

9.11 and Armageddon. The Christian Right and George W. Bush

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Abstract

Authors from the Christian Right in the US situate the September 11 attack on New York and Washington within God's intentions to bring America into the divine schedule for the end of the world. This is true of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, and other leading figures in the 'Christian Coalition'. This article analyses how Christian fundamentalists assess the roles of the US, the State of Israel, Islam, Iraq, the European Union, and Russia within what they perceive to be the divine plan for the future of the world, especially against the background of '9.11'. It argues that the ideas of the Christian Right and of President George W. Bush coalesce to a high degree. Whereas before 9.11 many American mega-church preachers had aspirations to direct political life. after the events of that day the President assumes some of the roles of a mega-religious leader.

Today, fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts (Bush 2001a).

In the evening of 9.11 2001 US President George W. Bush, commented on the attack which turned the World Trade Centre into 'Ground Zero', and destroyed parts of the Pentagon, Washington. The President added there was no difference between the terrorists who performed the acts and their protectors. America, he promised, would defend freedom and everything good and just in our world. On the following day the President invoked the language of 'war against terror'. In the war between good and evil the countries would be either 'with us or against us'. A political agenda was established which left its mark on the entire world. In his first State of the Union address, Bush declared:

The man and women of our Armed Forces have delivered a message now clear to every enemy of the United States: Even 7,000 miles away, across oceans and continents, on mountaintops and in caves you will not escape the justice of this nation (Bush 2002).

Linking Iran, Iraq and North Korea with terrorism, Bush designated them 'an axis of evil', declaring that the great national objective was to win the war, protect the homeland and revitalize the economy. The 'war on terrorism' and the thinking about religion after September 11 has already become the focus of several studies (see Markham and Abu-Rabi' 2002, Griffith 2002, Berquist 2002 and Lincoln 2003).

The novel *Left Behind* by Tim LaHaye¹ and Jerry B. Jenkins² has been among the best-selling books in America. It is one of a series of books, videos and other materials of which it is claimed that over 40 million copies were sold. Readers of *Left Behind* are given a view of the cockpit during a flight from New Babel to Tel Aviv, as, with the Second Coming of Christ, all born-again Christians are 'rapture'd' (taken up) from the earth to escape the ensuing tribulation. All over world, Christians disappear, leaving their clothes, jewellery and identity cards behind, together with the non-believers. Suddenly, airplanes and cars are left 'unmanned', and escalating catastrophes ensue. TV-correspondents make detailed reports of terror, war and chaos for those left behind—the apocalyptic end time has indeed begun. *Left Behind* is part of the worldview which continues to make its mark on large groups of conservative Christians in America, who are preparing themselves to face the catastrophic wars in the end time. In that period, the state of Israel is as the very centre of the world.

The powerful Christian Coalition, founded by Revd. Pat Robertson,³ presents itself as the largest and most active conservative grassroots political organization in America, and is **also** a strong supporter of the Republican Party. One of its most pressing preoccupations centres on Christian solidarity with the state of Israel. In a large 'Christian Solidarity with Israel' rally 15,000 people assembled in Washington DC on 11 October 2002. The rally was part of the 'God Bless America - One Nation Under God, Road to Victory 2002 Conference'. Ehud Olmert (Likud), mayor of Jerusalem, was an important guest, together with Colonel Oliver North, Ambassador Alan Keyes, and, among senators and members of Congress, Dick Armev, Tom DeLay and Roy Blunt. Robertson stated, 'we should not ask Israel to withdraw from the so called occupied territories. [Rather], we should stand with them and fight'. Olmert assured the audience that 'God is with us in supporting the State of Israel. You, the great Christians of the United States of America are with us and we will stand firm together against

¹ Tim LaHaye has been pastor in San Diego, but is working through Tim LaHaye Ministries, writing about Bible prophecy.

