon; prophecy writers have long been wary of advanced technology and have often warned of its abuses. Ideas that might be considered part of science fiction, such as malevolent AI, have often comfortably fit into works of prophecy, and these modern authors are no exception. Opposition to transhumanism is the latest manifestation of this fear. In this chapter, I intend to show how the fear of advancing technology and the risk this milieu sees it posing for human uniqueness plays a major role among these authors' works, and that they are a continuation of long-held concerns of prophecy writers. I do not intend to promote them but explain them. I hope to show how this milieu's concerns, even though they are rooted in an esoteric theology, are not unique to them, but do have some traction among liberal

Christians and wider society. I will also trace the origins of these beliefs. They did not originate from nothing but have their roots in what this milieu claims is the history of the world.

This is not a milieu that refuses to engage with science. These authors, far from wanting their readers to be ignorant about science, instead attempt to explain it in a way that makes it comprehensible for their audience. These authors all argue that Christianity does not do a quality job about educating believers about potentially life-altering scientific advancements. They also use these ideas to address the Bible, but always in a way that either proves the truth of Christianity, or reminds the reader that science is merely how us humans can understand the workings of God. However, this understanding does not stop this milieu from skepticism towards modern technology.

Fundamentalists have often paid close attention to advancements in technology and culture.¹⁷⁸ Boyer shows how fundamentalists have often tied modern technology with the rise of the Antichrist. The Antichrist is said to be a leader who will take control of the planet during the Tribulation, the seven-year period after the Rapture, a time when Jesus will take all Christians on the Earth to Heaven. Since the 1960s, the computer in particular has been at the center of many apocalyptic scenarios, embodying the “Great Conspiracy’s” technological side, “the precise *means* by which Antichrist’s forerunners would achieve their aims.”¹⁷⁹ Boyer observes how prophecy writers have traditionally “updated their ancient message with knowledgeable disquisitions on lasers, microchips, transponders, and fiber optics.”¹⁸⁰ Horn is an example of this type of prophecy writer. In 2013, he and Putnam wrote about how modern

¹⁷⁸ Boyer, 285.

¹⁷⁹ Boyer 267.

¹⁸⁰ Boyer 269.

technology could be used by the Antichrist “in particular, human tracking and monitoring utilities, including versions of embeddable smart tattoos and biochip devices that may provide for the mark of the Beast.”¹⁸¹ Prophecy writers have long decried the dangers of human-like technology, of technology that allows for monitoring and control, and the fear of transhumanism seen in these modern writers is a continuation of those fears.¹⁸² Fundamentalists have feared technology that seeps into their homes and monitors them.¹⁸³ As O’Callaghan explains, this milieu “transform[s] the field of technological research into a field of battle. In doing so, they move the discussion from the scientific realm into the spiritual and apocalypticize the science.”¹⁸⁴

Putnam critiques transhumanism by claiming that it sees the body as “simple hardware” and “den[ies] the soul *a priori* viewing consciousness purely as an epiphenomenon.”¹⁸⁵ He also says that transhumanism violates the image of God in man. He contends that transhumanism is “hubris,” denying the fallen and sinful condition of man and assuming that he can improve himself without God. He also argues that this new technology will only be affordable by the elite and will lead to the development of a “new caste system.”¹⁸⁶ In

¹⁸¹ Thomas Horn, “Forgotten Aspect of Bible Prophecy: The Lucifer Effect and the Coming War of Christian vs. Christian,” in *Blood on the Altar: The Coming War Between Christian vs. Christian*, ed. Thomas Horn (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2014), 23.

¹⁸² Boyer, 268.

¹⁸³ Amy Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125 and Boyer, 269-271.

¹⁸⁴ Sean O’Callaghan, “Technological Apocalypse: Transhumanism as an End-Time Religious Movement,” in *Religion and Human Enhancement: Death, Values, and Morality*, ed. Tracy J. Trothen and Calvin Mercer, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 75.

¹⁸⁵ Something that results from but does not impact a process.

