

FUNDAMENTALISM IN AMERICA

'All Praises Due to Satan, The Ruler of the World'

by Harley Schlanger

The following is adapted from a presentation to a LaRouche Youth Movement cadre school in Seattle, Washington, on Dec. 4, 2004.

Opening: *A chorus is singing the first verse of "Amazing Grace":*

Amazing grace!
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost,
But now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

Reverend Edwards: Our sermon today will be on a verse from *Deuteronomy* 32:35, "Their foot shall slide in due time."

O brothers and sisters, let me tell you—We are all walking on that slippery slope.

The reason why they have not fallen already, and do not fall now, is only that God's appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, their foot shall slide. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands on such slippery declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he cannot stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

Men's hands cannot be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any

deliver out of his hands. He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it.

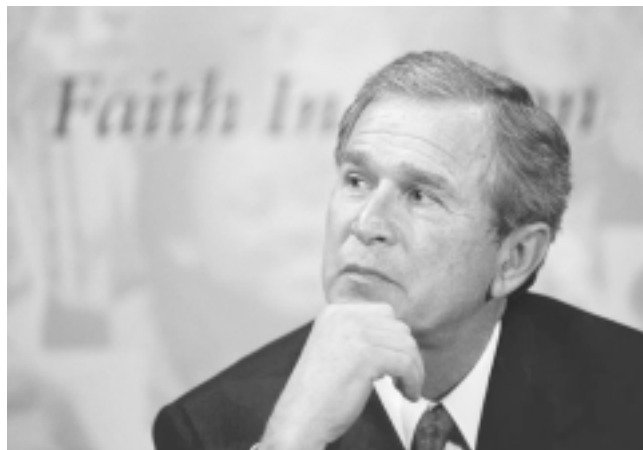
The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of, there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

O, verily, you must remember—this is a dreary, miserable world.

Wretches of the world, unite! Help God strike down that latte swillin', brie lovin', cabernet sippin', French speakin', baby killin', gay marryin' John Kerry, or it will be you on that slippery slope, a helpless sinner in the hand of an angry God.

This sermon—with the exception of the references to former Democratic Party Presidential candidate John Kerry—was delivered by Jonathan Edwards, during the revival move-



The flamboyant evangelist Rev. Arthur Blessitt (left) started George W. Bush on his conversion to the belief structure of the Christian Right, in 1984. Right: President Bush at the announcement of his Faith-Based Initiative for replacing the government's social safety net with "private charity," Jan. 24, 2001.

ment he spawned in the 1730s. Known as the Great Awakening, it was an operation against the efforts of the network which included Benjamin Franklin, to create a new republic on the American continent.

Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," will sound familiar to those who paid close attention during the 2004 Presidential campaign, when manipulating little, frightened people by asserting the power of a vengeful deity, provided the basis for Karl Rove's mobilization of those who are called Christian fundamentalists. Those manipulated, impotent folks who identify themselves as fundamentalists cast the vast majority of their votes to re-elect George W. Bush as President.

This article is addressed to the question of why this could have happened. These movements of fundamentalists calling themselves Christians have swept through America before, always to be defeated before the dire consequences of such irrationalism taking over our nation could be realized. We examine here some of the historical and cultural roots of this phenomenon, which has misused the name of Christianity in order to create an ideology determined to destroy God-given reason, and leave men helpless before a very worldly oligarchy that seeks to control the nation. To this oligarchy, the search for personal salvation has to be cast as a battle of little people against a hostile world, rather than the realization of God's love and justice in the world *He* created for that purpose.

In this story, George Bush is also simply a pathetic pawn. The most dangerous aspect of his Presidency is the possibility that Americans who identify with his delusions, won't abandon them before it's too late.

Dubya's 'Spiritual' Journey

Toward the end of April 1998, George W. Bush was invited by George Shultz, a leading figure among insiders at the

top of the Republican Party, to a meeting with him and his associates at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Shultz called the meeting not merely as a senior figure of the synarchists who run the neo-conservative movement, but as a kind of talent scout, to see if the younger Bush "had what it takes" to become President.¹

At the end of the meeting, according to Shultz's own recollections, he said to Bush, "I think you ought to be President." What did Shultz see in Bush that convinced him that Bush, who was running for re-election as Governor of Texas—a position with limited powers under the state's Constitution—and had no experience in foreign policy, could handle the job as President of the United States?

"He was very relaxed," Shultz said, "with the inner security some people have and some people don't."

What is it that gave Dubya that kind of "inner security"?

By his own admission, despite his birth into a prominent family which gave him a privileged childhood, George W. Bush had been a carouser who lacked direction, a failure in business, caught up in an aimless existence. He was the self-acknowledged black sheep of the family, a classic under-achiever who preferred juvenile practical jokes to thinking. Raised an Episcopalian, he converted to Methodism when he married Laura, though religion seemed to play a small part in his life.

In April 1984, aware that he was floundering, Bush asked for a private meeting with traveling evangelist Rev. Arthur Blessitt at the Holiday Inn in Midland, Texas. When Blessitt asked him if he had an assurance that he was going to heaven,

1. The story on the Shultz-Bush meeting is reported by James Mann, in *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 248-249. For the full story on Shultz's leading role in destroying our republic for the last three-and-a-half decades, see *EIR*, Dec. 3 and Dec. 10, 2004.

Bush responded that he did not. Though he and Blessit—who was known for carrying a 12-foot cross with him from city to city as part of his ministry—prayed together, he acknowledges that he continued for more than a year on a wayward path.

In the Summer of 1985, Bush spoke with the Rev. Billy Graham at the Bush family compound in Kennebunkport, Maine. Graham asked Bush, “Are you right with God?” Bush replied, “No, but I want to be.” Bush said that Graham, in this encounter, “planted a mustard seed” of salvation in his soul.²

It took another year, though, for that mustard seed to sprout, as Bush continued to be a heavy drinker until his 40th birthday, when he abruptly quit, in what the *New York Times* described as “a characteristic way: decisively, impulsively, and without much introspection.”

The lack of introspection is a characteristic which Bush has acknowledged, when he said, “I don’t spend a lot of time trying to figure me out. . . . I’m just not into psychobabble.”

The combination of these encounters with religious leaders and what was likely an ultimatum from his wife, to quit drinking, led to what Bush has described as a spiritual transformation, a personal conversion, a “calling.” Bush was “born again,” though he rarely uses that term to describe himself. From his wild drinking days, he was transformed into a serious Methodist, who believed he would receive strength from God’s grace.

It’s Easier Than Thinking

In describing his personal faith, which was strengthened by this transformation, Bush said, “My faith frees me . . . frees me to make decisions that others might not like.”³

This new “freedom” that Bush experienced was analyzed by Dr. Justin Frank, a clinical professor of psychiatry at George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. In his celebrated book, *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President*, Dr. Frank describes religion for Bush as a “coping mechanism.” He “uses religion to simplify and even replace thought, so that in some ways he doesn’t even have to think.”⁴

Fortified by this personal transformation, strengthened by his new freedom, Bush entered politics, twice winning the governorship of Texas. By the time of his 1998 meeting with Shultz, he was preparing a run for the Presidency. But was it more than faith which fortified him? Perhaps a deep-seated delusion?