² Jerry B. Jenkins is working with Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and is author of some 150 books.

the terrorists'. The political influence of such a demonstration is obvious from the fact that the conference received a videotaped message from Bush. In his greeting the President promised to continue advocating pro-Christian values, anti-abortion activism and low taxes. He concluded with, 'God Bless the Christian Coalition, and May God continue to bless the United States of America'.⁴

Since, according to the Christian fundamentalists, nothing happens without being part of the plan of God, 9.11 has to be understood in terms of apocalyptic interpretations and speculations. In such US circles, obviously, it appears to be necessary to situate America in the God-ordained schedule for the end of the world. Thus, several publications incorporate America/US in their title and/or on the cover. Such authors are well known in the Christian fundamentalist tradition of interpreting biblical prophecies⁵

- Mark Hitchcock⁶, *Is America in Bible Prophecy?* 2002 (see also 2002b)
- Grant R. Jeffrey⁷, *War on Terror. Unfolding Bible Prophecy?* 2002
- John Hagee⁸, *Attack on America. New York, Jerusalem and the Role of Terrorism in the Last Days*, 2001
- Arno Froese⁹, *Terror Over America. Understanding the Tragedy*, 2001
- Randall Price¹⁰, *Unholy War. America, Israel and Radical Islam*, 2001
- Dennis Laurence Cuddy¹¹, *September 11 Prior Knowledge*, 2002

The most influential author in the genre is Hal Lindsey, who in the aftermath of 9.11 already has produced a book (2002a) and several videos/DVDs (see 2001, 2002b, 2002c and 2002d).¹²

In what follows these books are used as illustrations of the worldview of American Christian fundamentalism, even though they do agree on all details of interpretation. Hitchcock, Froese and Jeffrey, for example, are mainly interested in the apocalyptic events, while Price puts the

³ Pat Robertson founded the Christian Coalition after his failure in the Presidential election of 1988.

⁴ <http://www.cc.org>, accessed on 20 October 2002.

⁵ See, for example, <http://www.armageddonbooks.com> accessed on 1 November 2002.

⁶ Mark Hitchcock is pastor in the Faith Bible Church in Edmond, Oklahoma.

⁷ Grant R Jeffrey has his own publishing house and at least 20 books among the bestselling books.

⁸ John Hagee is pastor in Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas and his TV-programmes are daily on the air through the Global Evangelism Television.

⁹ Arno Froese is the owner of the organization, Midnight Call Ministry, which publishes a magazine and books.

¹⁰ Randall Price is living in Jerusalem and directing among other things the World of the Bible Ministries.

¹¹ Dennis Laurence Cuddy is author of several books in the subject of Bible prophecies. Even audiovisual media has been used to communicate the message about America in the end time.

¹² Some books involving the US with the end time were published even prior to 9.11 (see McTernan 1996, Wilkerson 1998 and Hutchings 2000).

focus on the surrounding society, while Hagee intends to cover both aspects. But first, it is instructive to consider some aspects of terminology.

The Christian Right, which includes Conservative Christians, Evangelicals, born-again believers, Christian Zionists, Fundamentalists and Apocalyptic visionaries, is the focus of this essay. Several different aspects are covered. The Christian Right stands for conservative values, especially anti-abortion, and family values. Sometimes 'Conservative Christians' is used as a synonym for the Christian Right, but it can be used also to include a broader conservative perspective. Neither is the concept 'evangelical' unambiguous. Protestant Palestinians of Lutheran and Anglican confession, for example, designate themselves as evangelical, even though they hold views diametrically opposed to those embraced by the Christian Right in the US. While 'Christian Zionism' is not easy to define, a brief definition highlights the theological conviction which in various degrees argues for the establishment of a Davidic kingdom (which it identifies with the state of Israel) as the focus of the reign (Kingdom) of God on earth. In practice, Christian Zionists strongly support the state of Israel in all its activities. The term 'apocalyptic' is applied to the catastrophe of the end-time, frequently clothed in the nuclear terms of the fight between God and evil. 'Fundamentalism' usually refers to 'a rigid, political and militant tradition of interpretation of the Scriptures'. In what follows, the term 'Christian Right' includes a melange of these concepts, which, when mixed together, produces a distinctive theological system.

Hal Lindsey and the nuclear Armageddon

One of the roots of the contemporary Christian Right is found in the so-called Dispensationalism of the 19th century. Dispensational theologies divided the course of history into a number of sequential periods ('dispensations'), and dealt with the immanent end of the world, introducing the final contest between God and Satan which would culminate in the final cosmic Battle of Armageddon. At the same time, it developed a methodology whereby prophetic texts of the Bible were presented as finding fulfilment in actual contemporary events.

In the 1970s Hal Lindsey popularized such ideas, especially through his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), which sold over 40 million books. His most recent contribution, *The Everlasting Hatred: the Roots of Jihad* (2002a) continues his theme. His 'Armageddon theology' assumes that during the Cold War period the Soviet Union was the big enemy.

