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“Holy” Terror: Christian Fundamentalist Share in U.S. Globalization and War

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1. The purpose

The weight of religion in American life, politics and armed conflicts has been very much underestimated.¹ The reasoning of Enlightenment, secular outlook, market determinism projected by capital owners, and Marxist emphasis on economics generally helped to underrate religion’s capacity to influence events. On the other hand, religion played a role bigger than generally acknowledged in various circumstances, such as the English Revolution (of the 1640s), the American Revolution (1776) and the U.S. Civil War (1861-65).² The American community established, strengthened, and enriched itself as a Christian nation. It felt its religiosity even more after the Civil War.³

Bringing the topic to contemporary times, one may assert that religion played a role, and more than a supportive one, in the escalation of a public backing of the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. One must underline that for the American

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¹ For powerful arguments in a recent publication see Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*. London: Viking, 2006. For an earlier work see: William Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1979. For facts and figures: *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

² Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins’ Wars, Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

³ On the role of religion before and during the American Civil War see Randy Miller, Harry Stout and Charles Wilson, *Religion and American Civil War*. New York: Oxford University

Christian Right, the Middle East is also a “biblical battleground.” U.S. armed presence in that region, holy for Judaism, Christianity and Islam, has to be taken for granted on religious grounds as well.

Some selected but zealous variants of Christian denominations in the United States are more and more transforming themselves into persuasive religious sects, allied with big guns for global economic expansion, possession of strategic world resources, political domination in foreign lands, armed subversion of peoples in remote areas, and reinforcement of military bases in all continents.⁴ While the spokespersons of the same professedly devout but rigid sects inspire and guide the minds and the actions of some top decision-makers, their concepts and designs for the world ripen, in the process, into a leading peril of the 21st century. The stimulus of terror and war is not only oil politics, but also a variety of religious fundamentalism. Similarly, the extremist nature of fundamentalism may be found not only in the radicalism of other faiths, but also in the depredations caused by American (and Israeli) fanatical creeds. Armageddon hawks can compete with any counterpart in other religions. Powerful adherents of militant Christianity already transformed the Republicans into a religious party, the first of its kind in the entire U.S. history. The Democrats, an opposition party on the face of it, are only accommodating bystanders.

I wish to offer here some of the main points of American theocracy in terms of its place in political power, in terror-predicated strategies, and the capitalization of military might in the biblical Middle East. Religion has had a continuous hold on the psyche of the Americans. Some writers assert that the “[Christian] God Gene” has been ever-present with them.⁵ Substantial evidence drives one to conclude that Christian fundamentalism and associated churches, creeds, factions, orders, and splinter groups, not only oppose a vigorous dialogue between all faiths, but pose a fatal hazard to humanity and world peace. By “dialogue” I mean a mere exchange of ideas on the basis of good will, open-mindedness, and mutual respect, and not a scenario to reduce one to the shadow of the other or seek cooperation for a common

Press, 1998.

⁴ For a transformation of the old genteel conservatism into radicalism see: Kevin Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*. New York: Random House, 1982.

⁵ Dean Hamer, *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into Our Genes*. New York:

struggle against secularism.

2. The colonial roots

Religion was a moral and spiritual force in the New World since the beginning of British America in the early 17th century.⁶ "Puritan" New England has been the source of ideals and institutions regarded as "traditionally American." Any study of the American mind and action should seek the beginnings in Puritan Massachusetts Bay and its environs. Significant traces of similar thought and enterprise may be seen today. The Puritan and the Yankee represented then the two halves of New England, that is political and religious ideals on the one hand, and mercantile interests on the other. In other words, contribution from the Old World countered practical economics in the New World.

English Puritanism, originally theological, helped economics and politics to join hands with theology. The Puritan revolution, on the heels of the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers," was a rebellion of the middle class that craved for more freedom. The quest for capitalism and parliamentary government led to production for profit and representation of the new dominant class. While the doctrine of natural rights gradually came to mean property rights, the "left" wing of the Puritans produced numerous splinter groups (Anabaptists, Diggers, Quakers, and the like) that searched to meet the premises of the Reformation.

It is unfortunate that the immigrant Puritans brought along more of the rigid Calvin⁷ rather than Luther.⁸ While the former associated God's will with natural causes and theological determinism, the immigrants carried over a heritage of class prejudice. The wealthiest enjoyed the rights of the freemen, allying themselves with the capable contemporaries. A law (1631) limited franchise to church members, and another (1635) made attendance at church compulsory. The Puritan minister John

Doubleday, 2004.

⁶ Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920*, Vol. I. New York: Harcourt, Bruce and Co., 1930, pp. 3ff.

⁷ John Calvin accepted the idea of God as arbitrary, unconditional and universal.

⁸ Martin Luther may be said to represent uncompromising individualism.

Cotton, among the early stalwarts of theocracy, dreamed of a Utopia of the Saints, and John Winthrop advocated the ideal of the theocratic magistracy. Freedom was to follow the law of God as preached by the church, and the magistrate determined while the people obeyed.

Although the sway of the religious British colonies was far removed from the violent waves of the Spanish Inquisition, scripture-centered mindset dominated, nevertheless, among the early Puritans and (later) in Mormon Utah.⁹ Granted that almost every people makes God in its own image, the God of the Puritans was an angry God. All North American whites were Christian then, and all attended one or the other church, whose membership grew faster than population. The theological implications of Puritanism have become obsolete, but its moral and political assumptions endured. The spread of Catholicism,¹⁰ strongest among the Irish, Poles, Italians, and Mexicans, was also associated with the flood of immigration.¹¹

3. U.S. and religion expand

As well-known, with the end of the American Revolution, the United States expanded, principally westwards and southwards. Religion continued to prosper in the new lands as well. Foreign and American observers recorded this fact, publicly and without reserve. Through wars, conquests, extermination, and purchase, the new state reached the Pacific and the Caribbean shores, with various groups of immigrants bringing along their own churches. Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) declared in

⁹ Nathaniel Hawthorne's greatest novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), has become the classic portrayal of Boston around 1650. The novel highlights the Calvinistic obsession with "morality," sexual repression, sin, confession and spiritual salvation. This daring and even subversive book treated issues suppressed in 19th century America.

¹⁰ For the history of American Catholicism see Theodore Maynard, *The Story of American Catholicism*. New York: Macmillan, 1941.

¹¹ Some activities of the Catholic church undermined the dominant values of American society. (Paul Blanchard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*. 2nd rev. ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.) For instance, the encyclical of Pius XI, "Christian Education of Youth," stated that all education belonged pre-eminently to the church. No Catholic until J. F. Kennedy (1917-1963) entered the White House as president, and only a few Catholics presided over the Supreme Court. But America and Catholicism accepted each other in later years. In the meantime, America became more fundamentalist, and Catholicism did not change in a doctrinal way.

1893 that the frontier, "the hinter edge of free land," was the line of most rapid Americanization by a pragmatic nation.¹² His critics rejected the argument as a romantic glorification of a bloody process, marked by near genocidal treatment of Native American tribes, brutal war against Mexico, and environmental despoliation.¹³

Outstanding foreign observers endorsed the view that religion in the United States thrived. For instance, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), the French political scientist who undertook a study trip to that country and whose best known work is *Démocratie en Amérique*¹⁴ (4 volumes, 1835-1840), believed that men could "not do without dogmatic belief."¹⁵ He noted that the greatest part of British America was peopled by men who brought with them a form of Christianity that contributed powerfully to the establishment of a republic. He remarked: "There is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America." On may assert that this observation is still true today, even more so in some regions. In de Tocqueville's opinion, religion in the United States "directs the manners of the community, and by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state." He adds that "politics and religion contracted an alliance which has never been dissolved."¹⁶

According to Lord Bryce (1838-1922), British author and diplomat (ambassador in Washington, D.C., 1907-1913) who wrote (1888) another classic¹⁷ on the American society, wrote that there were "churches everywhere ... in the cities and in the country, in the North and in the South, in the quiet nooks of New England, in the settlements ... along railroads in the West," and that in small towns and country places the bulk went to church. Bryce noted that Christianity, in his time, was the "national religion." He observed that the Americans consider "their nation as a

¹² Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Holt, 1947.

¹³ E. E. Edwards's *References on the Significance of the Frontier in American History*, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, reveals the extent of Turner's influence. (*Bibliographical Contributions*, No. 5, United States Department of Agriculture, Library. Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, 1935.)

¹⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. New York: Vintage Books, 1957.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 311-326, 436; Vol. II, pp. 6, 10, 21-33, 133-135, 152, 154f, 323.

¹⁷ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2 vols. Chicago: Charles H. Sergel and Co., 1891.

special object of the Divine favor.”¹⁸

Henry Steele Commager, an American whose study of his countrymen’s thought and character is also a classic of the “American mind,”¹⁹ asserted that his fellow citizens believed in an universe governed by immutable and unassailable laws and held human institutions valid only when in conformity with the Higher Law.²⁰ During the years when Bryce lived in the United States, the Americans professed Calvinism for the most part. From the beginning, this world seemed a “paradise” for most Americans, except the black slaves. Churches increased steadily in membership and in authority. Some federated states, then, recognized Christianity as the official religion.