Texas evangelist James Robison, who served as the prime

spokesman for the Religious Roundtable founded by Edward McAteer and is a leading activist in the Christian Right, told Bush biographer Stephen Mansfield that Bush told him: “I’ve heard the call. I believe God wants me to run for President. . . . I feel like God wants me to run for President. I can’t explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen, and, at that time, my country is going to need me. I know it won’t be easy . . . but God wants me to do it.”⁵

The events of Sept. 11, 2001 had a further “transforming” effect on Bush, giving him what some call a full-blown “God complex.” An evangelist who knew him before 9/11, Jim Wallis, the editor of *Sojourner* magazine, describes the change he saw in Bush, from January 2001 to February 2002, as follows: “When I first saw Bush in Austin, what I saw was a self-help Methodist, very open, seeking. What I started to see at this point [February 2002] was the man that would emerge over the next year—a messianic American Calvinist. He doesn’t want to hear from anyone who doubts him.”⁶

Since 9/11, Bush speaks often of “God’s plan for America,” implying that God is watching over the United States and will protect the good from the “evildoers,” and that this is what defines his chosen role.

The ‘God Complex’

Justin Frank again offers a useful psychological insight into Bush’s state of mind: “Religion doesn’t just replace doubt with certainty; it replaces ambiguity with dualism. . . . Banishing ambivalence and nuance from his mind, he envisions himself in a belief system as fixed as his fundamentalist faith. . . .

“He cloaks himself in the certainty of being good, absolving the self of responsibility even for destructive acts, disregarding the possibility that he could make a mistake.”⁷

The result of this process is what Americans can see on their television every night: that we have a President with a dangerous mental instability. Typical of this instability was the nearly incoherent answer Bush gave to interviewer Tim Russert, when asked about growing international resentment toward the United States due to his unilateralist destruction of Iraq for its non-existent weapons of mass destruction and equally non-existent links to 9/11.

“Heck, I don’t know,” a puzzled Bush responded. “I think that people—when you do hard things, when you ask hard things of people, it can create tensions. And I—heck, I don’t know why people do it. I’ll tell you, though, I’m not going to change, see? I’m not trying to accommodate—I won’t change my philosophy or my point of view.”

2. Quoted in Stephen Mansfield, *The Faith of George W. Bush* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2003), p. 68.

3. George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (New York: Perennial, 1999), p. 6.

4. Justin Frank, *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), p. 54. See also interview with Dr. Frank, in this issue.

5. Mansfield, op. cit., pp. 108-9.

6. Wallis is quoted in Ron Suskind, “Without a Doubt,” *New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 17, 2004.

7. Frank, op. cit., p. 69.



What White House political puppet-master Karl Rove and his Christian Right allies did in the 2004 election, with backing from the financier oligarchy, is only the latest chapter in a long history of such efforts, beginning with the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Roots of Tragedy

The smug reaction of President Bush to the “mandate” proclaimed by Karl Rove and Dick Cheney following the vote in November 2004, and his manic drive to destroy the Social Security system, to deliver retirement funds to his Wall Street backers, demonstrate that Bush has learned nothing from the devastating mistakes of his first term. The potential to defeat the Bush agenda—which includes the likelihood of more wars—is real, given the positive response from prominent Democrats to the leadership of Lyndon LaRouche in the fight against vote suppression, and to defeat the privatization of Social Security.

However, this potential will only be realized by generating an understanding of the nature of the tragedy facing contemporary civilization, which goes beyond the presence of an incompetent buffoon in the White House. This is not the first time that a leading world power has been afflicted with a deluded or insane leader. The deeper tragedy is not that which resides in the manifestly dangerous leader, but that which is endemic within the population which chooses, or tolerates such a leader.

How is it possible that more than 59 million Americans voted for George Bush? Is his obvious lack of touch with reality not so obvious to them? To get at the essence of the tragic moment we face, from the standpoint of Classical tragedy, the question must be asked, How did the United States reach the point, at which a substantial percentage of its citizens cannot recognize the existential danger posed by the present gang of maniacs and thieves, who, with Bush,

are running the nation?

Polls taken during the campaign and afterwards indicate that the most significant support for Bush came from those who identify themselves as Christian fundamentalists, in particular those who say they have been “born again.” This factor, which was known going into the election, made the open expression of one’s “faith” an issue throughout the campaign.

While John Kerry spoke often of his religious convictions, and how they would affect the decisions he would make as President, Bush sent repeated, almost coded signals of his religiosity to this base. This was reinforced by the outreach of televangelists and the “Christian” Right networks, which have expanded greatly since they first played a leading role in the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan. Over the last four years, the activities of this network have been coordinated with White House political director Karl Rove and Tim Goeglein, the deputy director of public liaison.

In 2004, they used the fears, doubts and frustrations of millions of Americans to manipulate them around so-called “values issues,” e.g., abortion and gay marriage. The President and his surrogates diverted the attention of the millions of people facing an unsure future because of the quagmire in Iraq, and the loss of jobs and economic security resulting from the collapse of the U.S. physical economy, by regaling them with tales of how “elite liberals” are out to destroy Christianity and the Christian roots of the United States.⁸

This was supplemented by assurances from charismatic fundamentalist leaders such as James Robison and Pat Robertson, that Bush is being given divine guidance. Further, there is the proliferation of books, such as the “Left Behind” series by long-time Christian Right figure Tim LaHaye, and those of the impending Battle of Armageddon by Rev. John Hagee, which offer comfort to those frightened by global crises and instability, by presenting the scriptural “evidence” that there is nothing to worry about except personal salvation, since the End Times are near, and Jesus will soon return to reign over the Earth.

The 2004 election campaign was not the first time that frightened believers have been manipulated to turn inward, away from facing reality, away from the task of organizing society to address the crises which confront it. What Rove and his “religious” allies did, with generous backing from Wall Street financiers and corporate America, is only the latest chapter in a long history of such efforts, from the time of the first settlements on the American continent, beginning with the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Battle in Massachusetts

In 1630, in what was called the Great Migration to New England, John Winthrop and the 800 passengers who ac-

8. The attempt to divide the nation around this nonsense continued after the election, with windbag Fox TV commentator Bill O’Reilly and Straussian



Rev. John Hagee, author of books on the impending Battle of Armageddon, says there is nothing to worry about except personal salvation, since the End Times are near.

panied him were not merely fleeing religious persecution; they were creating a flank in the New World, to demonstrate the superiority of a republic to the monarchical regimes of Europe, which were allied with dominant and often-corrupt churches. This is the meaning of Winthrop's challenge to his fellow migrants, that "we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."⁹

The Great Migration occurred during a period of intense religious conflict in Europe. The Thirty Years' War was raging, and England was heading into a civil war and revolution. For Winthrop and his followers, particularly Increase Mather and his son Cotton, religious freedom from persecution by the alliance between the oligarchy and the established church in England was essential, as a precondition, to establish a civil government which could act in the interests of the Common

Lynne Cheney, the wife of the Vice President, insisting that there is a conscious effort under way by secular liberals to remove Christ from Christmas!

9. H. Graham Lowry, *How the Nation Was Won* (Washington, D.C.: EIR, 1987), p. 10. This book is the best investigation of the ideas underlying the battle for the creation of the American republic against the imperial regime which had emerged in England following the 1763 Treaty of Paris.

Good: thus, the idea of the "city upon a hill."