Jerusalem and Israel, according to Lindsey, would be subjected to a Communist assault led by Russia. In his *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (1982) Lindsey interprets Romans 13, and finds several important principles:

- God ordained governments to keep order and peace, and provide protection for their citizens and their property;
- God ordained an officer with a sword to enforce the law to protect the innocent and punish the guilty;
- Whatever nation attacks the life, liberty and property of others, its government or leaders must be punished (Lindsey 1982: 148).

Lindsey concludes that the Bible supports the building-up of a powerful military force and that the US would assume that role. This is of major significance since a weak America would encourage the Soviet Union to start an all-out war (which he also predicted).

We need to elect men and women who will have the courage to make the tough decisions needed to insure our nation's survival. They must be willing to clamp down on big government, cut exploitation of the welfare system, keep our strong commitments to our allies and stand up to communist expansion. We need people who see how important a strong military is to keeping peace for us and what remains of the free world (Lindsey 1982: 157).

It is typical of the Dispensationalist paradox that America should be ready to fight for 'peace and freedom', with all its available military might, while, at the same time, assuming that the final destruction is unavoidable. 'Armageddon' is closer than ever, and it seems that human beings are prepared to spark off the battle on behalf of God. Grace Halsell concluded in the middle of the 1980s that the message derived from the 'Armageddon Theology' was evident: since 'war is inevitable, so let's get on with it' (1989: 10).

Lindsey was followed by several televangelists, such as Jerry Falwell,¹³ Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart. Millions of US citizens followed the Christian Right's message concerning flourishing and territorially-expanding Israel, and the Coming catastrophes. At the same time, born-again Christians were promised salvation with the Second Coming of Christ, and escape from the Tribulation to come.

¹³ Jerry Falwell is the founder of Moral Majority (not operating any more), chancellor to Liberty University in Lynchburg, and pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, which has 22,000 members.

Time Magazine designated 1976 as 'the Evangelical Year,' referring to the victory of Jimmy Carter, a born-again southern Baptist, in the presidential elections of that year. Already in the 1970s, Ronald Reagan, as a governor in California, puzzled his guests during a dinner by interpreting events surrounding Israel and Russia against the background of biblical ideas. He stated that 'for the first time ever everything was in place for the battle of Armageddon' and went on talking about the hand of God, in this case of the Soviet Union being destroyed with nuclear weapons. Reagan made similar declarations during his presidency (Halsell 1989: 40-42).

The popularity of these ideas diminished during the late 1980s. Pat Robertson failed in his campaign for presidency and the organization 'The Moral Majority' was dissolved. A re-entry of these themes into the official arena came through the strong support for the Republican Party by the Christian Right in the 1994 election.

A Predestined, though problematic future

'9.11' has been described with words such as 'the beginning of the end', 'the Third World War has begun', 'we are the terminal generation', and 'we are entering the final stages of the endtimes' (Hagee 2001: 4, 7, 113; Froese 2001: 123). The vocabulary of the Christian Right connects '9.11' with the final battle between good and evil, its climax in the nuclear Armageddon, and in the millennium to be established for the Jewish people by Christ. The dilemma for those seeking to unveil the future was to demonstrate that such developments would completely change all the foundations of nations and individuals. The scenario which is being built up envisages two stages: before and after the Second Coming of Christ. It is difficult to understand, however, how the present situation helps to prepare for the future. In the time before the 'rapture', Christian Right authors look upon America as the leading nation of the world:

- God has a plan, and is in control of whatever happens (Hitchcock 2002a: 19; Froese 2001: 9).
- The US is the most powerful nation in the history of the world, and the only superpower in the world today (Hitchcock 2002a: 9, 61)
- The US represents 'global democracy, western values such as freedom of religion and choice and respect for human rights' (Price 2001: 11; Jeffrey 2002; 9-10; Froese 2001: 10)

Grant Jeffrey explains:

We will marshal the military, intelligence, and political forces of the West to utterly destroy those terrorists who have declared war on our freedoms, our right to religious choice, and our modern democratic values (2002: 15).

A strategy is built around the idea that if something or someone was posing a threat, it should be removed or completely destroyed, in the name of freedom and democracy. Even war is turned into a tool by God to punish rebellious peoples and 'the staff of His salvation to those who are oppressed' (the State of Israel and the Jews) (Price 2001: 365).