In the second half of the 19th century no other nation had grown as rapidly as the United States in terms of population, wealth, and power, thanks to the energy of its people, the rich resources of the vast country and the inventiveness of the captains of the society. As Edward Everett, a member of the House Representatives in the late 19th century, said, expansion was the “principle” of American institutions.²¹ In the 1890s, there appeared strategic, philosophical and religious reasons for supporting expansion.²² Basing world dominance on the control of the seas, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) launched his life’s campaign to educate the American public as well as its influential leaders on greatness and expansion.²³ Of many naval

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 423, 678, 563,574, 576, 577, 579, 680; Vol. II, pp. 278, 563, 570, 576, 578, 583, 585, 587f, 595, 597.

¹⁹ Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 28-29, 162-195.

²¹ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. New York: Delta Books, 1962, p. 20.

²² Türkaya Ataöv, “The Origins of U.S. Expansion,” in: *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations: 1965*. Ankara: University of Ankara, 1968, pp. 16-67.

²³ In *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1890), *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (2 vols., Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1892), and other writings Mahan was chiefly concerned with naval power as the means to achieve national greatness through mercantile imperialism. Adopting the thesis that growing industrial production demanded new foreign markets to maintain economic prosperity and political institutions at home, he insisted that the United States possesses a powerful navy to defend the merchant marine and keep the trade routes open.

doctrinaires of that period, "the most influential was Mahan."²⁴

John Louis O'Sullivan, one-time diplomat and journalist, had enriched the political vocabulary of the nation by coining, as early as 1845, the phrase "Manifest Destiny" whose adherents urged for a policy of expansion. While the mood of the 1840s was sensational, the notion acquired philosophical and religious contents half a century later. A notable argument that comes to the fore is the defence of Social Darwinism, according to which inequality was the order of the universe, and to lessen it would merely penalize the more capable and energetic in favour of the weak and the lazy. The race possessing the necessary high qualities was the Anglo-Saxons, especially its North American branch, thought the Social Darwinists.

Among those who helped most to develop Social Darwinism in the U.S. was the historian John Fiske, who stressed the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons in an essay entitled "Manifest Destiny" that appeared in the *Harper's Magazine* in 1885. He wrote: "The work which the English race began when it colonized North America is destined to go on until every land on the earth's surface that is not already the seat of an old civilization shall become English in its language, in its religion, in its political habits and traditions, and to a prominent extent in the blood of its people."²⁵

Another writer who influenced his contemporaries was Josiah Strong, a Congregational clergyman. In *Our Country*, he assumed that God was training the Anglo-Saxon race for the final competition of races. This race of "unequaled energy ... having developed peculiarly aggressive traits calculated to impress its institutions upon mankind, will spread itself over the earth."²⁶ He predicted that this powerful race would move down upon Mexico, Central and South America, the islands of the seas, "upon Africa and beyond." Strong's *Our Country* sold 170,000 copies in English. The same author in *The New Era or the Coming Kingdom* maintained that the Anglo-

²⁴ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism: 1871-1900*. New York: Harper, 1941, p. 240.

²⁵ Quoted in: Julius W. Pratt, *The Expansionists of 1898*. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959, p. 6. Much of John Fiske's (1842-1901) popularity resulted from his "reconciling" the new scientific doctrines with the theological orthodoxies that he continued to accept. An interpretation of the nature of Fiske's thought is H. Burnell Pannill's *The Religious Faith of John Fiske* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1957), which views his work as a restatement of the "core of the Christian message."

²⁶ Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, quoted in Pratt, op. cit., p. 6.

Saxon was carrying “a spiritual Christianity around the world.” He concluded: “Now for the first time in the record of history the greatest race occupies the greatest home. What a conjunction, big with universal blessings: the greatest numbers, the greatest wealth, the greatest physical basis for an empire.”²⁷ The Anglo-Saxon race was destined to dispossess many weaker ones, assimilate others and mould the remainder, “until it has Anglo-Saxonized mankind.”²⁸ He also noted the importance of guarding against the deterioration of the Anglo-Saxon stock in the United States by immigration.

The so-called philosophical content of expansionist policy was supported by the church. Missionary activity had already started in the Pacific islands, the pioneers having reached the Carolines in 1852. Only the Quakers and the Unitarians, who stood against war and the use of force in general, seemed to oppose expansion. John R. Mott, who stated that there was no work comparable to the Christian ministry,²⁹ considered the placing of a Christian America between the oceans as something that God had done purposely.³⁰ J. H. Barrows noted in *The Christian Conquest of Asia* that America had a place in the Christianizing of the world and that American commerce would develop in the Pacific hand in hand with American Christianity.³¹

Religious prejudice was not infrequently mixed with racism. An American Protestant missionary, who had spent years in the Ottoman society in the Middle East, and an Armenian- American, the president of the Armenian Patriotic Alliance in New York, had the following to say about Islam, Christianity, the Turks, and the dialogue among faiths:

There can be no curse for a Christian nation as great as of bearing the yoke of Moslem tyranny. Why is the Turk so fiercely opposed to progress? ... Because, in the first place, he is Turkish; and because in the second place, he

²⁷ Josiah Strong, *The New Era or the Coming Kingdom*. New York: Baker and Taylor, 1893, pp. 54-80; p. 74. Josiah Strong (1847-1916) was also a leading organizer of the Federal Council of Churches.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ John R. Mott, *The Future Leadership of the Church*. New York: Young Men’s Christian Association, 1908, p. 17.

³⁰ John R. Mott, *Strategic Points in the World’s Conquest*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1897, pp. 205-207.

³¹ John Henry Barrows, *The Christian Conquest of Asia*. New York, Scribner’s: 1899, pp. 237-239.

is Mohammedan. *The Turk is not a member of the best human race ...* The Turk does not belong even to the next best of races, the Semitic ... He is a branch of the Mongolian race, and as such, incapable of assimilating complex ideas and higher forms of civilization. The mental inferiority of the Turk unfortunately matched with a religion of a very low order, has made of him what he is, worse than savages. There is much to say of the inferiority of Islam, but I shall confine myself to showing that *the moral law of Islam is essentially immoral ...* [T]he Moslem is condemned to perpetual infancy as a moral creature; his individuality, his will power remain undeveloped ... Compare that with the moral law of Christianity ... [A Christian's] soul grows in grace and strength, and will power building up a Christlike character ... Just the reverse of this is the spiritual course of a Moslem. He does not aspire at all at purity or moral freedom ... [T]he curse of Islam makes it the religious duty of every follower of the prophet, from the Sultan down to the howling dervishes, to hate the Christians, to kill and plunder, rob, outrage and torture every one who will not accept the faith of Mohammed ... When Christendom repeats the phrase "Thy Kingdom Come" in the universal prayer it means the downfall of Islam ... The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of righteousness and between it and the cruel, lustful barbarism of Islamism there can be no peace ... [The Turk] is a wild beast to be caged ... I beg pardon of the hounds, hyenas ... and all other wild beasts for using their names in simile or metaphor to describe the swiftness, eagerness or ferocity of Kurd or Turk. It is only the poverty of language that makes such use allowable.³²

The longish quotation above is from a book printed in Chicago on the very eve (1896) of the 20th century, and the italics are in the original.

The harvest of that kind of combination was as follows: The United States acquired Great Power status and fought Spain in 1898, taking from the latter most of its colonies including Cuba and the Philippines. The U S. also added to its domains Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam and Wake. It acquired the Panama Canal, pressed for an Open Door Policy in China, and participated in the imperialist war against the Boxers.

4. "Christian Socialism" and Darwinian theory

³² A.W. Williams and M. S. Gabriel, *Bleeding Armenia: Its History and Horrors under the Curse of Islam*. Chicago: Publishers' Union, 1896, pp. 423-430, 470-471, 490-491.

Although some churchmen attempted, during the years described above, to “socialize” religion by attending to labour problems, political corruption, absentee ownership, and greedy wealth, Christian leaders were generally frightened by the competition of secular thinking. While some leaders asserted that individual salvation could not be separated from social reconstruction, the American conservatives published, in the early 1910s, a series of books/booklets under the general title of “The Fundamentals,” all of which underlined biblical authority.

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) was among those who introduced “Christian socialism.” Pastor of a German Baptist Church in New York City, he was influenced by the sufferings of his parishioners during a time of depression and by the ideas of Fabian socialists. He became an influential figure in the development in the United States of what has been called the “social gospel.” He supported even Eugene V. Debs (1855-1926), the president of the American Railway Union (1893) and Socialist nominee (in 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920) for president of the United States.³³ He published a number of books, in which his arguments were primarily religious.³⁴ But Rauschenbusch ascribed the responsibility for the failure of world regeneration principally to capitalism, which he condemned for encouraging inequality, covetousness, intolerance, fear, and similar “sins.” He even advocated “communism,” not in the Marxian sense but reminiscent of early Christianity.

The “Scopes trial” at Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925 was a decisive battle between science and theology. John T. Scopes (1900-1970) was indicted for teaching Darwin’s theory of evolution. He was accused of violating a law that prohibited the teaching of any doctrine that contradicted the divine creation of man. The trial, also called the “Monkey trial,” was broadcast live on radio. Andrew Dickson White (1832-1918), an educator who had won distinction as an inspiring and original teacher, had

³³ The only full-length book of one of the best remembered radicals in U.S. history: Eugene V. Debs, *Walls and Bars: Prisons and Prison Life in the “Land of the Free.”* Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2000.