The Mathers led the battle to achieve independence in New England, as both religious and political leaders. They were opposed not only by forces in England, but by the merchant elite in New England as well, whose fortunes depended on trade with England. The effort of the Mathers to renew the Charter, in 1688, which granted some autonomy to Massachusetts, was opposed by the representative of the Crown, Sir Edmund Andros, who received support from pro-British merchants from the Connecticut River Valley.

These merchants deployed one of their own, Solomon Stoddard, to oppose the Mathers. Stoddard, whose father was one of the wealthiest of the Connecticut merchants, attacked the Congregationalist Church of the Mathers as "undemocratic," run by "elites." In a series of sermons, he attacked the educated clergy, arguing that anyone can be chosen to lead. In 1687, Stoddard published "The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment," in which he dismissed the concept of a rational God acting through "visible saints," e.g., those like the Mathers, who governed by seeking knowledge of what constitutes the Common Good.

Stoddard asserted, "The only reason why God sets his love on one man and not upon another is, because he pleases. . . . The will of God is sufficient to move him to choose one and refuse another."¹⁰ Who achieves salvation is decided by the "free will of God," as an arbitrary choice. Since the choice cannot be known, Stoddard preached that "sheer zeal and piety," rather than reason, or activity derived from reason, was the sole precondition for leadership in the church.

Stoddard's attack on the "elites," especially the Mathers, was an attack on the conception that God has created a knowable universe. In his "Essays to Do Good," published in 1710, Cotton Mather argues that man's mission is to discover God's laws, through reason. The proper role of a clergyman is to aid this mission through the sermon, which evokes the powers of reason in the members of the congregation.

Using Fear To Manipulate the Fearful

Instead of reason, Stoddard focussed the congregants narrowly on their personal salvation, while organizing a rebellion against the Mathers and their fight for political independence from England. Though he claimed he was promoting democracy against the hierarchical structure of the church defended by the Mathers, historian Perry Miller accurately asserts that this was no "populist uprising," but that Stoddard, "by his explicit declaration," intended "to put dictatorial powers into the hands of the ministers and elders" who would turn the churches over to be governed by the synods from England.¹¹

Stoddard's organizing was effective, as many New Englanders, facing increasingly oppressive measures from Brit-

10. Quoted in Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), p. 233.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 258. See also Lowry, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

ain's imperial oligarchy, retreated from the historical mission of creating a city upon a hill, which had been defined by their predecessors. Instead, under the influence of Stoddard's preaching, which appealed to a "carnal, giddy, rising Generation"—backed by what Mather denounced as the "Presbyterianism that runs down the Connecticut River"¹²—frightened residents of the Colony embraced the goal of personal salvation, at the expense of the well-being of the colony as a whole. They had become little, fearful people, who, in such a state, could be easily controlled by a manipulator like Stoddard.

Cotton Mather polemicized aggressively against this retreat, writing "Things for a Distress'd People to Think Upon" in 1696. He identified this as a regression from "a fervent Inclination to Do Good," which "once ran through New England." This inclination has been replaced, he warned, by "a shameful Shrink . . . from that Greatness and Goodness. . . ." Instead, "We grow Little every way; Little in Our Civil Matters, Little in our Military Matters, Little in our Ecclesiastical Matters; we dwindle away, to Nothing."¹³

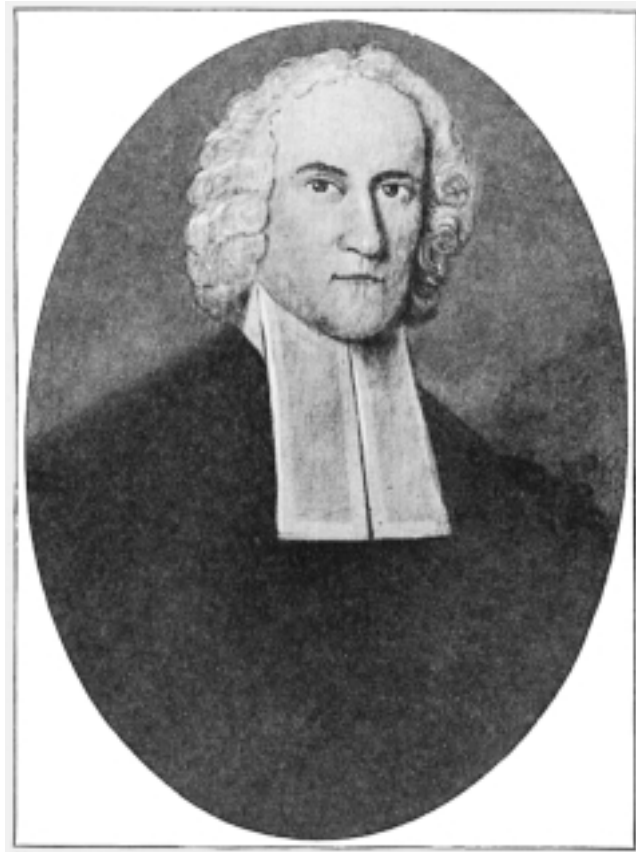
Upon its publication in 1710, Cotton Mather's "Essays to Do Good" became what historian Graham Lowry called a "handbook for organizing a republican movement." It is clear that, for Mather, faith in God does not excuse the faithful from active participation in doing good. He writes: "It is an invaluable honor, to do good; it is an incomparable pleasure. A man must look upon himself as dignified and gratified by God, when an opportunity to do good is put into his hands. He must embrace it with rapture, as enabling him to answer the great End of being."

This includes participation in, and support for, good government. "Government is called, the ordinance of God," he wrote. Thus, "it should vigorously pursue those noble and blessed ends for which it is ordained: the good of mankind."¹⁴

Among those allied with Mather was Josiah Franklin, whose son Benjamin, was influenced by the "Essays to Do Good." When he left New England for Philadelphia in 1723, Benjamin Franklin was already committed to fighting for a republican government which would act for "the good of mankind."

The Great Awakening

The revivalism which had been launched by Stoddard against the republican movement of the Mathers was transformed into a much larger sabotage operation by Jonathan Edwards, the grandson of Stoddard. The so-called Great Awakening in the United States in the 1740s was part of a



Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), in his Great Awakening of the 1730s, worked up his congregations into a fever pitch of terror over "the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God."

broader operation which originated in England, to contain the potential for revolt against the Church of England and the monarchy.

Its promoters attacked the rule of reason, arguing that religious belief is primarily based on feeling, not thinking; that one should trust the heart, not the head; and that biblical revelation, not human reason, should guide Christians.

In New England, under Edwards, this movement attacked the "elites," particularly those who were interested in physical science. Edwards was a great admirer of John Locke, whose view that man is merely an animal was at the heart of Edwards' theology. Edwards wrote that he read Locke with more pleasure "than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure."¹⁵

It is entirely lawful that Edwards would adopt the outlook of Locke to combat the republicanism of the Mathers and their networks, as Locke had been the mortal enemy of Gottfried Leibniz, whose scientific approach to statecraft was passed

12. Quoted in Lowry, op. cit., pp. 53. This is an obvious reference to the financial support for Stoddard's subversion from the pro-British merchants in the Connecticut Valley.

13. Ibid., p. 50.

14. Quoted in Lowry, op. cit., pp. 112-113. Chapter 5, "The Republican Offensive of 1710," gives a compelling picture of the mobilization by Mather which created the basis for American independence.