Focus on the State of Israel

Central to the theology of the Christian Right is the idea that the State of Israel should be looked upon as a state different from any other, since it was established by an eternal and unconditional covenant with God. One issue at the heart of this theology is Jerusalem which is considered to be the 'city of God' given to the Jews by a divine mandate (Hagee 2001: 15, 37; Price 2001: 47). Victories in wars (miracles) are seen as evidence of God's concern for Israel, and it is only through the mighty hand of God that Jerusalem is still kept in the hands of Israeli Jews (Hagee 2001: 43, 46; Froese 2001: 105). That is the reason why there should be no peace negotiations on the issue of Jerusalem.

Instead, the Christians should support the State of Israel and its sovereignty over the 'eternal Jewish capital' with all available recourses. At the end, God is in control, and no matter what happens the ultimate victory is already guaranteed to Israel (Hagee 2001: 39; Froese 2001: 107). This position also includes a new temple in Jerusalem, and a geo-political expansion into Greater Israel, understood as to include 'all of Lebanon, half of Syria, two-thirds of Jordan, all of Iraq, and the northern portion of Saudi Arabia' (Hagee 2001: 238).

The Bush administration has entered an alliance with the Israeli government in the war against terror, but the Christian Right is not satisfied. They want the question of religions to be included, with negative impact on the image of Islam. They argue that American support for Israel is the reason America has been so successful during the years, since God blesses anyone blessing Israel (Hitchcock 2002a: 84). As a consequence, the Christian Right is disappointed because they consider President Bush is not doing enough in his support for Israel. Instead he is trying to persuade 'unreliable' Arab regimes to join his war on terror

coalition. In the end, America can trust only Israel, thereby trusting God. Thus US supporters of Israel will be rewarded by being 'rapture'd.

Spin-doctoring God's response to 9.11

Two days after 9.11 Jerry Falwell was interviewed by Pat Robertson in the television-show *700 Club*. These two prominent representatives of the Christian Right consider nothing happens without the knowledge of God. They tried to explain why 9.11 happened, and to solve the question of guilt. This is what they had to say:

Falwell: ... And with biological warfare available to these monsters - the Husseins, the Bin Ladens, the Arafats - what we saw on Tuesday, as terrible as it is, could be miniscule if, in fact - if, in fact - God continues to lift the curtain and allow the enemies of America to give us probably what we deserve.

Robertson: Jerry, that's my feeling. I think we've just seen the antechamber to terror. We haven't even begun to see what they can do to the major population.

Falwell: The ACLU's¹⁴ got to take a lot of blame for this.

Robertson: Well, yes.

Falwell: And I know that I'll hear from them for this. But, throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen'.

Robertson: Well, I totally concur, and the problem is we have adopted that agenda at the highest levels of our government.

God, then, allowed 9.11 to happen, taking away his protection from America, which, for Falwell, had sinned through embracing, among other things, abortionists, feminists, gays and lesbians. A flood of protest and indignation met Falwell and Robertson (Harris 2001). In an interview with Diane Sawyer in ABC's *Good Morning America* Falwell regretted his statement as stupid and indefensible. To CNN he made the comment: 'I would never blame any human being except the terrorists, and if I left that impression with gays or lesbians or anyone else, I apologize' ('Falwell apologizes ...' 2001). At the same time, Robertson

¹⁴ American Civil Liberties Union

distanced himself from Falwell. Through this process both agreed with the official view, and thereby the traditional Christian Right position took a step back. It is possible to interpret this step by representatives of the Christian Right as a retreat, not for ideological or theological reasons, but to avoid a conflict with an America united under Bush.

However, the explanation given by Falwell is far more common within the Christian Right rather than a whim of the day. John Hagee, for example, claims 9.11 occurred because America is weak, and is not willing to crush the terrorists: 'Simply stated, America has mocked God!' (Hagee 2001: 8). As examples he notes that Satanism allowed gays and lesbians into the US army, and that theatres in New York presented Jesus as a practising homosexual, and that the Virgin Mary was covered in elephant dung in a painting, shown at an art exhibition in New York. He continues:

It's painful but it's very clear: America for decades has been bowing at the altars of paganism. The tragedy of the twin towers in New York is a fiery trial sent to drive us back to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. America has committed every sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, and just as God's judgement came to Sodom and Gomorrah, it is now being poured out upon America. Without a national day of repentance, the judgement will not be over by any stretch of the imagination (Hagee 2001: 11).