³⁴ His best known book is: *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. New York: Macmillan, 1907. See also: *Prayers of the Social Awakening*. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910; *Christianizing the Social Order*. New York: Macmillan, 1912; *The Social Principles of Jesus*. New York: Association Press, 1916; *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. New York: Macmillan, 1917. – See also the narrative of his life by a former student at the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, where he taught church history from 1902 to 1918: *Dores Robinson Sharpe, Walter Rauschenbusch*.

deplored such confrontations more than a generation earlier.³⁵ Both counsel and public opinion in Tennessee concentrated on the religious issue, largely ignoring the legal question, that is, the wisdom of the state law forbidding the teaching of evolution in schools. It was as if fundamentalism was on trial, not the high school teacher.

William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), three times (1896, 1900 and 1908) Democratic nominee for president, secretary of state (1913-1915) and a believer in a literal interpretation of the Bible, appeared as counsel for the prosecution – an appropriate choice indeed, because he was the most distinguished of American fundamentalists and also largely responsible for the enactment of anti-evolution laws in some states in the South. He debated Clarence Darrow (1857-1938), the chief counsel for the defence, on the basis of evolution. Darrow's attack on fundamentalism enabled the prosecution to identify science with atheism.

Bryan at Dayton represented the American mind and morality of the mid-19th century and of agrarian democracy, and of Puritanism. His language was full of Scriptural weight. He failed to meet the challenge of science, but he won the case. Scopes was convicted and the decision was upheld in the state Supreme Court.³⁶

Secular thinking frightened those who believed in biblical authority and the certainty of Christ's second coming. It was in 1919 that the World's Christian Fundamentals Association was formed. Fundamentalist preachers used all means,

New York: Macmillan, 1942.

³⁵ A. D. White drew the charter of a new (Cornell) university at Ithaca, N.Y. The novel elements in that institution were: (a) its democracy of studies: the humanities, sciences, and technical arts were taught commonly; (b) its parallel courses, open to free choice and leading to equal degrees; (c) its treatment of the students as men, not boys. White was the author of *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1896). See also Walter P. Rogers, *Andrew D. White and the Modern University*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1942.

³⁶ Two outstanding sources are the books by Henry L. Mencken (*A Religious Orgy in Tennessee; A Reporter's Account of the Scopes Monkey Trial*. Hoboken, N.J.: Melville House Publishing, 2006) and Michael Lienesch (*In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolution Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Mencken and Lienesch were writers with a flair for attacking "established nonsense." The Christian Right starts with challenging science, then, step by step, undertakes to obstruct, arrest, suppress, and finally prohibit it.

including thriving on publicity.³⁷ On the eve of the Second World War, the membership of the leading Protestant churches reached thirty million; the Roman Catholic church grew to twenty-three million; and the Jewish congregations added up to another five million. After the war, one of the initial gatherings of evangelist Billy Graham attracted fifty thousand listeners at a Boston Commons. The potential of tensions between Darwin and the Book of Genesis is much higher today.

5. The GOP advance in the South

The South, once a playground of the Democratic politicians, was gradually but firmly conquered by the Republicans (the GOP). The 23 Northern states with a population of 22 million, arrayed against 11 Southern states inhabited by nine million, had won the Civil War (1861-1865). The industrial superiority of the North then exceeded even its preponderance in population. But today, the North is no longer the more powerful half of the union, as it was in the mid-1860s. The ex-Confederate states have substantial population and economic power. Nor are they the political arena only of the “bosses” and the “machines” of the Democrats.³⁸ The South, which moved forward on its way into the national Republican Party, was also the high-powered center of crusading fundamentalism. It possessed as well the potential to fuse oil interests and the military-industrial complex with the Religious Right.

Pro-slavery Southern politics contained and regulated the decision-making process in Washington, D.C. until the entry of Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) into the White House (1860). Partial control of the South over executive actions persisted, nevertheless. Protestants were generally Republicans and centered in the North while the Southern Whites were Democrats. The North-centered Republicans had a next to

³⁷ For instance, in 1926, a certain Miss Aimée Semple McPherson, the founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, claimed to have been kidnapped while in fact she had been hiding with a lover.

³⁸ The bosses and their machines, then described as such, ruled singlehandedly for decades in all Southern states. For instance: Huey Long (Louisiana), Eugene Talmadge (Georgia), Harry F. Byrd (Virginia), E. H. Crump (Tennessee), “Cotton Ed” Smith (South Carolina), LeRoy Percy and Theodore Biblo (Mississippi), Jim Folsom (Alabama), W. L. O’Daniel (Texas). – On the South as a region with most distinctive character and tradition in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s see V. O Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950.

nil significance in the Southern states. This pattern started to change in the 1960s. The GOP support base moved from the North towards the South where religion and oil interests comfortably overlapped. This also means that the South little by little but steadily made its way into the national GOP.³⁹

The Republican Party distinguished itself as a channel for the well-being of selected groups at the top of the economic monolith. It was, for the most part, a medium for the affiliated interests of the industrial complex and oil-based national security. Marching Christian drive has been added. Now, Christian fundamentalists have made a room for themselves in addition to the energy producers, energy consumers and the industrial-military complex. Under the circumstances, no Republican nominee, especially the one with aspirations for the White House, can afford to take the religious challenge lightly.

Consequently, Southern interests and biblical world-view descended upon the Republican Party to a degree never seen before. "Dixieland" stood at the helm of all regions in the United States that could beget crusading fundamentalism. It possessed more potential than any other section where oil interests blended with the industrial complex and were also blessed by biblical sanction. Some Southerners migrated to the North and brought their fundamentalism along with them. The United States never had a national religious party before. The Republican Party is the first of this kind, signifying a change in American politics. As religious Americans, whether Protestant fundamentalists, church-going Catholics, or Orthodox Jews, move towards that party, the common denominator of all seems to be their remoteness from secularism. In 2000, the Republicans also got some support from the Muslim Americans. A handful of Republican politicians⁴⁰ criticized their own party for having turned into a theocracy, but radical views had already stepped into the seats of power.

The Christian Right deformed the Republican Party, silenced the Democratic opposition, and posed a threat to America's – and the world's – future. No other leading country on the globe is captive to the kind of unscientific assumptions as propagated by the powerful fundamentalist groups in that country. The roots of

³⁹ Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969.

⁴⁰ Senators Lincoln Chafee and John McCain and Congressman Christopher Shays.

Republican religiosity may be in domestic policy, but the religious bias is reflected in foreign policy as well.

The southward expansion of Republican power has been quick and persistent. Texas, the top U.S. oil and gas producer for many decades,⁴¹ sent several leading politicians to the White House. Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) and Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) were born in that “Lone Star State.” Eisenhower was the first Republican candidate to sweep the Southern belt in the 1952 presidential elections. Richard Nixon (1969-1974) spent his childhood in an oil state, and his father worked for a leading oil corporation. He supported oil-rich California. His Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger suggested, during the first (1973) significant climb of the oil prices, to seize the oil fields in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi.⁴²

The Democrat Bill Clinton, himself a Southern Baptist, chose Al Gore, another Southern Baptist, to be his running mate. Senate President pro tempore Strom Thurmond and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich were also Baptists and from the South. Two-term vice president Gore’s father was connected with oil; so was the independent candidate Ross Perot.

It is worth to remember that the South was home to some hawkish presidents. Harry S. Truman (1945-1953), a Baptist from Missouri, ordered atomic bombs to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, engaged in the Cold War with the Soviet Union, initiated NATO (1949), and sent troops to the Korean War (1950). Lyndon B. Johnson, a Disciple of Christ from Texas, escalated U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), a Methodist from Georgia, responded militarily to the Iran hostage crisis (involving fifty-three Americans) and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. After Carter’s misadventure in Iran and Ronald Reagan’s (1981-1989) choice of Bush, Sr. as his running-mate, Texas stopped supporting Democratic candidates. Republican Reagan, who carried ten out of the eleven southern states in

⁴¹ The history of oil in Texas dates back to 1901 when geysers of mud and oil erupted from thirty-six hundred feet under a salt dome: Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship Between the World’s Two Most Powerful Dynasties*. New York: Scribner, 2004, p. 25.

⁴² He repeated the same advice in an article, printed under a different name: Miles Ignotus [Henry Kissinger], “Seizing Arab Oil,” in: *Harper’s Magazine*, 250/1498 (March 1975), pp. 45-51.

1980, took almost the whole of the Confederate area. He ordered the invasion of Grenada and was involved in the Iran-*Contra* Affair.⁴³ Bill Clinton (1993-2001), a Baptist from Arkansas, committed U.S. forces in former Yugoslavia, bombed Iraqi territories, and militarily intervened in Haiti. George H. W. Bush (1989-1993), originally from the North, but an adopted son of the South, led the first war in Iraq and ordered the military invasion of Panama. Bush, Jr. (2000-2008), a former governor of Texas, led two wars in the Middle East.