15. Quoted in Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 175



John Wesley (1703-91) founded the Oxford Methodists movement in England. His revivalist tradition was transplanted to America in the 1740s, starting in Kentucky.

on by the Mathers to Franklin. It was thus Leibniz's "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" which were established as the inalienable rights defended by the Founding Fathers in the 1776 Declaration of Independence, and not the degenerate Locke's "life, liberty, and property."

In promoting Locke's view of the nature of man, Edwards evoked horrible images of man degraded to the level of human cattle. His famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," from which our opening sermon was compiled, gives man no option of redemption, except through complete submission to an unknowable, ferocious, and unloving God, who is happy to cast human wretches into eternal damnation.

The Great Awakening continued to ebb and flow from 1740 until about 1770, but nearly disappeared as a phenomenon during the years of the battle for independence from England, led by Mather-protégé Franklin and his youth movement. The stirring words of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, which assert the commitment to "promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our *posterity*," represent the triumph of the Leibnizian outlook of the Mathers and Franklin, against that of those skills for the British Empire, Stoddard and his grandson Jonathan Edwards.

John Wesley and the Great Revival

Unfortunately, the cosmology of Edwards was not laid to rest with him. The "Oxford Methodists" movement of John Wesley, founded at Oxford, England in 1739, was brought to the American continent in the 1740s by one of its cofounders, George Whitfield, and ran a parallel track in the South with what Edwards was doing in New England. While it was likewise eclipsed by the American Independence movement, it was reborn in the late 1790s as the "Great Revival," beginning with a camp revival in Kentucky.

Wesley was soon preaching to large crowds in England,

revivals during which men and women cried out, "as in the agonies of death . . . and before long they were generally able to rejoice in God their Savior."¹⁶

The waves of revivalism associated with Wesley's movement shared several important characteristics with Edwards' revivalism. First, by centering its doctrine of salvation around Jesus' death, and not his teachings, it encouraged passivity in the face of present injustices, causing people to turn away from the evil outside world and focus, selfishly, on their own salvation, rather than to organize for social change. Faith in a life to come, wrote British historian E.P. Thompson, looking at Wesley's Methodism and parallel religious movements in England, "served not only as a consolation to the poor but also as some emotional compensation for present sufferings and grievances: it was possible not only to imagine the 'reward' of the humble but also to enjoy some revenge upon their oppressors, by imagining their torments to come."¹⁷

Second, it is not surprising that the Great Revival would spawn a movement that would insist upon adherence to the political status quo in England, while providing support for opposition to the republic in the United States. The Leeds Conference of the Methodists in England in 1793 (shortly after Wesley's death), reaffirmed their "unfeigned loyalty to the King and sincere attachment to the [non-existent English] Constitution." In the United States, two grandsons of Jonathan Edwards played leading roles as saboteurs against the American System: Aaron Burr, whose allegiance was to London, and who organized against the economic nationalism associated with Alexander Hamilton, whom he killed; and Timothy Dwight, who was a leader of the Hartford Conven-

16. Quoted in John Telford, *John Wesley: Into All the World* (Greenville, S.C.: Ambassador, 1999 reprint of a book first published in 1902), p. 122.

17. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 34.

tion which backed Britain in the War of 1812, calling for the secession of New England at that time.¹⁸

Third, the emphasis on feeling and “spiritualism” generated a deep-seated anti-intellectualism and hostility to educated “elites,” just as Stoddard and Edwards had promoted such sentiments against the Mathers and their republican allies. The history of revivalism (and fundamentalism, up to the present day) is one of the challenge to the established clergy and other educated “elites,” such as doctors and lawyers, by charismatic lay preachers made smug by their confidence in their “inner faith.”

Though Wesley’s operations were launched in England in the 1740s, it wasn’t until the 1790s—after the consolidation of America’s victory against the British Empire, with the adoption of the U.S. Constitution—that his movement grew, both in Britain and America. In Britain, it served as a brake against the potential for an anti-oligarchical echo crossing the ocean, by preaching personal salvation rather than political-economic change. From 59,000 members in 1790, the Wesley Methodist church membership in Britain grew to over 600,000 by 1850.

Its growth in the United States, along with the growth of similar “anti-establishment” religions, such as the Baptists and Presbyterians, especially in the South, was even more dramatic. By 1850, three-quarters of all American churches were Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian.

Darby and the Cult of the Rapture

The growth of churches associated with revivalism continued in the United States during the 1850s, as these were troubling times. The nation was divided over slavery, with a civil war looming. As often has occurred in U.S. history during such confusing times of existential crisis, an operation was launched from Britain, taking advantage of the tension associated with the crisis to divert attention away from effective political action. Once again, many Americans retreated into the search for personal salvation, a search that was given a boost, in 1857, with the arrival of the Plymouth Brethren of John Nelson Darby.



John Nelson Darby

The Brethren was founded in 1830, around the belief that the Second Coming of Christ would occur not as a single event, but in two stages. Darby took the beliefs of one Margaret Macdonald, who was from a family engaged in “healing” and “speaking in tongues,” and developed from them a com-

plicated eschatology—a doctrine dealing with the “final judgment” and the “End Times.” Darby preached that the “Rapture of the church,” when the true Christians would be lifted directly to Heaven, was coming soon, along with the return of Jesus.

His doctrine held that the Rapture would soon be followed by the Tribulation, during which the Antichrist will reign and the sinful are punished. The Tribulation period ends with the Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ. This doctrine is called pre-millennial dispensationalism: “pre-millennial,” because Christ returns and engages in the Battle of Armageddon, to usher in a millennium of peace.¹⁹

Darby’s teachings were compatible, on the whole, with previous revivalist theologies. He taught that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and that it is only through Jesus’ death and sacrifice that man can be redeemed. In keeping with millennial movements of the past, his doctrine appealed most to those who were frightened and who felt little and impotent, and who saw the world as a mysterious and hostile place. This teaching offers comfort to those paralyzed by their fears and impotence, as it turns their recognition of the decline of civilization into a cause for celebration, as a sign of the impending return of Jesus Christ. If one’s faith is strong enough and one has accepted that the sole path to salvation was paved by Jesus?? suffering, his theory goes, then Rapture will be the reward.

The promotion of Darbyism was run through the Niagara Bible Conference, a series of annual events which began in 1875. For the next 22 Summers, these conferences served as the recruitment ground for spreading Darbyism to American church leaders, particularly within the “conservative” denominations. The term “fundamentalist” was first used to describe the “conservatives” attending the Niagara conferences.

But the popularizing of Darby was boosted primarily with the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible, which was first published in 1909, by Oxford University Press. The author was Cyrus I. Scofield, a veteran of the Confederate Army, who was run out of Kansas after the Civil War for his shady dealings. Scofield was recruited to Darby’s outlook by Dr. James Brookes, a leader of the Niagara Conferences. When the former ne’er-do-well Scofield was ordained as a minister, the Topeka, Kansas, *Daily Capital* newspaper described him as a “politician and shyster generally . . . this peer among scalamags,” who had left Kansas four years earlier “after a series of forgeries and confidence games.”

However, after being named the pastor at the First Con-

18. For the story of Burr’s treachery, see Anton Chaitkin, *Treason in America: From Aaron Burr to Averell Harriman* (New York: New Benjamin Franklin House, 1984).