¹⁸⁶ Putnam, “Critique” 10, 16, 18-19.

addition, Carl Teichrib, another writer in this milieu, contends that transhumanism denies the saving death of Christ by adding the “plus” of technology to it.¹⁸⁷ It is essentially blasphemy, violating the commandment, “thou shalt have no other gods before me[;]” man worships machines, then desires to fuse with them, “becoming what we worship.”¹⁸⁸ This milieu sees transhumanism as a threat; as something that can endanger the soul. It shows a suspicion of man’s ability to improve himself, something quite common among conservative Christianity. It also demonstrates a fear of physical and spiritual corruption, of an outside force deceiving others into accepting it into themselves and destroying them. To this milieu, genetic purity is important. Among these authors is an idea—sometimes explicitly stated, sometimes not—that mankind must be genetically “pure” to be in God’s likeness. Genetic engineering is seen as a threat to that purity.

Alberino both condemns transhumanism in his own work and focuses on corruption. He identifies humanity as being on the brink of “the Hybrid Age,” a time when “men will merge with their machines to transcend the limitations of their bodies.”¹⁸⁹ He joins Putnam in criticizing “Christian transhumanism,” arguing that it is a paradox, since “the very goal of transhumanism is posthumanism[,]” to “eliminate death.”¹⁹⁰ He claims that “the goal of posthumanism [is] to discard the body of Adam in order to attain the attributes of the gods; to dispense with the mortal and moral inhibitions of the human condition and evolve into overman.”¹⁹¹ Teichrib concurs with

¹⁸⁷ Carl Teichrib, “Machines of Loving Grace,” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 75.

¹⁸⁸ Teichrib, 89.

¹⁸⁹ Alberino, 270.

¹⁹⁰ Alberino, 273.

¹⁹¹ Alberino, 284.

this, arguing that “to be truly posthuman requires mastery over morality—to enter the realm of divinity, *to be as God*.”¹⁹² For Alberino, human modification, “to become like Apollo, a posthuman hybrid modified with the genetic markers of the Golden Race[,]” will eventually become the infamous Mark of the Beast that seals one’s allegiance to the Antichrist.¹⁹³ Alberino tells of a world where mankind, via genetic modification, has become “posthuman” and incapable of claiming their inheritance from God.¹⁹⁴

According to Alberino, the End Times will involve mankind, which has failed to prevent inevitable genetic decay via genetic modification, being “saved” from an alien invasion by the Antichrist and “his dragon siblings,” who will offer to save mankind via DNA splicing. However, this modification will cause them to cease to be human, forever separating them from God.¹⁹⁵ The Antichrist, who “will be more human than the posthumans subjugated to his dominion[,]” will thus hijack mankind’s right to rule via convincing them to surrender it through his modifications.¹⁹⁶

This scenario ties in with these authors’ concern about human modification and genetic manipulation. Horn contends that “modern transhumanist goals involving genetic modification of species” are similar to the goals of the Watchers when they created the Nephilim.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Teichrib, 82.

¹⁹³ Alberino, 276.

¹⁹⁴ Alberino, 287.

¹⁹⁵ Alberino, 286-287.

¹⁹⁶ Alberino, 283-289, 290.

¹⁹⁷ Horn, “Forgotten,” 33.

This milieu points to Genesis 6:1-4, a passage which talks about the “sons of God” having children with the “daughters of men,” to explain the origins of the Nephilim, the product of these unions. Horn and Putnam claim that “genetic manipulation [...] was central to what these ‘gods’ were up to and ultimately why God destroyed all but Noah’s family in the Flood.” They reference the Bible’s description of “‘all flesh’ having become ‘corrupted, both man and beast.’”¹⁹⁸ Alberino speculates that the Watchers might have tried to corrupt man’s genome “in order to secure domination of the Earth for their hybrid sons, who remained human enough to appropriate it.”¹⁹⁹ He also alleges, citing the apocryphal Book of Giants, that further experiments were done to combine the genomes of animals and humans.²⁰⁰ To this milieu, this dangerous genetic manipulation did not end during the time of the Watchers.

These authors follow the thread of the Watcher’s corruption. For example, Carl Gallups notes the possible dangers of IVG (*in vitro gametogenesis*) and CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) to humanity by drawing attention to Genesis 6:12.²⁰¹ CRISPR gene editing is a genetic engineering technique that “was adapted from a naturally occurring genome editing system that bacteria use as an immune defense.”²⁰² By adapting this system, researchers can edit DNA. According to Gallups, CRISPR allows scientists to “[mimic] molecular scissors, letting [them] ‘snip’ or repair selected components of DNA. Human and

¹⁹⁸ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 177.