His question is, 'Can America descend any lower into the cesspool of immorality?' (Hagee 2001: 125-26). Mark Hitchcock, for his part, asks the question if America will be destroyed by a nuclear attack, by bio-terrorism or by collapse as a result of moral corruption (2002a: 8). Jack Van Impe, with his mighty media-empire, compares America with the Roman Empire, not falling because of armies, but because of sin, by alcohol, drugs, murder, abortion, blasphemy, bribery and graft (Van Impe 2002). Such authors link the current religious status of America with terrorism. If there is no change in the religious pattern in America in the direction of the ideas of such authors, and if a great religious awakening does not take place, terrorist-caused bloodshed and death itself destroy millions globally. Born-again Christians, however, will escape all such tribulations.

Muslim friends and the Islam of the terrorists

At an early stage the American administration talked about the Coming campaign as a crusade, causing great concerns in the Muslim world, and by naming the campaign 'Operation Infinite Justice' it opened up a confrontation between America and Islam. It has been said the Bush administration showed a 'lack of religious understanding, not to say moral humility'

(Gehman 2002:15). The question is, whether these ideas are congruent with the understanding of the Christian Right in the US. At the same time, the ideas of the Christian Right fit in with the theses of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996).

A couple of days after the catastrophe, President Bush spoke at the Islamic Center in Washington DC, making a distinction between terrorism and the peaceful essence of Islam: the face of terror should not be identified with the faith of Islam. He noted that millions of Muslims are citizens of America, and that Muslims all over the world were similarly 'appalled and outraged at last Tuesday's attacks'. The negative perception of the Christian Right of Islam became public with Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, and well-known preacher and religious leader. He was part of the group of religious leaders asked by President Bush to the White House on 20 September 2001 for consultation. A month later, Graham was interviewed in NCB's *Nightly News*. He said the Muslims worshipped a different God from that of Christians, and he believed Islam to be 'a very evil and wicked religion'. In his tv programme *700 Club* (February 2002), Pat Robertson disagreed with Bush's claim that Islam was a peaceful religion. Moreover, Robertson pointed out that the 'Koran makes it very clear, if you see an infidel, you kill him' (Press 2002). On 6 October 2002, Falwell made headlines all over the Muslim world after claiming in CBC's *60 Minutes*: 'I think Mohammed was a terrorist' and 'a violent man, a man of war'. While admitting that most Muslims want to live in peace, more than a thousand years ago there was, he claims, a line drawn between Christians and Jews on the one side and Muslims on the other (Simon 2002). His words caused riots and in a week's time he apologized if he had been hurtful to the feelings of many Muslims.¹⁵

Grant Jeffrey and Arno Froese tried to distinguish between the overwhelming majority of Muslims and terrorist Islam, insisting that the war was not against Islam (Jeffrey 2002: 10; Froese 2001: 99). Nevertheless, Islam, when politicized, is 'an extremely dangerous weapon in the hands of fanatics'. Randall Price has discovered 'one-half of all terrorist organizations in the world are united by the religion of Islam'. He explains that terrorism can be separated from Islam, but he questions whether Islam can be separated from terrorism. Consequently, America is at war: 'we are at war with Islam ... regardless of the name we call the enemy, if the enemy is Islamic, it is Islam that is being attacked' (Price 2001: 26, 28). John Hagee

¹⁵ 'Pakistan slams US Senator's (sic!) blasphemous remarks' (*PAKnews.com*, 13 October 2002), 'US pastor blasted for remark about Prophet' (*Daily News, The Voice of Bahrain*, 14 October 2002), and 'Falwell Apologizes for Anti-Muslim Remarks Amid Worldwide Uproar' (*Tehrantimes.com*, 14 October 2002).

maintains that Islamic theology may be boiled down to fundamentalist Arabs who 'must destroy the Jews and rule Israel' (2001: 68, 70). To be loyal to the prophet they must attack Israel and the Jews. In that way, the Koran is presented as the motivator of terror.