19. Some contemporary theologians break the eschatology down further, speaking of “pre-tribulation rapturists” versus “post-tribulation rapturists.” We limit ourselves here to the “pre-millennialists” and the “post-millennialists.” For those wishing to pursue this to its full, nitpicking end, John Walvoord, who spent more than 50 years at the fundie training center, Dallas Theological Seminary, promoting the work of Darby and Darby’s popularizer, C.I. Scofield, has written a book, *The Rapture Question*, in which he argues that Darby’s “pre-tribulationist” viewpoint is the correct one.

gregational Church in Dallas in 1882, Scofield's project of writing a biblical commentary which would prove that Darby was right gained some well-heeled backers, including Lyman Stewart, president of the Union Oil Company of California and a group of real estate brokers and Wall Street investors.

The other prominent promoter of Darby's doctrines was D.L. Moody, whose Moody Bible College was at the center of the next wave of revivalism.

The importance of Darby's work is clear in the depraved fiction of Rapture popularizer Tim LaHaye, whose "Left Behind" series flows from Darby's pre-millennial doctrine. John Walvoord, another promoter of Darby who was the long-serving president of Dallas Theological Seminary, said that "Much of the Truth promulgated by fundamental Christians today had its rebirth in the movement known as the 'Plymouth Brethren.' "

The Roaring Twenties' Revivals

Before we proceed to the current sideshow of the fundamentalism which produced the Presidency of George W. Bush—with its modern Darbyites and, even more frightening, the post-millennialist "Christian Reconstructionists" or "Dominionists"—it is useful to take a brief look at the renewal of revivalism which occurred during the Roaring Twenties. The Dionysian Age of Excess was a fertile ground for recruitment to fundamentalism (as we see again, today, with fundies proliferating during the present Age of Consumerism).

The period after World War I was one of tumult, with the dismantling of the war-time economy, revolution in Russia and a "Red Scare" in the United States, and the failure of Woodrow Wilson to convince the American people that peace depended on U.S. membership in the League of Nations. With a foolish apostle of free trade, Calvin Coolidge, in the White House adding fuel to an out-of-control speculative boom, many Americans longed for something more than a crack at earthly paradise.

Thus, the post-war period also was a time of Prohibition; of the gang-countergang battle between proponents of Darwinian evolution and the fundamentalists who preached the infallibility of the Bible, which produced the Scopes trial; and of decade-long traveling religious road shows, one featuring an ex-baseball player, Billy Sunday, who promoted a "muscular" Christianity, and another with a religious Goddess, Aimee Semple McPherson, who saved souls while seductively wrapping herself around a cross.

Sunday's pitch was simple: "With Christ, you are saved, without him you are lost. . . . You are going to live forever in heaven or you are going to live forever in hell. It's up to you and you must decide now."

While crowds at these revivals swelled, the corporate sponsors, which included names such as Morgan, Rockefeller, Weyerhaeuser, Swift, Armour, and Marshall Fields, could barely contain their glee, as the religious snake oil went down with big gulps of preaching about the God-given necessity for laissez-faire/free trade economics, compliant workers, and



Aimee Temple McPherson, a religious fundamentalist of the Roaring Twenties, saved souls by seductively wrapping herself around a cross.

attacks on the devil's own support for the evil of all evils, government regulation.

While Sinclair Lewis's publication of *Elmer Gantry* in 1926, an insightful broadside against the dirty, lascivious side of revivalism, and the hypocrisy of the businessmen who promoted it, had an effect on the literate public, the religious movement of the 1920s came to an end only when the deadly, crushing weight of the Great Depression caused the growing ranks of poor, hungry, and homeless Americans to look to government to find relief. The effects of the New Deal, from job creation to bank regulation, from the flood control and electrification of the Tennessee Valley Authority to the improvements in schools, seemed to be an answer from God to those who had lost hope.²⁰

20. For a chilling view of what might have occurred had Franklin Roosevelt not succeeded with the New Deal, see Sinclair Lewis's 1935 novel, *It Can't Happen Here* (New York: Signet Classics, 1970), in which he presents the case that fascism could come to America under a "Christian" guise.

Once again, the American System of Leibniz and Franklin, of our Constitutional republic, had demonstrated that man is capable of reversing crises through application of human reason, and acting through government to “promote the general welfare.”

The Assault on New Deal ‘Elites’

Since the mid-1930s, the reforms introduced by Franklin D. Roosevelt with the New Deal have been the target of Wall Street financial interests and their oligarchical allies in the City of London. As in previous periods, these financial elites attacked the American System, in part, by mobilizing religious leaders who manipulated their flocks by convincing them that they held the keys to the Heavenly Kingdom. One of these operations which targeted FDR was founded in the United States in 1938, by Frank Buchman. Called the Moral Re-Armament movement, Buchman’s operation allegedly took aim at the moral corruption of the world.



Frank Buchman

Buchman’s movement originated in Oxford—where else?—and was originally known as the “Oxford Group.” By 1936, Buchman had become an admirer of Hitler, of whom he said, “I thank heaven for Adolf Hitler.”

Though Buchman’s movement did not grow significantly while FDR was alive, it grew after World War II ended, as defense against “the Antichrist of Communism” became its leading cause. Buchman’s “anti-Communism” provided a religious cover to the beginnings of the Cold War, including backing for Harry Truman’s “Red Scare,” which was later known as McCarthyism, against “Godless Communism.”

The most important aspect of Moral Re-Armament in the growth of fundamentalism after the war, was its involvement with the operations run through another anti-Communist operation, the Korean CIA front and wacky sex cult of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, which later became the Unification Church. In addition to the World Anti-Communist League of Moon, which gave covert backing to the illegally funded drugs-and-guns operation known as Iran-Contra in the 1980s, Moon provided funding for Tim LaHaye’s American Coalition for Traditional Values. LaHaye also served as chairman for Moon’s Coalition for Religious Freedom, which was bankrolled directly by the KCIA’s Gen. Bo Hi Pak.²¹

21. The relationship between Buchman and Moon is covered in depth by Laurence Hecht, “Moonification of the Sciences: The Russell-Wells ‘No-Soul’ Gang Behind the Moonie Freak Show,” *21st Century Science & Technology*, Winter 2002-03. Hecht provides documentation of the central role played by anti-Americans Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells in creating Moral Re-Armament.

Others among today’s prominent fundamentalists who benefitted from Moon’s operations include Dr. James Dobson, for his Focus on the Family; and Gary Bauer, for the Family Research Council. Moon also bailed out Jerry Falwell’s Liberty College, when Falwell fell behind in loan repayments and faced foreclosure.

Every one of these operations has engaged in attacks on “big government,” with President Roosevelt and the New Deal the leading targets of their venomous assaults.

The other post-war figure who opened the way for the new generation of Christian crusaders in the tradition of Jonathan Edward’s Great Awakening is the Rev. Billy Graham, who launched his first revivals in the late 1940s. While Graham is considered to be too soft by today’s extremists—during his recent revival in Los Angeles, Christian Reconstructionist cult members denounced him for proclaiming that God loves everyone, even homosexuals—his preaching provides a link to earlier revivalists, with their focus on the sinful nature of man and the absolute authority of the Bible.