¹⁹⁹ Alberino, 158.

²⁰⁰ Alberino, 147.

²⁰¹ Carl Gallups, *Gods of Ground Zero: The Truth of Eden’s Iniquity, Why It Still Matters, and the Mystery of What’s Coming Next*, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 141.

²⁰² “What are genome editing and CRISPR-Cas9?” MedlinePlus, National Library of Medicine (US), March 22, 2022, <https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/genomicresearch/genomeediting/>.

animal DNA can be mixed or even altered using the technology.”²⁰³ Horn and Putnam state that “germline engineering is considered by some conservative bioethicists to be the most dangerous of human-enhancement technology, as it has the power to truly reassemble the very nature of humanity into posthuman[.]”²⁰⁴

This milieu is concerned about errors being spread through genetics. Horn warns of a “Lucifer Effect,” theorizing that cruelty, sociopathy, and other traits could be spread through genetics, again comparing this to the Nephilim.²⁰⁵ He and Putnam warned about this in *Exo-Vaticana*, arguing that germline engineering ran the risk of spreading genetic modifications to future generations.²⁰⁶ In this regard, they are similar to Alberino, who also expresses a fear of genetic engineering turning people into something less than human and who speculates about what amounts to non-humanity spreading through genetic manipulation during the End Times and what he thinks might have occurred before the Flood.²⁰⁷ These authors take their cue in this from I.D.E. Thomas, who also claimed in *The Omega Conspiracy* (2008) that the Nephilim wanted to “pollute the bloodline of humanity in an effort to foil plans for the future birth of the Messiah.”²⁰⁸ In a 2008 reprint of the book by Anomalos Publishing House, one of Horn’s two publishing houses, he says that it “is the scholarship that connects the dots for the

²⁰³ Gallups, 140.

²⁰⁴ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 117.

²⁰⁵ Horn, “Forgotten,” 33-37.

²⁰⁶ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 117.

²⁰⁷ Alberino, 158.

²⁰⁸ Thomas, 313.

rest of us.”²⁰⁹ Again, we can see how these authors are not pulling their ideas out of nothing, they are calling upon an older tradition and merely updating a few aspects.

Horn clarifies in *The Milieu* (2018) that he and other authors do not oppose all human modification. Horn uses the examples of a deaf child receiving a hearing aid versus the hypothetical example of him having his DNA fused with a dolphin’s (due to its “incredible hearing abilities, including echolocation”) to explain what he and the rest of “The Milieu” consider acceptable and not acceptable: “One *treats* his human condition, one *changes* his human condition, making him something that is no longer completely human.”²¹⁰ He argues that “God is the ultimate scientist, the First Scientist actually” and his creation deserves “*respect*”; mankind should not attempt to improve on what is already there by, “dabbl[ing] with the First Scientist’s beautiful and artistic human DNA design to the point that His original race no longer resembles itself.”²¹¹ Gilbert agrees, saying that, “Medical advances are a good thing, but they are *restoration*, not *transformation*.”²¹² Teichrib also calls for “discernment” and hopes that Christians and conservatives will not “shun technologies that are medically beneficial or otherwise valuable because of associations with transhumanism[.]”²¹³

In this, this milieu follows in the tradition of technology-skeptical fundamentalism. In her literary analysis of the *Left Behind* series, a series which is often seen as the main example of

²⁰⁹ I.D.E. Thomas, *The Omega Conspiracy: Satan’s Last Assault on God’s Kingdom*, (Crane: Anomalos Publishing House, 2008), Back Cover.

²¹⁰ Thomas Horn, “Horn’s Milieu?” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 24.

²¹¹ Horn, “Horn’s Milieu” 15.

²¹² Derek Gilbert, “The Fight That Shows No Pity: Christian Transhumanists and the Quest for Gilgamesh,” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 138.