6. The House of Bush

The House of Bush typically represents the harmony between oil interests, the military-industrial complex, Christian fundamentalism, and the intelligence community. Four generations of the Bush family (not only the two presidents, but also Samuel S. Bush and George Herbert Walker) pursued their profits from oil and gained the alliance of fundamentalist cliques and crowds for the eventual conquest of executive power.⁴⁴ Four generations ascended the ladder of national power via the secret Skull and Bones at Yale, the lucrative Wall Street, the CIA closet, profitable Arab oil, the vice-presidency and the White House, bringing to the highest offices their family and ideological agenda.

While the last two Bushes transformed themselves from silver-spoon Yankees to "born-again" Texans, they cultivated close ties with evangelical personalities. J. Dan(forth) Quayle (b. 1947), the running mate of Bush, Sr., was also a sympathizer of the Christian Right. Especially Bush Jr. took the rightist swings under his wings and guided constituencies accordingly. Although the Democrats had reigned in all the South before and decades after the Civil War, the Republican Bush carried the eleven states in both elections.⁴⁵

⁴³ His wife, Nancy Reagan, resorted to astrology to help the President plan his actions.

⁴⁴ Kevin Phillips, *American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush*. New York: Viking, 2004. While friendly biographies lack the necessary skeptical scrutiny of the four Bushes, Kevin Phillips's book brings to the reader the back corridor intrigues, policy favoritism to the top 1 percent, armament scandals and similar acts that would lead to presidential impeachment under different circumstances.

⁴⁵ Michael Lind, *Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*. New

The latter part of Bush Jr.'s life is a "faith portrait." He was born (1946) in Connecticut, where Protestants lived as a fiery breed, and their local son Jonathan Edwards warned sinners of the wrath of an angry God. Bush Sr., a church-goer, moved to Texas in 1948. Although young George's mother postulated that her son had always shown interest in reading the Bible, the son himself does not remember such a ritual before he was "born-again." Initially a heavy alcohol consumer, he sought advice from pastors (including Billy Graham), from whom he got the "compassionate conservatism" idea, which drew evangelists to the polls. When he joined a Bible-reading group and read it, each week a new chapter, perhaps for the first time reading a book line by line, he parted with Jack Daniels and greeted Jesus. He moved to Washington, D.C. in 1987 to support his father's campaign. The South had already taken control of the Republican Party. The son chose to be an intermediary between the Christian Right and the father. The young Bush carried on his career on that new base. It was this groundwork that prepared him for the dichotomy of "good vs. evil" defining the "war against terrorism."

Before he started the presidential campaign, he told the pastors in his governor's office that he had been "called" to seek a more responsible position in the country. Dick Cheney, a Republican vice-presidential candidate in the 2000 elections and originally from Texas, changed his residence to Wyoming to avoid the legal complication of offering both candidates from the same state. The father of Condoleezza Rice, his adviser and expert on matters of international security, was a preacher from Alabama. When George W. Bush entered the White House, and especially after the 9/11 attacks on American soil, he gave the impression that his policies were supported by God and that he had a personal relationship with Jesus. Because of such occurrences, it may look unobjectionable when the Ten Commandments are posted in public buildings, prayer enters schools, there is wider use of religious education, and attacks on the separation of church and state multiply.

Every American president invoked God and asked His blessing.⁴⁶ But

York: Basic Books, 2003. The Republican presidential coalition is weak in the north-east, the Great Lakes and the Pacific coast, where the ratios of non-believers, Catholics, Jews, and smaller Protestant groups are high.

⁴⁶ For instance, President William McKinley (1897-1901) confided to a delegation of the

President Bush is the most resolutely faith-based chief executive, who forged his political career ahead through contacts with ministers of the then emerging evangelical movement and whose strongest backers are the Bible-believing Christians. The Chief Executive and the Commander-in-Chief also posed as the preacher-in-chief. After he moved into the White House, Bible study groups multiplied there. Bush tended to this base with various favours, such as pro-life judicial appointments and a proposed ban on human cloning. The base returned the favour by being the strongest supporters of the wars in the Middle East.

President Bush reportedly rises ahead of the dawn most days and reads *My Utmost for His Highest*, a book of evangelical mini-sermons, by Oswald Chambers, a Scottish preacher who brought the Gospel to the Christian soldiers during their effort to wrest Palestine from the Muslim Turks and to capture Jerusalem for the British Empire in 1917.⁴⁷ Bush many a time made statements, however, on how he admired Islam. He was host to *Ramadan* dinners and even occasionally criticized some evangelist leaders for castigating the Muslim faith. The evangelists do not disguise, on the other hand, their determination to convert Muslims to Protestantism of some sort.

The fight in the "war against terrorism" was also a fight for a "God-defined" liberty and freedom, decided by the American executive, supported by American business, executed by American arms, and blessed by the American version of religion. The assumption is that the U.S. Government executes what God orders and the President speaks and acts for none other than Him. All must agree with one side or the other; there is no middle-of-the-road. Believing in the biblical interpretation of the world, the U.S. President saw in himself the moral and substantial authority to define terrorism, to detect its origins, and to lay hands on the culprits. Bush, voted to

Methodist Episcopal Church how he arrived at the decision of prevailing over the Philippines: "I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night it came to me ... There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them." Frank Tannenbaum, *The American Tradition in Foreign Policy*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955, p. 58.

⁴⁷ Howard Fineman, "Bush and God," in: *Newsweek*, 10 March 2003, p. 25. See also Joan Didion, "Mr. Bush and the Divine," in: *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 50/17 (6 December 2003), p. 82.

occupy the White House for two consecutive terms, led two wars in the Middle East, ostensibly to spare no effort against terrorism. Such approach includes the underrating of the scientific reports on global warming as much as belittling the Darwinian theory of evolution. Being an elected leader, one may assume that many of his supporters share this world view.

Assuming that Florida Governor Jeb Bush follows in the footsteps of his elder brother and father and participates in an election of some future date, perhaps initially for the vice-presidency, but to run later for the top executive job, the authority of the fundamentalists, mainly via the House, will continue in the Republican coalition. This authority challenges other options in American politics, with or without the Bush dynasty. The muscle that President George W. Bush has securely placed behind the Christian right will have an enduring effect.

7. Fundamentalist varieties

Where does this authority come from? Basically, from a narrow interpretation of the Christian faith meshed with neoliberalism as a “reigning theology,” and its captains constituting “secular priesthood.” The largest framework is Protestantism, which composes one of the three main movements within Christianity. The Protestants share some of the basic Christian concepts such as the existence of God, His triune nature, the immortality of the soul, Heaven and Hell (while rejecting the Roman Catholic idea of Purgatory), divine revelation, and the like. But they put forward three new principles: salvation through personal faith, the universal priesthood of all believers, and the exclusive authority of the Bible as the only source of revealed truth.⁴⁸ New groups were added to the first forms of Protestantism.⁴⁹ Most of these

⁴⁸ According to Protestant teaching, original sin had perverted the nature of man, robbed him of his capacity for Good and therefore, he could achieve salvation only via his personal faith rather than good works. Every Christian having been “chosen” and baptized, receives initiation into supernatural communion with God and the right to preach without mediators. The Bible is the only source of dogma.

⁴⁹ The first forms of Protestantism were Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, Calvinism, Unitarianism, Socinianism, Anabaptism, the Mennonite Church, and the Anglican Church. Later Protestantism includes Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, the Salvation Army, Christian Science, Pentecostals, and some others.

groups took shape under the banner of "religious revival," supposedly meaning a return to the ideals of early Christianity. A closer scrutiny should show that market logic has overtaken theological logic. This transformation will be taken up below, albeit in summary form. It should be underlined that the world center for this transformation as well as Protestantism is the United States.

"Fundamentalism" is used, in the broad sense, to denote those religious movements which proclaim doctrines to be immutable and demand from believers a literal acceptance of the prophecies and miracles contained in the sacred books, rejecting any attempt at allegorical interpretation and preferring blind faith to the arguments of reason. They also insist upon strict, unswerving observance of all traditional religious prescriptions. In the narrow sense, the term is used to denote the orthodox trend in modern Protestantism, which emerged in conservative Protestant circles in North America as a response to the spread of theological modernism and liberalism in Christianity. Fundamentalists expect stronger faith in Christian dogma and particularly in the unquestioned infallibility of the Bible. Some writers (for instance, Almond, Appleby and Sivan) assert that fundamentalism is rising globally.⁵⁰ However, in addition to cherishing a Christian Right agenda reinforcing a hegemonic ideology, fundamentalism shares devotion to market capitalism, now known as neoliberalism. This merger will be accentuated in the later paragraphs.

Furthermore, the teachings of the "evangelicals," a term (from the Greek *ευαγγέλιον*, meaning "good news") more widely used in the last decade or so, are based on the Gospels. Christians consider that "salvation" has been accomplished and that all those who have come to believe in Christ are saved. Salvation is granted to persons without any contribution on his/her part, but purely on the strength of faith in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. "Evangelization" is a term used to denote the activity aimed at converting peoples and individuals to Christianity. In order to justify such activity, the Church turns to the exhortation made by Christ to his Apostles in the Gospel, according to St. Matthew: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ..." (Mt. 28:19). During the period of colonial annexations,

⁵⁰ Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

the Church set about the task of evangelization with the help of missionaries, who propagated Christianity and sought to convert the local population. The collapse of the imperial colonial system induced the Church to devise new methods of evangelization in order to adapt to the emerging socio-political conditions in Asian and African countries.