‘Family Values’ Brainwashing

The current crop of fundamentalist leaders who believe that President Bush has been selected by God to lead the United States, are adherents, for the most part, to the basic beliefs identified thus far as part of the American revivalist tradition. And whether they know it or not, a part of this tradition is that their preaching serves the interests of the true elites of society, namely the bankers and business-corporate networks of London and Wall Street, who want a frightened but docile population, pursuing their personal salvation, oblivious to the fact that they are being used as a battering ram against the real, republican traditions of our nation.

That a significant percentage of those living in the lower 80% of family income-brackets voted for Bush on the basis of his support for so-called family values, demonstrates how effective the deployment of these fundamentalist operations has been. As Thomas Frank develops in his insightful study, *What’s the Matter With Kansas?* those who vote for “Christian conservative” candidates, such as Bush, on the basis of “family values,” end up supporting the real agenda of the Wall Street backers of these candidates—i.e., an economic agenda which includes free trade, outsourcing as part of “globalization,” tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation, and privatization (of Social Security, for example). These Wall Street networks may “talk Jesus” to influence voters, Frank writes, but they “walk corporate.”

The end product of this agenda—which its Wall Street and corporate backers expect Bush to deliver in full—is lower wages, loss of jobs, cuts in benefits, such as health care, and disinvestment in basic infrastructure. Those who bear the brunt of these cuts are the ones who marched to the polls and voted for Bush, because they believed him to be a Christian!

The present moves by Bush to scrap Social Security, which will consign millions of elderly, disabled, and children



Tim LaHaye, once a paid operative of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, authored the hugely popular "Left Behind" series of books on the End Times, which have sold more than 60 million copies.

to a human scrap heap, in order to steal the Social Security funds for the bankrupt banks, is hardly a Christian policy—it should be called by its proper name, a fascist policy!

It is certainly fair to ask: Where is the evidence that Jesus, in pursuing his mission, promoted tax cuts and other benefits for the upper 20% of income-brackets, policies which create a growing gap between rich and poor, consigning millions to poverty? How is it that voters cast ballots for candidates who speak of their support for "Christian values" when running for office, yet act, once elected, against measures which would benefit those who voted for them? As Thomas Frank notes, "The deafness of the conservative rank and file to the patent insincerity of their leaders is one of the true cultural marvels of the Great Backlash."²²

How did the modern fundamentalists, working with Wall Street, create this deafness?

Fear of Being 'Left Behind'

There is a great fear among many who consider themselves Christians today, that they will find themselves in the woeful position of Capt. Rayford Steele, the airline pilot-hero in the series of bestsellers about the return of Jesus Christ, written by Tim LaHaye, who once was a paid operative of Reverend Moon, and his co-author Jerry Jenkins. One evening, while flying overseas, Steele discovers that many of his passengers have mysteriously disappeared, their clothes,

wedding rings, hair clips, etc., remaining on their seats, leaving no trace of their physical bodies.

Steele's orderly life receives a further jolt upon his return home, when he discovers that his wife and young son are among the millions who have disappeared. With the help of a distraught assistant pastor at his wife's church, whose family had also disappeared, leaving him alone with his guilt that he was not a "good Christian," Steele learns that his wife and son were "raptured," taken from the Earth to join Jesus in heaven, sparing them the horrors of the coming seven years of Tribulation, as the Antichrist takes over the world. He concludes that he is in the same situation as his wife's pastor—both have been "left behind," to face the horrors of the Tribulation which, according to the authors, he could have escaped, through Rapture, had he been a good Christian.

LaHaye's Darbyite pre-millennial beliefs are summarized in the preaching of the pastor, who is determined to prepare himself and others so they will not be left behind again. He underlines that salvation comes as a result of a "transaction," a contract with Christ. Since we are all sinners, he says, "we can't save ourselves." No one can "earn their way to God or to heaven by doing good things," an idea which he calls "probably the biggest misconception ever." The reason we should do good and live right, he continues, is "in response to salvation."

We are saved only because Jesus "paid the penalty . . . he died in our place because he loved us. When we tell Christ that we acknowledge ourselves as sinners and lost, and receive his gift of salvation, he saves us. *A transaction takes place.* We go from darkness to light, from lost to found . . . we have what

22. Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter With Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004). See a review by Harley Schlanger, "Unfortunately, It's Not Just Kansas," in *EIR*, Oct. 29, 2004.

Jesus has: a relationship with God, eternal life, and because Jesus paid our penalty, we also have forgiveness for our sins” (emphasis added).²³

Thus, LaHaye offers his readers his recipe for eternal life. Again, there is no mention of the teachings of Jesus, no insistence that man must imitate him in bringing justice to the world, ministering to the poor, offering forgiveness to others. Forgiveness comes only from God, and it is offered only for personal salvation. Jesus’ life is important only because it precedes his death; and the importance of his suffering and death is as a “transaction,” to assure the sinner that there will be a reward of eternal life.

By the end of the first volume, Steele has joined with his daughter, his wife’s pastor, and a world-renowned journalist to form the “Tribulation Force,” beginning a journey through 11 more volumes until the Antichrist is defeated, and the millennium of peace begins, with the “Glorious Appearing” of Jesus.

Of course, in the end, the courageous Steele is reunited with his wife.

At last count, more than 60 million copies of the 12 volumes have been sold. The appeal of these books is not good writing; there is much repetition, the characters are shallow and poorly developed, and there is no suspense, as it is obvious who the Antichrist is, and that he will be defeated, before the reader completes the first 75 pages of the first volume.

But the 12 volumes speak to millions today who feel lost and dirty, helpless and impotent. LaHaye is playing on the guilt of those who drink, or gamble, or engage in sexual excess, those who strive for wealth while ignoring their families. His writing offers hope to those who believe they cannot control their sinfulness, since Satan controls their body and this world. As Lyndon LaRouche has observed, they may go to church on Sunday, but behave like sinners the rest of the week. LaHaye is appealing to those who fear death, but are also afraid they have nothing to live for. They may fall to their knees in prayer, but the question they want answered is, “Can’t I make some kind of deal with God, for *me*?”

It is this psychology, which is characteristic of many of those in the lower 80% family income-brackets who voted for Bush—despite the fact that his policies will worsen the conditions of life for themselves, their families, and the nation—which is the subject of LaRouche’s report, “Those Populist Fools Who Would Seek a Contract Even With God.”²⁴ LaHaye’s heroes, following in the footsteps of those swept up in the revivalist movements in America in the previous three centuries, reject the responsibility of man to act for the general welfare, to make of this Earth a “city on a hill.”

By running from this world, as though it were Satan’s domain, they are trying to escape the responsibility to act to

improve human society, as this universe, and man within it, were created precisely to allow for the lessening of imperfection. “The principles which predetermine the consequences of our actions,” LaRouche writes, “are universal. They are laws of the universe, existing as such natural laws, whether we chose them or not. Therefore, mankind cannot negotiate a business contract with God.

“Man must discover the laws embedded in that universe of which we are a part, and use our discovery of those laws, as powers by means of which we improve the universe according to the intention embedded in those discovered laws.”²⁵

Those, like LaHaye, who preach this doctrine of the foolishness of acting to improve present conditions, as the End of Times is near, are rewarded quite generously for the work they do. In addition to the money received from the Moonies, and from the sale of his best-selling novels, LaHaye’s activity has been funded by right-wing Republicans and the foundations they run. For example, his Council for National Policy received money from Nelson Bunker Hunt, the Coors family, the Bradley Foundation, Howard Ahmanson, and Richard DeVos of Amway (who also funds the Christian Freedom Foundation, a leading voice for free trade and economic liberalization, including deregulation and privatization of Social Security).