²¹³ Teichrib, 47.

premillennialism, Jennie Chapman notes how believers are in essence inoculated against technology, which is seen as a tool of the secular world and hence the devil, by seeing it used to, for example, spread the Gospel. When believers use it, it is seen as a neutral force that evangelicals can use for themselves.²¹⁴ This milieu follows that trend; even though they are critical of technology, they make heavy use of it. One of the major outlets for this milieu is SkyWatchTV, an online service that hosts some of their media. As of summer 2022, Horn is promoting an online conference consisting of milieu members. As Gilbert acknowledges in a 2018 essay, he and his wife, Sharon K. Gilbert, have plenty of electronic devices around their house and have no issue using them. As we will see, while Sharon Gilbert will warn that there will come a time for humans to separate from technology, both the Gilberts and the rest of this group heavily rely on it to spread their message.²¹⁵ Transhumanism stands out in this as this milieu sees no good in it, no possibility of it being used for God’s glory. It is inherently Satanic.

This milieu, even though it is opposed to transhumanism, sees its rise as inevitable. This inevitability gives more urgency to their warnings about the threat it represents to man’s soul. Horn says that transhumanism can be seen as “an assault on God’s creative genius[,]” and that, in the face of its seeming inexorability, “people of faith seek to maintain their humanity.”²¹⁶ Horn asserts that, “the Bible is [...] concerned with the antithesis of transhumanism: the integration of our bodies and minds.”²¹⁷ Essentially, Horn argues that, “We—believers and nonbelievers—need *now more than ever*, to know the facts about transhumanism’s leaps in the current age,” pros and

²¹⁴ Jennie Chapman, *Plotting Apocalypse: Reading, Agency, and Identity in the Left Behind Series*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 118-121.

²¹⁵ Gilbert, “Fight,” Page Number unavailable.

²¹⁶ Horn, “New Face,” 310.

²¹⁷ Horn, “New Face,” 314.

cons alike, the latter of which he feels are not being properly addressed.²¹⁸ This is a repeat of a warning he issued in 2010, where he says, “the church as an institution has failed at any concentrated effort to focus on the genetics revolution, the government’s interest in human enhancement, the viral transhumanist philosophy capturing the minds of a generation at colleges and universities [...] and the significant moral and ethical issues raised by these trends.”²¹⁹ Putnam concurred in a 2011 essay, saying “there can be no doubt that scientific progress and technical advancements are now poised to dramatically transform humanity. It is moving at such a rapid pace that it is imperative for thoughtful Christians to offer a biblical perspective in the marketplace of ideas.”²²⁰ He insists that “transhumanism will not wait for Christians to catch up[,]” and that, “one way or another, the melding of man and machine is going to happen.”²²¹ Teichrib also makes a similar claim, saying that “churches need to be informed and equipped to understand the worldviews behind the [transhumanist] movement, bringing sober realism and wisdom to the conversation. Seminaries and apologetics ministries ought to formulate biblical responses to the hope-in-technology and search for opportunities to speak into the subject.”²²² According to Horn, he focuses on this topic due to the lack of understanding and the speed at which this new technology is developing. He notes in a 2018 essay that terms like “*Genetics, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Synthetic Biology, [and]*

²¹⁸ Horn, “Horn’s Milieu?” 25-26.

²¹⁹ Thomas Horn, “An Open Letter to Christian Leaders on Biotechnology and the Future of Man,” in “Christianity Versus Transhumanism,” by Bruce Sterling, *WIRED*, September 21, 2010, <https://www.wired.com/2010/09/christianity-versus-transhumanism/>.

²²⁰ Cris Putnam, “The Doctrine of Man: A Critique of Christian Transhumanism,” (2011): 3, accessed May 10, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/4162109/A_Critique_of_Christian_Transhumanism.

²²¹ Putnam, “Critique,” 20.

²²² Teichrib, “Machines,” 46.

Nanotechnology [italics in original]” were not well understood in mainstream culture when he used them as subtitles of a 2010 book.²²³

Horn emphasizes that “man is not just a series of biological functions,” and that he and other members of his milieu are concerned about “supernaturalism and spirituality.”²²⁴

According to Horn, “We are spirit and soul and vulnerable to spiritual, not just environmental, dangers,” and need “*spiritual shields*” in addition to shields meant to defend us from the “secular” dangers of advancing technology.²²⁵ This milieu sees transhumanism as a corrupting force, something that could endanger the eternal destiny of humanity. However, their concerns go beyond this specific issue; advanced technology still presents a threat to the believer, even if it is not part of their body. Specifically, artificial intelligence is seen as another avenue Satan can use to attack Christians.