The word “Pentecostals” is another term that frequently appears in connection with religious fundamentalism. It is also a Protestant movement which came into being at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States. The basis of its teaching was the legend concerning “the descent of the Holy Spirit” upon the Apostles on the 50th day after Christ’s resurrection, as a result of which they received the “gift of prophesy” and began “to speak in tongues.” The Pentecostals attach considerable importance to the imminence of the “Second Coming” of Christ, the end of the world, and the millennium of Christ’s “Reign on Earth.” They place great emphasis on mystical communion with God. They hold that a person who is pleasing to God can become the tool of the “spirit who descends upon him.” This “descent” takes place in conditions of extreme religious exaltation, sometimes bordering upon insanity during prayer meetings.⁵¹ Typical of Pentecostal gatherings is the mystical atmosphere of their prayer sessions and a belief in “apparitions” and “visions.” But “Christian millennium” is also a millennial capitalism, to be further explored below.

The Mormons, the Mennonites, and Jehovah’s Witnesses are referred to frequently among the other fundamentalist groups. “Mormons” is the popular name for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a religious sect that was founded in 1830 in the United States. Its founder (Joseph Smith) published the *Book of Mormon*, which is supposed to be the history of the colony of Jerusalem Israelites that had allegedly existed in America and to whom Christ was supposed to have entrusted his teachings recorded by the “prophet Mormon” on brass tablets. The Mormons settled in the west of the United States where they founded Salt Lake City that became their “Mecca.” The Mormons expect that the “end of the world” is at hand, as is the last battle with Satan. They regard themselves as the “chosen people.”

⁵¹ Especially in the Southern states, thousands of worshippers gathered outdoors and sobbed, shouted, cried, fell to the ground, and exhibited ecstasies reaching the point of hysteria. Some roared like lions, barked like dogs, and oinked like pigs.

The Mennonites are the adherents of one of the trends in Protestantism, which came into being in the 16th century in the Netherlands. Their founder (Menno Simons) advocated that men accept what they find in the real world, reject violence, and aspire to moral perfection. An international body, known as the Mennonite World Conference, was set up with its headquarters in the United States. The Quakers or the Society of Friends is also a Protestant sect, with communities in North America, Britain, and East Africa whose adherents preach strongly pacifist ideas. Their teachings on conflicts, which correspond with social reformism, advocate solutions with the help of the "eternal truths of the Gospel."

Jehovah's Witnesses are also of the Protestant persuasion. They were established in the U.S. in the 1870s. The organization is active in missionary work; their literature is being published in more than 160 languages throughout the world. Their teaching possesses various features that distinguish it from orthodox Protestantism. For instance, they deny the triune nature of God, declare that Christ and the Holy Spirit are born of Jehovah, and that God symbolizes supreme morality and justice. They see the history of society as a struggle between divine and satanic forces. Since they prophesy that the coming of the Messianic Kingdom will only be for the righteous, that is for the adherents of their own sect, they oppose the very idea of transforming the society on the basis of equality and justice.

More and more individuals in research councils and professional associations represent the theocratically-minded Right. Outstanding among the many organizations that endorsed the Republican business-religious axis were: the Heritage Foundation, the Council for National Policy, the Committee to Restore American Values, the Mountain States Legal Foundation, and the Coalition for Revival. The last mentioned is not only among the most powerful conservative establishments, but also believes that a theocratic government needs to be formed before the return of Jesus.

8. Supporters and suppositions

Such conservatives may be labeled as fundamentalists, evangelicals, Pentecostals, true-believers, born-again, Scripture-readers, or restorationists. Apart from sensitivity towards deviations from the Scriptures, some fundamentalists may detest, in the

modern age, crime as a way of life, pornography as a form of business and gay rights as part of individual freedom.⁵² Growing crime, accelerated by the American brand of capitalism, transformed the urban areas of that country into what a former Chief Justice (Warren Berger) described as the “reign of terror.”⁵³

Even if some fundamentalists in all likelihood reacted towards greed, luxury, decadence, immorality, corruption and terrorism, it is also true that the evangelical beliefs began a movement towards the North and conquered much of the rest of the United States, and “southernized” it in a way.⁵⁴ Although some opinion-builders devoted themselves, after the Civil War, to the “religious reconstruction of the South,”⁵⁵ the South, in itself, is still “fighting the Civil War.”⁵⁶ In the eyes of the southern establishment, God merely tested the faith of His Confederate sons and daughters by subjecting them to a defeat. But the vanquished South was to rise later as a land of the true believers. Consequently, the weight of the New Israel Protestantism in the North shifted to the South, the influence of which in politics, domestic and foreign, became more and more apparent. The South sent some of its local politicians to the White House, frequently achieved majorities in both houses of the U.S. Congress, and encouraged more military action abroad. According to many members of the Southern élite, God selected the United States as an example of the free Republican form of government that He wanted the rest of the world to echo and resemble. The Civil War was God’s test (!) to see whether His selected people could preserve this ideal example.

On the threshold of the 21st century, about two-fifths of all Americans considered themselves to be “born-again,” although some of them may not fit the descriptions of that category. Not only Texas sent a born-again governor to the White House in 2000, the map of the United States was designed in such a way on the

⁵² Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.

⁵³ *Time Magazine*, 23 March 1981, p. 18.

⁵⁴ John Eagerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

⁵⁵ Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863-1877*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁵⁶ David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.

Internet that the South was shown as "Jesusland" while the rest was abandoned, entitled as the "United States of Canada." Religious themes were also operative in Texan millionaire Ross Perot's (b. 1930) election campaign (1992) that brought 19% of the popular vote.⁵⁷ The former Mayor of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, who previously supported gay and abortion rights, and the former Senate Republican leader Bill Frist of Tennessee, who occasionally comforted stem-cell researchers, do not enjoy undiluted true-believer endorsement.

"Believers" either interpret food shortages, *tsunamis*, rising costs, and wars as signs of "end times," or call for regeneration before the Second Coming of Christ. Neither of the splinter groups put fossil fuels and climate deterioration on their agenda. Economic conservatives may not share the fundamentalist beliefs in end times, but they join hands in their opposition to fuel efficiency, environmental regulation, and endorsement of wars abroad. Relying on "biblical instructions" (Genesis 1:28), the fundamentalists assert that the divine authority gave them the right to use worldly resources.

Fundamentalism also favours male primacy.⁵⁸ Since the Bible has restricted the female role essentially to the family, the same circles exhibit enmity towards the international women's treaties. The ultimate aim is to turn the clock back and confine women to their place in a society of male dominance. Although the values of radical conservatism may not prevail uniformly in every traditionalist section of the country, polygamous families, covenant marriages, and child brides are in reality many more than usually assumed. Christian fundamentalists even tend to limit the right to vote to males only.

The increase in the number of Protestant fundamentalists, especially in the last four decades, and their spread have been uncontrollable and meteoric.⁵⁹ This was a process of "reinforcing American Protestantism."⁶⁰ One in four Americans is

⁵⁷ Albert J. Menendez, *The Perot Voters and the Future of American Politics*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1996.

⁵⁸ John Stratton Hawley (ed.), *Fundamentalism and Gender*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁵⁹ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *The Churching of America: 1776-1990*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

⁶⁰ Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*. Berkeley:

presently affiliated with a Protestant church. As early as 1960, the members of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), which believed to have a special divine mission, reached ten million. By the 1980s, the Church of the Southern Cultural Memory could boast of eighteen million members. The Pentecostals are at least ten million. The Mormons reached five million in 2000. The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists were at least one million at the turn of the century. The perceivable tip of the politico-religious edifice is only a part of the gargantuan iceberg below.

When the Americans were asked in 2004 "whether every word of the Bible is literally accurate," 55% of the national sample and 83% of the evangelical Protestants answered in the affirmative.⁶¹ When they were asked "whether the world would end in an Armageddon battle between Jesus and the Antichrist, 45% of all Christians and 71% of the evangelical Protestants replied affirmatively.⁶² According to them, the U.S. engagements in the Middle East and elsewhere are in tune with the deistically-ordained struggle between Good and Evil; it is supposedly the old St. John "prophecy" of a war between the soldiers of God and Satan – just like the 1914-1918 War of Britain and her allies against the Central Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary, the Ottomans and Bulgaria) and the Cold War (of the U.S. bloc facing the Soviets) had been.

9. Fundamentalist books as bestsellers

It is no surprise, then, that the printing of fundamentalist books broadens into a national industry in the United States. Moreover, the bestseller lists reveal the popularity of such themes, a fact endorsed by official American publications as well.⁶³ *Time Magazine* has named the most influential evangelicals, led by Tim LaHaye of the "Left Behind" series.⁶⁴ It is necessary to describe here some pursuits of the most

University of California Press, 1997.

⁶¹ *Newsweek Poll*, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, December 2-3, 2004.

⁶² *Newsweek Poll*, conducted by Princeton Research Associates, October 1999.

⁶³ Kathryn VanSpanckeren, *American Literature*, rev. ed., Washington, D.C., Department of State, n. d., p. 136.