Also contributing to promote policies favoring economic liberalization by right-wing Christian lobbying groups are the Mellon Scaife and Olin Foundations.

Beyond Pre-Millennialism

Another feature of the “Left Behind” series is that it is replete with symbolism that resonated among many of those terrorized by the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Four features, in particular, stand out. First, that the target of the Antichrist is, of course, Christians. This maps easily onto the belief that Christians in the United States today are persecuted by “liberal secular humanists,” who are using the power of the Federal government to obliterate Christianity.

Second, it is essential for Christians to support Israel, as the in-gathering of the Jews in the Holy Land is an essential precondition for the Second Coming of Jesus.²⁶ While they proclaim great love and fellowship toward the Jews, it should not escape notice that ultimately, the Jews must either accept Jesus the second time around, or be condemned to eternal damnation.

Third, the coordinating agency used by the Antichrist to pursue his war against Christianity is the United Nations. During the build-up to the Iraq War, Bush’s repeated demon-

25. Ibid.

26. LaHaye’s approach to Israel in the “End Times” is held by most of the contemporary televangelists. See, for example, the writings of Dr. John Hagee of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, *Day of Deception* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), or *The Battle for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

23. Tim LaHaye, Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1995), pp. 143-144.

24. *Fidelio*, Fall 2004.

LaHaye Fears He May Be 'Left Behind' by New Book

Tim LaHaye, the co-author of the 12-volume "Left Behind" series, has launched an attack on Tyndale House of Wheaton, Illinois, which published his Rapture cult novels, for its decision to publish a new novel which offers a different account of the End Times allegedly prophesied in the *Book of Revelation*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on Jan. 2.

LaHaye's series is about a small cell which was "left behind" when the real Christians were "raptured." By missing the Rapture, members of the cell remained on the Earth during the seven-year Tribulation, during which the Antichrist ruled the Earth.

The first book of the new Tyndale House series, *The*

Last Disciple by Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, rejects LaHaye's interpretation of the *Book of Revelation*—according to which the End Times are coming any day now—and begins with the premise that *Revelation* is really a coded story of the persecution of Christians and the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem in the First Century A.D. In the Hanegraaff-Brouwer interpretation, Nero is the Beast, and John was writing in exile, fearing he would soon be martyred. The Tribulation was not a reference to some distant event, but the brutality Christians were facing at that moment.

LaHaye attacked Tyndale House: "They are going to take the money we made for them and promote this nonsense. I don't know what science fiction he is reading. We believe the Rapture is going to come, not his nonsense that Christ came back in 68 A.D."

Perhaps LaHaye could get his good friend and ally Rev. Pat Robertson to clear this up, the next time Pat is on line with God.—*Harley Schlanger*

strations of contempt for the UN were well received among the audience targetted by LaHaye.

Fourth, the new headquarters for the UN (which became known in the books as "Global Community") was in New Babylon, i.e., Iraq.

Though many of the volumes in LaHaye's series were written before 9/11, these four features fit in well with the outlook of the neo-conservatives, such as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney's chief aide Lewis Libby, who had mapped out plans for imperial warfare prior to 9/11 and the so-called war on terror. LaHaye and others of the Christian Right worked closely with Bush's master manipulator, Karl Rove, in crafting a message that would assure full support for the war plans pursued by Bush.

Central to the mobilization of this base was the message, put out quite frequently, that Bush is the man chosen by God to lead God's chosen nation in this ultimate battle.

This message resonates even more positively with another, even more frightening tendency among today's fundamentalists, the "post-millennialists," who believe that they must act to destroy the "evildoers" to bring about the millennium; i.e., there is no Rapture or second coming until after the forces of evil have been defeated.

This grouping is sometimes called "Christian Reconstructionists," as they believe that "Christians have a mandate to rebuild, or reconstruct, all of human society, beginning with the United States and moving outward."²⁷ Also known as

"Dominionists,"²⁸ they argue that the Old Testament scriptures must form the basis of the legal system, and that secular law should be subordinated to biblical, or Mosaic, law.

Randall Terry, for example, known for the radical anti-abortion organization Operation Rescue, said that "a lot of God-fearing men believe that biblical law must be the foundation for our civil law. And if American does not return to Biblical values, we cannot survive."²⁹ These would-be American Ayatollahs thus provide biblical justification to those who kill doctors who perform abortions, or physically attack homosexuals. Political candidates who are identified as "liberals" because they are thought to elevate the role of government above the authority of the Bible, must be defeated; thus, the fervor of the Christian Right in 2004 against Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry, who was vilified over the single issues of abortion and gay rights.

The rhetoric from religious leaders who hold these beliefs can be quite chilling. James Robison, a spiritual advisor to Bush, wrote in his book *The Absolutes*, that there are only two worldviews, that of biblical Christianity, and that of Relativism: "the entertainer, teacher or leader who undermines the relevance of absolute principles [i.e., from the Bible] is no less demonically manipulated than the terrorist."

27. William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), p. 353.

28. "Dominionists" believe that Christ will not return until the church has claimed dominion over all governments and institutions in the world. Pat Robertson, whose views correspond with this belief, said in 1984, as the Christian Right gained a foot-in-the-door with the election of Ronald Reagan, "Our aim is to gain dominion over society."

29. Quoted in Martin, op. cit., p. 353.

The Dominionists see Bush, with his mission to spread “American democracy” to the world against the “axis of evil,” as a leader in this, the final battle in history. Speaking from this perspective, former Republican Presidential pre-candidate Gary Bauer said of Bush, “There is a very strong feeling in the evangelical world that . . . somehow God was working to put into the White House a man whose life had been transformed by accepting Christ. . . . God put George Bush there for a time like this.”³⁰

Part of the belief structure of the Dominionists is that government, in the hands of “liberal elitists,” such as Franklin Roosevelt, is their enemy. Not surprisingly, they oppose government “interference” in the economy, serving as staunch supporters of free trade, tax cuts, deregulation, while opposing unionism and Social Security. Pat Robertson first launched a campaign to privatize Social Security in 1986, calling for phasing in “some kind of compulsory private system where [employed workers] can begin to set aside money on their own. . . .”³¹



Pat Robertson

Robertson, who rants against the loss of freedom due to “big government,” seems to have no problem with a “compulsory” program, as long as it channels the money to Wall Street investment houses and speculators, and not to the elderly retirees for whom it was intended.

Christianity for Dummies

There is one additional present-day religious phenomenon to note, which might otherwise tend to be overlooked, as it seems, on the surface, to be so insipid as to be harmless. This is the run-away success of *Purpose Driven Life*, whose author, Rick Warren, promises to give the reader the answers to “life’s most important question: What on earth am I here for?”

Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, writes that if the reader gives him 40 days—the recommended time to read each of his book’s 40 chapters—“you will know God’s purpose for your life and will under-

stand the big picture—how all the pieces of your life fit together. Having this perspective will reduce your stress, simplify your decisions, increase your satisfaction, and, most important, prepare you for eternity.”³²

What, it offers no cure for the common cold?