Gary Stearman warns that “artificial intelligence is on the verge of surpassing human perception and thought. High technology threatens to enslave the unwary.” He also warns of the coming of “the ‘singularity’ [...] where man and machine will merge to launch humankind toward its next level.”²²⁶ The Singularity is a term that refers to “the point at which greater-than human machine intelligence begins rapidly improving itself, bringing an end to human-directed history.” The name is a reference to the

²²³ Thomas Horn, “Giving Life to the Living Image of the Beast and the First-Fruits of His Dark Image-Bearers,” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 245-246.

²²⁴ Horn, “New Face,” 306.

²²⁵ Horn, “New Face,” 304-306.

²²⁶ Gary Stearman, introduction to *On the Path of the Immortals: Exo-Vaticana, Project L.U.C.I.F.E.R. and the Strategic Locations Where Entities Await the Appointed Time*, by Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2015), vi.

center of a black hole, a place where we can no longer “predict how physical laws will work.” In the same way, once machine intelligence starts rapidly improving, our world will become unpredictable.²²⁷ Horn also devotes part of a chapter of *The Milieu* to the dangers of robots and speculates about how gene editing could allow a robot to have a child with a human who would be the soulless Antichrist.²²⁸ As mentioned, these fears have a long tradition, and even some seemingly modern ideas have their roots in the past. For example, prophecy writers have long speculated about the Antichrist being a computer, the embodiment of mindless automation.²²⁹

This is a theory that has found traction among these modern-day authors. Sharon Gilbert dedicates an essay in *Blood on the Altar* (2014) to the dangers of the Internet and artificial intelligence, claiming that the Internet will one day “awaken to ‘life’” and be part of the Mark of the Beast.²³⁰ In an essay published four years later, she still speculates that artificial intelligence will be vulnerable to demonic possession, and warns Christians to be prepared to separate themselves from the Internet when it takes control.²³¹ She is not the only one of these authors to wrestle with this idea; Teichrib also warns that the Singularity, “the image of the New Man,” could be a created image, “an artificial intelligence possessed and ‘made alive’ by a malevolent

²²⁷ James J. Hughes, “The Politics of Transhumanism and the Techno-Millennial Imagination, 1626–2030.” *Zygon* 47, no. 4, (December 2012): 763, accessed June 9, 2022, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9744.2012.01289.x.

²²⁸ Horn, “Giving Life,” 280-282.

²²⁹ Boyer, 283.

²³⁰ Sharon Gilbert, “By the Typing of Our Thumbs, Something Wicked This Way Comes,” *Blood on the Altar: The Coming War Between Christian vs. Christian*, ed. Thomas Horn (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2014), 79-80.

²³¹ Sharon Gilbert, “Summoning the Dragon: Artificial Intelligence and the Coming Beast System,” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 237-238.

spiritual entity.”²³² Derek Gilbert also warns about the possibility.²³³ It is a theological spin on what some might consider a purely science fiction concern.

Because of their concerns about scientific advances, these authors attempt to explain that science to their audience. For example, Horn mentions wormholes and portals in *On the Path of the Immortals* (2015), showing an awareness of modern science, albeit framing it in a way that explicitly honors God.²³⁴ Putnam goes as far as to insist that “one cannot be a consistent Christian (or scientist) while summarily dismissing [wormholes,]” a topic seemingly unconnected to Christianity.²³⁵ He contends that black holes might “be wormhole portals leading to other universes.”²³⁶ This ties into braneworld theory, the idea that “our four-dimensional spacetime is [...] a membrane or ‘brane’ that is simply a subspace of a larger, multidimensional space.” In the same way that “a square living on a sheet of paper would have no concept of depth,” we have no understanding of the higher dimensions around us. As Horn and Putnam explain it, “The big idea is that our visible, four-dimensional spacetime universe is restricted to its own brane in a higher-dimensional space called ‘the bulk.’ The bulk could contain other branes that are, for intents and purposes, parallel universes.” Putnam and Horn argue that, “black holes may, in fact, be points of connection between parallel braneworlds[,]” something that would explain the odd behavior of UFOs that seemingly teleport and shapeshift at random.²³⁷

²³² Teichrib, 64.

²³³ Derek Gilbert, “Fight,” 135-136.

²³⁴ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 162.

²³⁵ Horn and Putnam, 230.

²³⁶ Horn and Putnam, 212, 218.

²³⁷ Horn and Putnam, *Exo-Vaticana*, 347-350.