⁶⁴ "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America," *Time Magazine*, 22 February 2005, p. 19. – Some others are: GOP Senator Rich Santorum (Pennsylvania) and Michael Gerson (a White

outstanding of these leaders, as well as the contents of their effective publications. After all, Jerry Falwell qualified the "Left Behind" series as the most influential books since the Bible. *Publishers Weekly* described them as a *tsunami* (Japanese term for a tidal wave) of books with religious themes.⁶⁵ Several books of that series became bestsellers, reaching tens of millions of copies in print, video and audio form, making the fundamentalist preachers multimillionaires in the process. The Left Behind web site receives more than twenty-five thousand hits per day. An article in the *American Scholar* stated that "[t]his may not be the apocalypse, but it's certainly publishing history."⁶⁶

The wildly selling novels of the Left Behind series, coauthored by Tim LaHaye⁶⁷ and Jerry Jenkins⁶⁸ and with total sales surpassing 65 million copies, narrate an evangelical apocalypse, presented as the visible symbol of a thriving Christian popular culture. Over 70% of the sales are from the South and Midwest, only six percent from the urban Northeast. A full 85% of the readership consider themselves

House speech writer), Catholic priest Richard Neuhaus (a convert from Lutheranism and founder of the New York-based fundamentalist journal *First Things*), Douglas Coe (head of the Washington-based Fellowship Foundation that convenes the National Prayer Breakfast following the State of the Union address), Billy and Franklin Graham, Mark Knoll (of Wheaton College), Rick Warren (author of *Purpose-Driven Life*), Diane Knippers (Episcopal laywoman heading the Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy). Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson should also be added.

⁶⁵ "Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins," *Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, Vol. 39, Gale Group, 2001; reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2007.

⁶⁶ J. C. Furnas, "Millennial Sideshow," in: *American Scholar*, Vol. 69/1 (Winter 2000), p. 87.

⁶⁷ Tim LaHaye, born (1926) in Detroit (Mich.), served in a Baptist congregation (Minnesota) and in a Scott Memorial Church (California), helped to start a Christian college at El Cajon (California) and also supported his wife (Beverly Davenport) in her work as the hostess of a syndicated Christian radio talk show and founder of a conservative public policy lobby group (Concerned Women of America). He and his wife hosted radio programs about family life that attacked humanism as an anti-Christian force working to destroy traditional family values. He identified the United Nations and the World Council of Churches as structures that would be used for evil ends. He was the President of Christian Heritage College (1970-1976). See Tim LaHaye's web site: <http://www.timlahaye.com>.

⁶⁸ Religion played a pivotal role also in the life of Jerry B. Jenkins, who was born (1949) in Kalamazoo (Minnesota). He attended the Moody Bible Institute (Illinois) and two other colleges and took up a job as an editor with the religious Scripture Press Publications (Illinois). His prolific literary outfit has been astonishing. His collaboration with Bill Graham on that evangelist's 1997 memoirs (*Just As I Am*. New York: Harper Collins, 1997) made *The New York Times* bestseller list. He was the editor and director of *Moody Monthly* and visiting lecturer in advanced journalism at the Wheaton Graduate School (1975). See Jerry Jenkins's web site: <http://www.jerryjenkins.com>.

“born-again” Christians. They combine old-time religion with science-fiction entertainment. They are the brainchildren of two men, the first a retired Southern Baptist minister, author and broadcaster, and the second an evangelical author, who is also known for writing a syndicated comic strip (“Gil Thorp”).⁶⁹ These books deal with the end of the world, a scenario of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. They turned biblical “prophecies” about the “Second Coming of Jesus Christ” into mass market literary entertainment.

California-based LaHaye frames the plots, based on biblical texts, for the *Left Behind* series. His main function is to use Bible prophecy to create outlines for contemporary action plots. He then sends the outlines to Jenkins, who lives in Colorado and who produces the first draft of each book and mails it back to LaHaye to ensure that all the details of the plot agree with biblical prophecies, as outlined in the Book of Revelation. LaHaye serves as consultant for prophetic accuracy and Jenkins is the author of the novels. They were printed by the Tyndale House Publishers, which was founded (1962) by Kenneth N. Taylor.⁷⁰ The marketing director told in an interview that they were not engineering all of the success themselves. “It’s God really using it in a might way,” he declared. This was fiction “to teach biblical truth.”⁷¹ LaHaye said that God had given them “a vehicle to affect the minds of other people.”⁷² The books were “the most successful Christian series ever.”⁷³

Left Behind, published in 1995, is the “flagship novel” from which the series draws its name. The book opens with a story when the captain (Rayford Steele in the cockpit of a Boeing), weary of his “born-again” wife’s devotion to a divine suitor and entertaining adulterous thoughts about the (“drop-dead gorgeous”) senior flight

⁶⁹ *Newsweek* describes the LaHaye-Jenkins team as “the most successful literary partnership of all time.” David Gates, “Religion; The Pop Prophets,” in: *Newsweek*, 24 May 2004, p. 44.

⁷⁰ When evangelist Billy Graham saw in the early 1960s a copy of the *Living Letters*, printed by the Tyndale family, he asked if he could print a special edition and offer it on the telecasts of his crusades. It was instantly read by about two million Americans. Tyndale grew from modest beginnings into a major publishing entity that now reaches every continent.

⁷¹ Steve Rabey, “Apocalyptic Sales Out of This World,” in: *Christianity Today*, 1 March 1999, p. 19.

⁷² Thomas Fields-Meyer, “In Heaven’s Name,” in: *People’s Weekly*, 14 December 1998, p. 139.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

attendant, flies over the Atlantic. The hostess reports that dozens of passengers have disappeared from the airplane, having evaporated into thin air and leaving behind only piles of their personal belongings. The stunned captain turns the airliner around and returns home to learn that his wife and son, a born-again Christian like his mother, have also disappeared. The pastor of the suburban church explains that Jesus has come and led the "true believers" off to Heaven. Everyone else has been "left behind" in "the Rapture."⁷⁴ However, all is not lost yet. The pastor, whose faith in Jesus has at times wavered, says that it is not too late to convert or to become a true believer. Only the latter may be saved from eternal damnation in the second, and final, Rapture. Having been galvanized into true faith, the pilot, his (left behind) daughter and the pastor almost immediately become born-again Christians and set out to spread the right message and consequently take up the battle against the legions of Evil, which are also on the march.

Downright chaos is an inevitable inheritance when millions of true believers vanish. But a European (not an American) politician (from Romania), named Nicolae Carpathia, moves in and becomes the ruler of the wicked world. He is, in fact, the Antichrist. He takes control of the United Nations, trumpets for general disarmament, introduces an international currency of his choice, and tries to make the UN an even stronger world-wide agency than it is today. The book's severest attacks are leveled at the United Nations. For a country like the United States, where the people suspect overt government interference and fear executive centralization, it is no wonder that such themes attract the readers' interest. With the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., and the ensuing wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, many readers felt that the world was indeed entering its last days. There is a resonance between such scenarios and President Bush's rhetoric garnishing his Middle East policies.

An American journalist (Cameron "Buck" Williams), who is also one of the "left behinds," aspires to examine the Rapture. The journalist converts, but commits

⁷⁴ As described in the Book of Revelation, the event called "the Rapture," believed to precede the "Second Coming of Christ," is portrayed as a sudden blast of a heavenly trumpet, after which all who have truly been saved will be carried up safely to Heaven. Those "left behind" will have to live through the fearsome "end-times" and the rule of the Antichrist.

the mistake of introducing the very attractive flight attendant to the new UN dictator Carpathia. While she becomes his assistant (and lover), the pilot and the reporter help establish the "Tribulation Force," which is apparently "a sort of Green Berets" of true believers battling the Antichrist Carpathia. The subsequent volumes, all bestsellers, chronicle the adventures of the Tribulation Force and the inevitable apocalyptic battle between the forces of Good and Evil.

Left Behind was followed by many sequels, all devoted to the apocalyptic plot. The Jews and the Catholics take their lumps. Their chances of being saved in the Rapture are slim. But overt anti-Catholicism is deliberately toned down to give the books a wider circulation. These books include several titles in the adult series, juvenile novels, audio versions, devotionals, and graphic variants. Many have entered the bestseller lists. Taken as a whole they established Christian fiction as a significant category in publishing in general. Just as *Left Behind* describes the Rapture, *Kingdom Come*, a much later book, narrates the perfect kingdom of Jesus Christ on Earth. Over the course of several books, terrible events unfold, as the Antichrist, Satan's most powerful servant, forges a global government and seeks to press his mark on everyone. The good ones are only the Christian fundamentalists, and the Evil ones are all the rest. It should be remembered that Evil still lurks in the hearts of the unbelievers. The unrepentant always prepare to mount a new offensive against the Lord himself, sparking an ultimate conflict from which only one side will emerge as the eternal victor.

There are several bestsellers in between these two popular editions. For instance, *Soul Harvest* was an instant bestseller in 1998. *Apollyon* (1999) made the bestseller lists of *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Chicago Tribune*. *Desecration* had a first printing (2001) of 2.95 million copies. It was the number one fiction title for all of 2001. *In the Presence of My Enemies*, a missionary story by Gracia Burnham, entered the bestseller list in 2003 and sold more than 200,000 copies in hardcover. *The Passion* is a collection of photo images from Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ." Josh McDowell's *More Than a Carpenter*, first published in 1977 by Tyndale, has been printed in more than fifty languages and continues to be a bestseller. Kenneth Taylor, of Tyndale Publishers, presented then-

President Ronald Reagan the 28 millionth copy of *The Living Bible*.