The image of the enemy in the shadow of Armageddon

In its apocalyptic vision the Christian Right has particular pictures of the enemy. Its authors agree that Osama bin Ladin and the al-Qaida took an active part in the attacks of 9.11, since they are Muslim extremists who hate America. The hijacked planes, which became catastrophic missiles, are a part of the larger pattern enemy weaponry. Typically, the Christian Right considers both America and Israel to be at war with the same enemy, i.e., 'terrorism', and is full of hate towards all non-Muslims, and especially Israelis, Americans and Western Christians (Price 2001: 37; Jeffrey 2002: 12, 151; Froese 2001: 34).

The language of the Christian Right identifies completely with 'the ongoing war': 'we are at war with terrorism', 'our war against international Islamic terrorism', 'we are now involved in a life and death war against Islamic terrorism', and 'we need warriors!' (Price 2001: 26; Jeffrey 2002: 11, 15; Hagee 2001: 5). Hagee puts it this way:

The question is, do we have the will to stop making excuses and take military action against them and their sponsors? America will either take bold, aggressive action and win, or we will continue to make excuses and lose (2001: 5).

According to the Christian Right, America must act with powerful force and speedily. The paradox is that, at the same time, all nations of the world must be united to fight the evil terrorism in the present situation, but, according to the apocalyptic pattern, they unite with the purpose of becoming the evil enemy-pact against Israel and God in the unavoidable end.

Allies of the terrorists include countries such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, the Sudan, North Korea, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Lebanon and Syria (Hagee 2001: 5, 17; Jeffrey 2002: 17, 144; Price 2001: 46). To fit into the Armageddon pattern, future enemies of Israel will include Russia, Turkey and Central Asia (Hitchcock 2002a: 57). The global network of terrorists also involves Yassir Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, which are not acknowledged as a legitimate power (Hagee 2001: 11; Jeffrey 2002: 144). Soon, according to these ideas, the Islamic states will abandon the American coalition and America will be left with only Israel as an ally (Price 2001: 47). When the nations of the world speak of Judea, Samaria and the

Gaza Strip as 'Arab places' all will end up in opposition to the God of Israel, and will be judged at Armageddon (Froese 2001: 52).

Specifically, **Iraq** is pinpointed as having adopted a policy of attacking America through terrorism, and is named as the country probably being behind 9.11, as well as the spread of anthrax in America. Their interpretations of the Bible accounts for Saddam Hussein's reconstruction of Babylon, financed through Iraqi oil, to serve as the religious and commercial centre of the Antichrist. As an example, the conclusion made out of Jeremiah 50, 9 is that with astonishing accuracy Jeremiah saw arrows (Jeffrey 2002: 127). Just putting the question if the arrows were not Tomahawk cruise missiles † the author gives the impression that already the prophet saw the missiles. The combination of terrorist activities and interpretations of certain texts of the Bible prompt President Bush to order his powerful military resources to destroy the Iraqi army and Saddam Hussein (Jeffrey 2002: 92). According to Grant Jeffrey, America cannot delay its military response against Iraq, lest Iraq would launch its 'weapons of mass destruction', making 9.11 a footnote compared with what would follow, global destruction in a third world war (Jeffrey 2002: 112).

The enemies of the State of Israel and the conflict in the Middle East are explained in terms of good and evil. The conflict, thus, does not emanate from disputes over land, human rights, or questions of citizenship, but, rather, have their origins in supernatural sources. Since 'Satan hates everything God loves', which is made to refer specifically to the Jewish people, it is obvious that Arabs' 'hatred of Israel' has a supernatural origin (Hagee 2001: 105). History is a continuous cycle, wherein Israel offers the olive branch, while 'the Palestinians swat it away while screaming for world pity and support' (Hagee 2001: 30). The conflict, then, is between Western culture (Israel) and a terror organization (PLO/Palestinian Authority) (Price 2001: 10), or, alternatively, is a conflict between Judaism and Islam (Hagee 2001: 66; Froese 2001: 107). The Christian Right supports the State of Israel and its sovereignty over Jerusalem. In line with certain interpretations of the Temple Mount Faithful,¹⁶ Randall Price urges such support for Israel:

There will never be peace in Israel until the Temple Mount is liberated, G-d's enemies are removed from Jerusalem, the hill of G-d is purified from pagan Moslem presence, and the house of G-d is rebuilt...The terrorist Arafat, and his 'Palestinian Authority', will not succeed with their war. We do not fear them or their violence. The great event of the

¹⁶ The Temple Mount Faithful is a Jerusalem-based Jewish fundamentalist group led by Gershon Salomon.

redemption of Israel cannot be stopped. Who can stop the G-d of Israel? (Price 2001: 312-13).