Horn also speculates that certain events from the Bible, such as Elijah being taken up in a whirlwind, were actually God using the Einstein-Rosen Bridge to communicate with humanity, as well as taking certain people through to Him.²³⁸

We have already seen how this milieu engages with modern scientific thought, and they use it to explain the universe in ways that fundamentalism traditionally does not. For example, Alberino affirms string theory, the theory that the universe is comprised of vibrating strings and that “the way in which these strings vibrate determines the nature and action of the elementary constituents of the material world[,]” as the best way to explain the universe. Alberino bases his logic on the argument that “string theory gives new meaning to the theological argument of *fine-tuning*, which posits that the extreme precision observed in the mechanisms that make the universe possible must be the result of intelligent design (i.e. a *conscious tuner*).”²³⁹ Horn also approvingly discusses string and superstring theory in *Immortals*.²⁴⁰ Fundamentalism is also tied in with six-day Creationism, which argues that the creation of the world described in Genesis 1 is literal. In another break from it, Alberino says that Christians should “embrace Big Bang cosmology,” as he argues that everything originated “from a singular source” although he insists that that source was God.²⁴¹ Their exploration of these topics is meant to justify and explain the Bible by showing how it is not contradictory with science.

This milieu constantly tries to draw their ideas back to God and to tie them in with science. For example, Putnam claims in *Immortals* that “theoretical physics is the way our

²³⁸ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 162, 164-165, 166.

²³⁹ Alberino, 30-32.

²⁴⁰ Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 153-155.

²⁴¹ Alberino, 29.

limited human minds must try to scientifically explain the supernatural abilities of God, who transcends time and space!”²⁴² In other words, science’s role is to help humans understand how God accomplishes his will. Putnam criticizes Christians who reject the paranormal or even supernatural worlds: “In Christianity, objections [in this case, to psi] seem to rise from incredulity, appropriate fear, and willful avoidance of the data. Even so, the Bible is full of anomalous phenomena.”²⁴³ Alberino concurs that science is valuable for the Christian. He argues that the word “supernatural” is contradictory to the Christian since “the biblical paradigm does not portray two distinct creations, one for the natural world and one for the supernatural, but a singular universe in which all things are bound together by synergistic forces.”²⁴⁴ He even states that “we should discard supernatural explanations in favor of scientific ones,” and that “much of the ‘supernatural’ activity recurrent in the biblical narrative is demystified when read against the backdrop of a hyperdimensional universe.”²⁴⁵ He follows through on this throughout *Birthright*, explaining the seeming supernatural in the Bible in scientific terms. For example, he explains an incident in 2 Kings 6 where Elisha’s servant is made to see angels protecting him and Elisha as him being allowed to perceive in higher dimensions.²⁴⁶ Again, we see how this milieu attempts to prove the Bible by showing how it is compatible with modern science. However, acceptance of science does not mean that this milieu totally embraces technology.

²⁴² Horn and Putnam, *Immortals*, 162.

²⁴³ Putnam, *Worldview*, 2609.

²⁴⁴ Alberino, 29.

²⁴⁵ Alberino, 24, 8.

²⁴⁶ Alberino, 24-25.

Technological conservatism can also be seen in some of Horn's comments about modern technology in *Emperor*, where he critiques many aspects of it, such as how it leads to disconnection from friends and family and encourages cruel comments about others, trolling.²⁴⁷ *Zeitgeist* (2021) sees a continuation of Horn's criticisms, as he condemns the news media and the rise of the internet (especially social media) for how they have limited people's views and manipulated facts.²⁴⁸ These are common criticisms of technology, even outside of Christian circles. One does not have to read Christian publications to find articles noting media manipulation and the influence that technology has over our everyday lives.

Some of their criticisms of transhumanism are also shared by other critics of modern technology. In many ways, these authors are echoing concerns from the Christian Right that go back to 2002. Putnam's criticism about the risk of transhumanism leading to a new caste system is also not exclusive to this group of authors. While he does not go as far as to say that transhumanism would lead to a caste system, Ted Peters does note that "only the wealthy sectors of the modern economy are sufficiently flushed with money to afford to invest in [genetics, nanotechnology, and robotics.]"²⁴⁹ He also notes that "a fear that technology is already dehumanizing us has colored our vision since the Industrial Revolution[,]" showing the longevity of some of these fears.²⁵⁰ Porter also observes that it is possible that future posthumans will have very different values than our own due to the transformative and ever-evolving nature of

²⁴⁷ Horn and Putnam, *Emperor*, 43-45.