Epicenter Documentary is filmed on location in the Middle East and takes the viewer on a trip from prophecy to today's headlines. Drawing on (his personal) Jewish heritage and Christian faith supplementing it, the reporting Joel C. Rosenberg "reveals Scripture's reliability in predicting the future." *Left Behind: The Kids*, a favorite of children (aged 10-14), is a story "that follows teens, who were 'left behind,'" and who have nothing left but their newfound faith in Jesus."⁷⁵ The junior series follows the adventures of four young people as they battle the forces of the Antichrist that invade their high school. *Armageddon, Oil and Terror* offers "predictions on the future of terrorism, oil-based economics, and nuclear war in the Middle East."⁷⁶ Rosenberg's *The Copper Scroll* takes the reader to the so-called "new democratic Iraq."

This series of publications, which blossomed into several categories,⁷⁷ received little attention by the mainstream media, but had remarkable popularity and commercial success. There have also been, mostly favourable, reviews in American magazines.⁷⁸ As M. J. Gross wrote, LaHaye and Jenkins did "a masterful job of using conservative Christian media networks to purvey their message, build their image, and make their fortune."⁷⁹ Many reviewers found the Left Behind Series as rattling good reading. For instance, a review for *American Scholar* found the first book "a real page turner."⁸⁰ For a *Christian Century* review, it is "well written."⁸¹ The printed works received novel of the year and gold medal awards and nominations for such awards.

⁷⁵ Quoted according to the book information web site:<http://www.leftbehind.com>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Such as: Left Behind Series; Left Behind: The Kids Series; Nonfiction for Adults; Fiction for Adults; Fiction for Children; Global Air Troubleshooters Series; Margo Mystery Series; Jennifer Gray Mystery Series; The Bradford Family Adventure Series; Dallas O'Neill and the Baker Street Sports Club Series; Dallas O'Neill Mysteries; Toby Andreas and the Junior Deputies' Series; Tara Chadwick Series.

⁷⁸ For instance: *American Scholar*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Booklist*, *Christian Century*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Christianity Today*, *Humanist*, *Library Journal*, *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Mother Jones*, *Nation*, *National Review*, *New York Review of Books*, *People Weekly*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Washington Post Book World*.

⁷⁹ Michael Joseph Gross, "The Trials of the Tribulation," in: *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 285/1 (January 2000), pp. 122-128. Quoted according to the online version at <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/01/001gross2.htm>.

⁸⁰ Furnas, op. cit., p. 87.

⁸¹ John D. Spalding, review of *Left Behind*, *Christian Century*, 22 May 1996, pp. 587-591.

10. Fundamentalism and neoliberalism

These books seldom came under critical inquiry. There is no doubt that the main source is the definite and restricted agenda of the Christian Right. But a fitting criticism should encompass more than that. As a *Booklist* reviewer noted, the first publication was impaired by failures of logic and factual errors.⁸² The *Library Journal* maintained that it was “riddled with cardboard characterization and creaky dialog.”⁸³ These criticisms, legitimate in themselves, overlook nevertheless the devotion of Christian fundamentalism to the global free-market drive of big American capital as well as the political and military consequences of this hegemonic expansion. The threat of Christian fundamentalism is not limited to the hegemony of a particular faith; it is magnified much beyond that. Besides the propagation of Christianity, the underground resistance opposing the Antichrist dictatorship, qualified as a centralized and state-run economy, is presented as a free-market structure. These books are not one-dimensional; they pursue aims more sweeping than just revivalist teaching. An evaluation of such fundamentalist literature solely on the ground of a deistic framework falls short of explaining the complexity of the propaganda in question. The same holds true for the books’ evangelical support of the Bible of antique age or of a Palestine-free Israel of contemporary times. Reviews that ignore the total implications are prone to mislead.⁸⁴ The books, in fact, also represent a commitment to neoliberal economic values, popular support for new imperialist policies, and advocacy of more military presence abroad.

Their rich contents are at times irreconcilable as well as interlaced. The events in the popular books cover issues related to globalization, the United Nations,

⁸² Ray Olsen, “Nation without a Conscience,” in: *Booklist*, 15 October 1994, p. 376.

⁸³ Melissa Hudak, review of *Left Behind*, in: *Library Journal*, 15 May 1999, p. 147.

⁸⁴ Two exceptions – books that accentuate the totality of the fundamentalist publications – are: Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: “Left Behind” in Evangelical America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; and Andrew Strombeck, “Invest in Jesus: Neoliberalism and the Left Behind Novels,” in: *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 64 (Fall 2006), pp. 161-195.

Europe, privatization, gender, sexuality, and race, among others. Although Antichrist signified, in the near past, not only all manifestations of Soviet Communism, but also some bottom lines of late capitalism, the books of the Left Behind Series condemn neither multinational capitalism nor its technological innovations. There has been a shift in American culture and politics.⁸⁵ Evangelical culture is predominantly popular within the *petit bourgeois* class, which benefits from neoliberal gains. Although the events described in the books are related to contemporary times, they reflect religious prophecy insofar as it agrees with the dominant features of the present. The prophetic future, in this sense, is a more forcefully entrenched present. It looks as if not only the U.S. administrations of contemporary times, but also the Bible and the Scriptures denounce state-run centralization, but favour free-market economy. The evangelists are no less market actors than they are true believers. They use the latest gadgets as frequently and efficiently as a top corporation executive.

As Strombeck observed, the Left Behind Series represents a marginal-looking religious ideology, but also the central credo of market economy and all that comes with it.⁸⁶ The actors of the Tribulation Force, who act on behalf of Jesus and fiercely oppose the Antichrist, have vast finances at their disposal, travel extensively, and use guns as well as cell phones. They assail the United Nations, as much as the U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge Sr. frowned at the League of Nations decades earlier.⁸⁷ Their publications blast the misdeeds of businessmen, but support the privatization drive of the same. Like the top one percent in the economic pyramid, the Tribulation Force members also keep the "unbelieving masses" away from their compounds. The "true believers" are bourgeois professionals just as tough, highly skilled, and competent as modern business executives. Apparently, a good Christian has to be a good professional as well. Hence, the evangelist books devote no prominent place to the people of the working class. The leading characters are all white Americans, and although there exists some foreign blood they all think and act like white Americans.

⁸⁵ Bruce Shulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Dacapo Books, 2001.

⁸⁶ Andrew Strombeck, "Invest in Jesus ...," loc. cit., p. 168.

⁸⁷ Julius W. Pratt, *A History of United States Foreign Policy*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955, pp, 512-515.

Some become Christians and willfully abandon their cultural identities. Foreigners in and around the Tribulation Force, sooner or later, learn that Christianity and corporations are rational choices for any human being, no matter which race, nation or religion that person may originally belong to. It is ethically right and economically advantageous to kneel down in front of the evangelical altar and the IMF. Belief in neoliberalism is almost like a prayer.

American Protestant thinking according to which success in business is a measure of spiritual maturity, was apparently in tune with Max Weber (1864-1920) who, in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, examined the relationship between religious morality and economic success. The American evangelicals of today are not much different from their compatriot businessmen.

11. Onward, Christian oil producers!

Radical religiosity in contemporary American society competes with the energy producers in feeding hawkishness in official decision-making. The oil interests and fundamentalists are part of the same chorus: "Onward, Christian oil producers!" While the rivalry for Middle Eastern oil has a century of history behind it,⁸⁸ close to

⁸⁸ William Engdahl, *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order*. London: Pluto Press, 2004; Stephen C. Pelletiere, *Iraq and the International Oil System*. Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 2004. – In outright contradiction to President Woodrow Wilson's "Point Number 1" of his famous "14 Points" enunciated in the U.S. Congress and at Versailles, "secret covenants secretly arrived at" divided the resources of the Ottoman Empire, with the principal aim of controlling the oil resources. Mosul and Kirkuk were cut off from the Turkish state on account of the known oil wealth in northern Iraq. It was put then under British (now U.S.) control. While (the British) Mark Sykes and (the French) Georges Picot, who had signed the 1916 agreement in order to reduce the welter of imperialism to some sort of precision and divide the Middle Eastern spoils, dreamed of another Baku on the Tigris (*Didje*) and the Euphrates (*Firat*) Rivers, (the British) General Edmund Allenby, recovering from his setbacks in Gaza, entered Ottoman Jerusalem as a Crusader. Although it was American oil that was the spark plug easing Allied victory in 1918 (also helping the American dollar), Washington's rivals in the long run were then British and Dutch interests. Another Allied victory in 1918 enabled the same dollar to be the hegemon in the fiscal world. When the outcome of the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 threatened to dethrone the existing oil régime, this peril could be averted only by the OPEC decision, initiated by a superbly loyal Saudi Arabia, to continue to accept the greenback as oil trading currency, most of which would be deposited in U.S. banks anyway. Any other country that purchased oil would search for U.S. dollars and pay in that currency, which kept the latter from falling.

one-fourth of the Americans believe that the Christian holy books predicted the events of 9/11.⁸⁹ Oil is no longer a merchandise. Western, principally American, interests consider it as the blood of their system. Private cars, public buses, inter-continental planes, war machines, power plants, residential infrastructure, general heating, and various gadgets burn oil every day. The economy of no other nation is as dependent upon oil as that of the United States. Consequently, the Americans have a "petro-culture," not only with personal cars, but also with gasoline stations in every corner, and even oil museums. Counties with higher per capita gasoline usage generally vote for Republican Bush Jr. Most voters are tied to oil culturally as well as financially.