Explicitly, Price identifies the enemies of the State of Israel with the enemies of God, all, especially Muslim, to be removed from Jerusalem. Arafat is labelled an international terrorist 'who has more Jewish blood on his hands than any person in history since the time of Adolf Hitler' (Hagee 2001: 12). He is called 'an international terrorist' (Hagee 2001: 21), 'the leading terrorist in the world' (Jeffrey 2002: 61) and 'because he is Islamic, wants Israel's complete defeat' (Hagee 2001: 78). Without providing examples, it is claimed that 'Palestinians have consistently broadcast incitement, calling upon the Arab masses to harm Jews and Christians wherever they may be found' (Hagee 2001: 27). The obsession with Arafat is obvious, while other Palestinian and Lebanese groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Hizbullah, are rarely mentioned. Israel should, as soon as possible, launch a full-scale attack on the area controlled by the Palestinians, to drive Arafat into exile, and destroy the Palestinian Authority. However, because of the likely international disaffection, Israel must choose the best timing to justify its action before the world (Price 2001: 351).

During the cold war **the Soviet Union** was enemy number one, and a certain amount of this mentality still obtains. Russia, with its military knowledge, will likely create a coalition with Arab nations, with their finances and oil, for a joint attack on Israel. Grant Jeffrey writes that UN resolutions concerning Israel may be a motivation for attack on Israel in the same way as America uses resolutions against Iraq (Jeffrey 2002: 133). At the same time war is unavoidable, since Israel is the 'hook' to draw Russia into the war (Hagee 2001: 15, 143, 159). The apocalyptic Christian Right informs us concerning the strength of the war: as many as 85 per cent of the people will be annihilated and the massive use of weapons are exemplified with the information that the weapons left on the battlefields will provide the surviving Israel with fuel during seven years. Perhaps Israel may be forced to use nuclear weapons. The exact timing of the war in the prophetic timetable differs from one author to another, but all are agreed that it is on the drawing board of the Russian army.

The Christian Right discourse makes no attempt to understand the enemy, since one is dealing with supernatural powers. There is no need for questions or explanations as to why the

terrorists are acting, whether through frustration, oppression or humiliation. Pre-ordained evil demands no analyses. One simply must destroy it.

USA, Europe and Anti-Christ

It did not take long to locate 9.11 within the perspective of apocalyptic end-time expectations. A new global world order was about to take shape in a peaceful way through the nations of the world uniting against terror. Such a unity is looked upon as part of the masterplan of Satan to unite the world into one people, ready to accept an indisputable leader, the Antichrist who will appear after the Second Coming of Christ (Froese 2001: 31). The Antichrist will appear from within the European Union and will establish Europe as the world leader in the new global order. Through diplomacy and negotiations Europe will establish peace for Israel, but only for a short period. After three and a half years that peace will be turned into a total tyranny (Hitchcock 2002: 101).

While such views are popular within the Christian Right in the US, they are less common within the countries of the European Union, where they are to be found only in very small groups, even in Britain (Sizer 1999). In Sweden, for example, some material has been published in recent years, but the ideas flourish only in small groups (Gunner 1999), whose ideas have been analyzed in Swedish (Gunner 1996). Yet, one encounters much of the same thinking to explain September 11. Immediately after the attack, one of the leaders of the movement 'World of Life', Ulf Ekman, made a clear distinction between Muslims in general and fundamentalist Islamists. But when Coming to the question of Israel the language was typical. In an article of October 2001 this pastor writes about Islam, Arafat and Jerusalem (in Swedish).

According to Islam forcing the Jews into the sea is worship in the presence of Allah. To annihilate the State of Israel is a goal still inscribed in the charter of PLO, and their leader Yassir Arafat has not changed it in spite of fine promises. And I think, the only solution to this seemingly insoluble problem is to release thousands of Arabs from their Muslim bondage, to transform their hostility towards their sister nation, the Jews (Ekman 2001: 7).¹⁷

Let us return to the US. According to the Christian Right, America is part of the world government. To solve the problem how America will accept conforming itself under a regime controlled by Europe, Grant Jeffrey writes:

¹⁷ This is this author 's translation from Swedish.