²⁴⁸ Horn, *Zeitgeist*, 46-56 (news media), 56-68 (social media).

²⁴⁹ Ted Peters, "Progress and Provolution: Will Transhumanism Leave Sin Behind?" in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* ed. Roland Cole-Turner, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 70-71, 75-76.

²⁵⁰ Peters, 74.

“transformative technologies.”²⁵¹ Liberal bioethicists have taken that warning one step beyond: posthumans could see us as slaves at best, inferior beings to be slaughtered at worst.²⁵² Fredrick Meekins dedicates his essay in *The Milieu* to popular fiction plots that express the same fears as these authors, such as a genetically-engineered superhuman taking control, alien beings posing as gods, or a technologically-created afterlife proving “not all what [it] was hoped to be[,]” in order to demonstrate how even non-Christians are concerned about these topics.²⁵³

Members of this milieu are not the only Christians who challenge transhumanism, and their complaints are shared by other, more mainstream Christians. Noreen Herzfeld contends that, if we can simply upload our minds into a machine, then we lose our ability to care about the finite world and the people around us.²⁵⁴ Ted Peters, Brent Waters, and Gerald McKenny are also critics of transhumanism not associated with this milieu. Peters accuses transhumanists of naiveite, of assuming that “progress” will always lead to good and denying mankind’s tendencies towards “evil and destruction,” or sin.²⁵⁵ Waters says that transhumanism denigrates the body and therefore “den[ies] the very grace that sustains, vindicates, and redeems the human condition.” He condemns it as “essentially an idolatrous religion proffering a counterfeit salvation.”²⁵⁶ McKenny also argues that mankind gets its dignity from “its finite, vulnerable,

²⁵¹ Porter, “Bioethics and Transhumanism.”

²⁵² Hughes, 770-771.

²⁵³ Fredrick Meekins, “The Eschatological Awareness of Popular Science Fiction,” in *The Milieu: Welcome to the Transhuman Resistance*, ed. Thomas Horn, (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2018), 201-2, 205-6, 208-9.

²⁵⁴ Robert Geraci, *Apocalyptic AI: Visions of Heaven in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 137.

²⁵⁵ Peters, 78-80.

²⁵⁶ Brent Waters, “Whose Salvation? Which Eschatology? Transhumanism and Christianity as Competing Salvific Religions,” in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* ed. Roland Cole-Turner, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 172-173.

embodied nature[,]” something that transhumanists reject.²⁵⁷ I draw attention to these figures to note that this suspicion of transhumanism is not limited to conservative authors; their complaints find traction among other Christians and even secular liberals.

Bioconservatism is a key part of the worldview of these authors. Part of it is because it fits into their wider theology, part of it because they feel that these issues are not well understood by Christians. Rather than shying away from these issues, these authors tackle them head-on, educating their audience on everything from quantum mechanics to transhumanism. However, while the material might be recent science, the attitude of suspicion behind it is much older. This milieu argues that transhumanism and genetic modification are dangers to mankind’s soul. They will corrupt man and render him no more in God’s image. They see it as their mission to combat these societal trends via education, also attempting to justify the plausibility of Christianity with science. In doing so, they oppose what they see as an ever-expanding system that has spread across society.

²⁵⁷ Gerald McKenny, “Transcendence, Technological Enhancement, and Christian Theology,” in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* ed. Roland Cole-Turner, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 179.

CONCLUSION

Despite the trappings of science and extraterrestrials and occult imagery, none of what I describe is new. The fear of an all-controlling and dehumanizing force, the suspicion of technology, even the focus on extraterrestrials, have all been present throughout premillennialist thought for centuries. In some ways, the largest deviation is that this milieu sees no benefit to the new technology, as opposed to other innovations, which have been co-opted for evangelism. A suspicion of modern science is combined with the belief that it proves the Word of God, allowing this milieu to write about complex topics while simultaneously viewing advancements with caution.