More than 16 million copies of his book have been sold, and study groups meet each week throughout the nation to discuss his teachings. They meet to pursue the meaning of the strings of homilies he presents, such as, “You didn’t create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for,” or, “all of life is a test.”

But these seemingly inoffensive comments lead the reader back to the same dead-end: Man is not capable of knowing God; man’s only purpose on the Earth is to live for God. “The ultimate goal of the universe is to show the glory of God,” he writes. “It is the reason for everything that exists, including you. God made it all for his glory.” The astute reader may perceive a difference in the God of Rick Warren and that of his predecessor, Jonathan Edwards. While Edwards’ God is angry and capricious, the God of Warren appears to be more like a selfish Baby Boomer.

He continues: “We are commanded to recognize his glory, honor his glory, declare his glory, praise his glory, reflect his glory, and live for his glory. . . . Why? Because God deserves it. We owe him every honor we can possibly give. Since God made all things, he deserves all the glory.

“All sin, at its root, is failing to give God glory.”

There is more to his ministry, however, than childish homilies. He ends his preface with an Edwards-like formulation on the futility of attempting to discover the *principles* which govern this universe which God has created. He writes that there are two means by which one can determine the purpose of life. “Your first option is speculation. This is what most people choose. They conjecture, they guess, they theorize.” This is ultimately useless, as “even the wisest philosophers are just guessing.”

The other option is “revelation. We can turn to what God has revealed about life in his Word,” i.e., the Bible. “To discover your purpose in life, you must turn to God’s Word, not the world’s wisdom.”

It should come as no surprise that Warren sides with the phony “anti-elitism” promoted by Jonathan Edwards, nor that he explicitly rejects the Leibnizian conception behind the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming that “it’s easy to forget that the pursuit of happiness is not what life is about.”

It is therefore lawful that Warren told a PBS interviewer that he was not surprised by the outcome of the 2004 Presidential election, as it “was not a political election. . . . It was a cultural election.” Warren joined with other fundamentalists in opposing Kerry—though not by name—by circulat-

30. Outgoing Attorney General John Ashcroft is a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God church, which is “Dominionist” in its outlook. Ashcroft, like Bush, dismisses the judgment of posterity on one’s actions today. Bush, when asked about how history will judge him, said he didn’t know; besides, “I’ll be dead then.” Ashcroft was more eschatological: “I don’t particularly care if I do what’s right in the sight of men. The important thing is for me to do right in God’s sight. . . . The verdict of history is inconsequential; the verdict of eternity is what counts.”

31. From transcripts of Robertson’s show, “The 700 Club,” compiled by Katherine Yurica, in the *Yurica Report*.

32. Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Press, 2002), p. 9.

ing a letter to 136,000 pastors, identifying “five non-negotiable issues” in instructing parishioners how to vote: abortion, stem cell research, same sex marriage, human cloning, and euthanasia.

The Coming Age of Reason

It is clear from this review of fundamentalism and revivalism in American history, that there have been two primary and opposite religious pathways that have shaped Christian intervention into politics. The first goes back to the earliest settlers from Europe, to the Mathers of Massachusetts, who brought with them what LaRouche has identified as the heritage of Moses, which “identifies a God whose existence is intelligibly provable by the mind of mortal man.”³³

This is the legacy of Leibniz and his followers, including, most prominently, Benjamin Franklin. The religious-philosophical outlook of this network is embedded in our Declaration of Independence: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” and our Constitution, in the principles of sovereignty, general welfare, and posterity.

The leaders who did the most to realize these principles were true Christians, from the Founding Fathers to Lincoln, from Franklin Roosevelt to Martin Luther King, Jr. They expressed their love of God by acting to improve the conditions of life for all mankind. They had an implicit faith in the goodness of man, which was reflected in their commitment to building a true republic, in which each individual was given the right to act in the interests of the General Welfare, or Common Good, to the extent they were able to discern which policies served those interests.

This outlook has always been under attack by those who did not wish to see a republic thrive on the American continent. The waves of revivalism, and the retreat into a selfish seeking for personal salvation by sinful men and women, have been used as battering rams against the republic. Repeatedly, these assaults were launched in Great Britain—most frequently from Oxford—and found support among the most wealthy bankers, merchants, and businessmen on these shores. The sponsors of these movements and their American allies used to their advantage the fears and uncertainty that are a part of life, to convince those gripped by such fears that their suffering is known to God, who will reward them—as long as they suffer submissively, quietly, and piously, in his name.

These hypocrites, meanwhile, make their fortunes by convincing the fearful majority that government is their enemy, as it is the province of those who think they can know the intentions of the Creator. God is mysterious, His ways unknowable, they preach. Therefore, the power of government must be weakened, protectionism replaced by free trade, regulations scuttled, social services replaced by private charity.

33. Lyndon LaRouche, “What Is God, That Man Is Made In His Image?” *Fidelio*, Spring 1995, p. 20.

Each time these apostles of free trade ride the crest of such rhetoric to control of the White House and Congress, there is a speculative boom, followed by an economic depression. Ironically, it is in the depths of depression, when mere survival becomes most difficult, that fundamentalist fervor begins to ebb. Two examples of this are the improbable election of Lincoln, following the crash of 1857, and Franklin Roosevelt’s win in 1932. Both occurred after a period of frenzied revivalism led to the election of leaders who were free traders, whose free-trade policies caused an economic collapse, which forced millions of hungry and homeless Americans to turn to the government for help.

It is at such moments that frightened, little people can be uplifted by great leaders, raised from an inward focus on personal salvation to escape the hopeless misery of daily life, to joyfully take on the great tasks confronting mankind. Such a leader acts as a Sublime figure in history, able to inspire others because of the willingness to face the most awesome fears, including death, in pursuit of a better future.

In this, such leaders are engaged in the imitation of Christ, acting to fulfill His mission of justice and mercy. The exclusive emphasis on pursuit of personal salvation is a rejection of the mission of Jesus, who gave the world hope through not just by His example on the cross, but by His words and actions. The narrow-minded focus on the suffering and death of Jesus, as in the Mel Gibson movie *Passion of the Christ*—which was especially popular among those hoping to be blissfully raptured, perhaps, as Lyndon LaRouche has quipped, to avoid paying off the mortgage or credit card debt—is merely an egocentric rejection of the real teachings of Jesus, as presented in the Gospels.³⁴

Today, civilization faces an existential crisis. The consistent errors of the last 40 years have reduced the once-powerful U.S. economy to a debt-ridden basket-case, with Americans dependent upon cheap labor of others to survive, and the neo-cons and the so-called Christian revivalists leading the nation toward more wars, embarking on a crusade to become the new Roman Empire.

While their pious nostrums may still work on George W. Bush, whose “God complex” has convinced him that he is the savior of freedom and democracy, the harsh reality of a new, devastating global depression bearing down upon us may serve to jar many who voted for Bush on the basis of “family values,” into recognizing they have been duped by false prophets.

At that late moment, there is still time for them to discover the true mission of the American republic, to serve as citizens in constructing a city upon a hill.

34. For example, Jesus’ admonitions to the faithful in his Sermon on the Mount, such as “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (*Matthew* 7:1), seem to have fallen on deaf ears amidst the often-hateful rhetoric one hears from today’s right-wing Christians. I am still looking for a comment from Jesus which would justify tax cuts for the wealthy, the death penalty, or anti-union policies.