The almost dictatorial powers available to a U.S. President once he declares a national emergency are virtually equal to the vast legal powers that were held by Adolf Hitler during his Nazi dictatorship (2002: 159).

According to Jeffrey, the President's executive power may be used to join a world government, which would be prepared ahead of the 'rapture' of the born-again Christians, the emergence of the Antichrist, and the inauguration of the seven years of tribulation for the Jewish people and the others left behind. At the same time, the interpretation of the situation is radically changed through the 'rapture'. Since many of leading positions in government, industry, military and business in America are occupied by born-again Christians the 'rapture' will instantaneously erase the power-base of America (Hitchcock 2002a: 67). The authors predict the percentage of born-again Christians in America to be 41 of the total population, compared to Asia 2.7, Europe 2, and the Middle East 0.3.

After 9.11, the apocalyptic literature in the US has intensified its focus on the role of America in God's plan. The theology of the Christian Right seems to be ambiguous in the circumstances when the fight for 'good' is transformed instantly into a fight on the side of evil. In its kind of thinking, unavoidably, the American struggle for global freedom and democracy can be described as doing the business of evil through creating a platform for the Antichrist. This is a precondition for giving the powers of evil free access to world hegemony, the Second Coming of Christ and the battle at Armageddon. Even more confusing, perhaps, is the double role of America. Support for Israel will prepare Israel for the peace-agreement with the Antichrist, and support for the European Union will establish the Antichrist power base.

A Gallup poll in 1994 showed that 59 per cent of the American people believed the world was heading towards its end, and the number has certainly not decreased since 9.11. The Christian Right is a powerful force influencing the entire American society. Suppose, however, that President George W. Bush were influenced by its theology. If such were the case, he should not promote peace between Israel and its neighbours, nor organize the world in a 'for us and against us' polarity. If he were to promote peace, he would fit perfectly into the image of the Antichrist, the predestined peacemaker, who at the same time is the symbol of total evil. To solve such a dilemma the Christian Right accentuates the present time, and rather plays down the future. Nevertheless, they consider that time is running out. The message becomes so intensified, so overloaded with interpretations and myths of their own making, that reality seems to be catching up. The divine cannot wait any more. The myth is projected even in

novels and videos. Furthermore, it is close to ending up with a military campaign on the side of the 'good one'.

The President and the future

Television-channels all over the US transmitted live the memorial service held in Washington National Cathedral, with representatives from different denominations and religions on stage. Billy Graham drew the participants' attention to the fact that they were all together, regardless of ethnic, religious or political background, confirming the conviction that God cares.

But now we have a choice: whether to implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually as a people and a nation -- or, whether we choose to become stronger through this entire struggle -- to rebuild on a solid foundation. And I believe that we are in the process of starting to rebuild on that foundation. That foundation is our trust in God. That's what this service is all about and in that faith we have the strength to endure something as difficult and horrendous as what we have experienced this week (Graham 2001).

The memorials one week later at the Yankee Stadium, and at Ground Zero on 28 October were also arranged as inter-religious services. Similar memorial services were conducted in other locations, both in New York and elsewhere. On 20 September, President Bush invited a broad range of religious leaders to meet in the White House. Of the twenty-seven leaders who appeared, thirteen were 'Evangelicals', including Luis Palau, Franklin Graham, Max Lucado and Bill Hybels. Gerald Kieschnick, from the Lutheran Missouri Synod, read from St Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 13, and concluded that President Bush had a divine call, and that he was the servant of God.

You not only have a civil calling, but a divine calling ... You are not just a civil servant; you are a servant of God called for such a time like this (Carnes 2001).

The President accepted the responsibility and the special divine mission. It is interesting, however, that he seems to avoid viewing the mission from an evangelical perspective. Rather, he seems to prefer to project himself as a man of faith irrespective of denomination or religious affiliation.

While it is not clear whether the President belongs to the Christian Right, his politics are certainly in line with its ideas. Moreover, whereas before 9.11 many American mega-church preachers had aspirations to direct political life, after 9.11 the President, in particular, seems to aspire to being a mega-religious leader. Step by step the US's political priorities seem to fit

into the Christian Rights' views on evil, terrorism, Iraq, Israel, and their relevance to America. The perspectives of the Christian Right, it appears, have become those of the nation.

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