As mentioned in the introduction, these authors have some crossover with improvisational millennialism. Their theology is based on a variety of sources, they are separate from the wider premillennialist Christian community while still having a foot set in it, and they often appeal to suppressed and unknown knowledge. However, it is still Christianity with some add-ons. While members of this milieu do use alternative sources from different faith traditions and the UFO conspiracy sphere, it is ultimately in the service of folding them all under the umbrella of Christianity. These authors do not try to claim that they are anything other than Christian, nor try to deny Christian doctrines. Based on their works, these authors would likely describe themselves as fundamentalists.²⁵⁸ Heiser and possibly Alberino are the only exceptions.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ O'Donnell, "Navigations," 643.

²⁵⁹ I base this conclusion on Alberino's embracing of "Big Bang cosmology" (which at the very least means he's not a seven-day Creationist) and on multiple posts on Heiser's website where he distances himself from fundamentalism and premillennialism in general. See Michael Heiser, "Understanding the Christian Fundamentalist View of UFOs and Aliens, Part 5," May 29, 2010, <https://drms.com/understanding-the-christian-fundamentalist-view-of-ufos-and-aliens-part-5/>.

I believe that anyone reading this milieu's works would conclude that its members are Christians: while some traditional interpretations are challenged, central doctrines of Christianity are unchanged. In *Veneration* (2019), Gilbert explains that he is more concerned that the reader believe "that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ[,]” even clarifying that he is not adding anything to that, than he is with whether or not they believe his book.²⁶⁰ Heiser also says that, while his own conclusions are “uncomfortable,” he is not debunking important Christian doctrine.²⁶¹ These are only two examples, but I did not see any of these authors claiming that believing in their writings was essential for Christianity. They felt that it was important, that they were giving much needed context, and that they were correcting doctrinal errors, but they did not claim that they were creating something new, or that salvation depended on believing what they wrote. There are *elements* of improvisational millennialism in this milieu, and I see the value in the term when comparing this milieu to other, similar belief systems, but I do not believe that it totally explains them.

This milieu does have an impact on the world around them. As I have discussed, they do have multiple ways of accessing an audience, ranging from online media to books. Judging the exact influence this milieu has is difficult, but it cannot be denied that they do have an audience that accepts their conclusions about eschatology and technology. As far back as 2011, the fundamentalist blog *Herescope* was warning about the increasing influence of Horn's “Watcher” theory and the others who were endorsing it.²⁶² We have already discussed in the introduction how Horn was able to promote his ideas in fundamentalist spaces, and nothing has changed to

²⁶⁰ Gilbert, *Veneration*, Chapter 1.

²⁶¹ Heiser, *Unseen*, 13.

²⁶² Gaylene Goodroad, “Doomsday Datesetters 2012,” *Herescope*, June 10, 2011, <https://herescope.blogspot.com/2011/06/doomsday-datesetters-2012.html>.

prevent that. The rebuttals to this group are few and far between, not to mention from the earlier part of the last decade. This lack of open pushback speaks both to this group's obscurity and in turn, their ability to spread their ideas without opposition.

Their focus on the Nephilim and how they relate to evolving technology sets them apart. This group would argue that this is because the church overlooks and neglects this doctrine because they find it hard and challenging to their understanding of the Bible.²⁶³ We have seen how they have made similar arguments about technology and transhumanism specifically. As mentioned, they are a cultic milieu; they are a Christian group and follows Christian doctrines, but deliberately set themselves apart from the church through their arguments. By creating a network of online news services, books, and conferences, they can present their ideas without overt attention from wider Christian bodies who, in their view, would censor this group for their esoteric ideas. They attempt to present these discussions in a way so their audience can understand the severity of the issue and the stakes of it, as well as the science and philosophy involved.

I would argue that this milieu, niche though it may be, does speak to people. These authors are not voices crying out to nothing, but they speak to issues and fears that Americans struggle with, from fears about superior forces from outer space dominating us to concerns about modern technology and the idea that it might one day replace humanity. The message they present is the same message that prophecy writers have presented for decades: "Behold, the end of the world is coming, and these scientific advancements that you love will be part of it. Repent and be saved." The key thing missing is the final focus on the Millennium, that final kingdom

²⁶³ Heiser, 93-94.

ruled by Christ, which seems to receive short shrift in these books.²⁶⁴ Although the message of hope through salvation in Jesus Christ is weaved in, the apocalyptic focus dominates their narratives. As a result, many will notice the latter more than the former.

²⁶⁴ Boyer, 318.

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