The United States, with only 4% of the world population and 5% of global resources, leads all countries (due to a consumption of over 25% of world energy) in poisoning the global environment. It is also notorious for having declined to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Christian fundamentalists, along with the oil executives, the dollar watchers, and the military, are insensitive over the environmental crisis. For the fundamentalists, resource depletion, global warming and environmental deterioration are subjects, first and foremost, of religion – just like marriage, family, abortion, health and sex education.

North America's oil resources have either already peaked or are depleting fast. In a decade or so, the United States would need to import many more (perhaps 50) million barrels a day.⁹⁰ World oil is also declining. With U.S. debt increasing and oil production dwindling, experts were alarmed that hundreds of billions of dollars would be needed annually to purchase that commodity towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century. The American drive to push the buttons in the oil-producing fields all over the world is interwoven with the rule of the dollar. Its supremacy may be maintained if oil sales are denominated in that currency. The Iraqi oil production being reduced on account of the embargo and sabotage, and the inclination of the Baath régime then in power in Baghdad to trade its oil in euros brought about a decline of the dollar and the eventual military intervention. The first

⁸⁹ *Time Magazine*, 1 July 2002.

⁹⁰ Colin Campbell and Jean Laherrère, "The End of Cheap Oil," in: *Scientific American*, Vol.

U.S. intervention in Iraq, ordered by the Republican Bush Sr. To evict Iraq from Kuwait, was oil-related. Democrat Bill Clinton, who knew that his fellow citizens were more energy-addicted than ever, continued with the air patrols over that Middle Eastern country.

With the intervention in 2003, the American military transformed the bulk of the Middle East into a “filling station.” The United States whipped its own military forces into shape in and around oil fields abroad, their connecting pipelines, their protective military bases, and sea lanes. Under the semblance of “fighting terror,” it established a network of bases from Afghanistan to São Tomé and from Kyrgyzstan to Nigeria. Analysts have used the term “base mania” to describe the strategy aimed at encircling the whole planet.⁹¹ In the process, the American version of the Christian faith is also spreading into new areas under the umbrella of military and energy interests.⁹² One of the motives for “preemptive wars” in the Holy Land is “faith.”

12. War in the Holy Land

Under the influence of a Bible-centered worldview, a large percentage of the American electorate assigns top priority to religious principles in foreign policy and promotes U.S. military action to eventually realize the end-times prophecy. Moreover, according to this belief, “the armies of Christ” will prevail in the battle near Haifa in Israel and a “new millennium” will arrive. The Christian Right had identified different groups or entities (from Native Americans to Soviet Communism) at different times as representation of “the Antichrist.”⁹³ “Islam” is now taking their place. While historically evangelicals had taught that all other religions were wrong, the contemporary phenomenon is much more than that; it is harsh criticism, defamation, insult, and slander.

In 2003, evangelists from several states gathered for a seminar on how to woo

278/3 (March 1998), pp. 78-84.

⁹¹ Michael T. Clare, “Imperial Reach: The Pentagon’s New Basing Strategy,” in: *The Nation*, Vol. 280/15 (25 April 2005), pp. 13-18.

⁹² The drive is to entrench an old religion under the new conditions in the Middle East: see Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002.

⁹³ For a premillennialist theology see Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist*. Oxford: Oxford

Muslims away from Islam.⁹⁴ Religious leaders like Pat Robertson,⁹⁵ Jerry Falwell,⁹⁶ Franklin Graham, and Jerry Vines used sharp language that drew rebukes from Muslims. Graham described Islam as "a very evil and wicked religion," and Vines called Islam's founder Muhammed as "demon-possessed pedophile." They all noted that the world's two largest religions were heading towards a confrontation, with Christianity incorporating the "good, true and peaceful" and Islam representing the image of "evil, false and violent."⁹⁷ According to the Rev. Richard Cizik, the Vice-president for Governmental Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, representing 43,000 congregations, the Muslims have become the "modern-day equivalent of the Evil Empire."⁹⁸ Charles Kimball wrote that Islam was "the only religious tradition that has ever threatened the existence of Christianity."⁹⁹ The

University Press, 1995.

⁹⁴ Laurie Goodstein, "Seeing Islam as 'Evil' Faith, Evangelicals Seek Converts," in: *The New York Times*, 27 May 2003.

⁹⁵ For an examination of an intolerant extremist whose ideas came close to holding the reins of American politics see Robert Boston, *The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1996. The author is assistant director of communication for "Americans for the Separation of Church and State," and assistant editor of the *Church and State* magazine.

⁹⁶ Jerry L. Falwell (1933-2007) was an American fundamentalist, Christian pastor and evangelist, who founded the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg (Virginia), Liberty University (1971), and the Moral Majority group (1979) – although his father was not religious and his grandfather was a staunch atheist. Jerry Falwell's Liberty University was a Christian liberal arts school and his Moral Majority, one of the largest political lobby groups for evangelicals during the 1980s, was also credited with delivering two-thirds of the white evangelist vote to Reagan. Falwell supported racial segregation, criticized Martin Luther King and condemned the Civil Rights Movement as the "Civil Wrongs Movement." He regularly featured segregationist politicians (like Lester Maddox and George Wallace) on his evangelical program "The Old-Time Gospel Hour." His staunch pro-Israel stand was sometimes referred to as "Christian Zionism." He denounced certain teachings in public schools, calling them breeding grounds for atheism, secularism, and humanism, which he claimed to contradict with Christian morality. In his book entitled *America Can Be Saved* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lords Publishers, 1979) Falwell wrote that he hoped to see the day when all public schools would be closed down and their functions taken over by the churches. In the 1980s, he was also critical of sanctions against the *apartheid* régime in South Africa. In 1987, the Federal Election Commission fined Falwell 6,000 dollars for illegally transferring 6.7 million dollars in funds intended for his religious ministry to his political action committees.

⁹⁷ Laurie Goodstein, op. cit.

⁹⁸ Goodstein, op. cit.

⁹⁹ Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*. San Francisco: Harper, 2002. The author is professor in the Department of Religion at Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem, N.C.).

Qur'an's "good verses" are likened to "the food an assassin adds to poison" (Don Richardson).¹⁰⁰ A Muslim writer described this emerging phenomenon as Islam being "under siege."¹⁰¹

Consequently, the expansion of U.S. influence in the Middle East has theological determinants in addition to the goals of fighting terrorism and securing oil. At least for a couple of the most recent presidential elections, the White House contenders have been carrying favour with deistic "end-times" circles for whom the Middle Eastern lands signify holiness according to the teachings of the Old and the New Testaments plus the related Scriptures. The Middle East is a frontline for the devoted Christians as well as the military.

After the bombing of Afghanistan (7 October 2001), and just before the assault on Iraq (19 March 2003), the overwhelming majority of the Americans who witnessed the events under official and religious twist, believed that Saddam Hussein was not only involved in the 9/11 attacks and in the covert development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), but that he was also the Antichrist rebuilding contemporary Babylon. When Bush Jr. ordered his troops into Iraq, he was reading a collection of sermons by a British preacher before General Allenby led his soldiers to Ottoman Jerusalem in 1917.

The American decision makers officially announced that their troops were entering Afghanistan and Iraq to bring democracy, freedom and liberty to these "old-line" societies. Prior to the move against Iraq, the Turkish Grand National Assembly denied the American soldiers transit rights through the country.¹⁰² Saddam Hussein's Iraq was condemned by the Christian Right, not necessarily for the alleged reasons of the intervention such as quest for arms of mass destruction, al-Qaeda ties, or

¹⁰⁰ Don Richardson, *Secrets of the Koran*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003.

¹⁰¹ Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Under Siege: Living Dangerously in a Post-Honor World*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2003.

¹⁰² Polls then indicated that more than 90% of the Turkish public were against the use of Turkish territory. Later polls, conducted in some Muslim (Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey) and Western countries (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the U.S.) during the first year (2004) of the occupation of Iraq, showed that antagonism towards American foreign policy had hardened. The majority interpreted the "war on terror" as an effort to control oil wealth and dominate the globe. Osama bin Laden was rated favorably by 55% of those surveyed in Jordan, 65% in Pakistan, and 45% in Morocco: Susan Sachs, "Poll Finds Hostility Hardening Towards U.S. Politics," in: *The New York Times*, 17 March 2004.

dictatorial rule, but as a "second Babylon." The American defeat of Iraq, a major Muslim nation, opened that country for Christian missionaries. In a critical analysis of the Christian Right, Bill Moyers, a Baptist minister and retired television journalist, said that the invasion was "a warm-up act, predicted in the Book of Revelation," for the true believers. For them, a war with Islam was "something to be welcomed" as a conflagration on the road to redemption.¹⁰³ Thus, the thought pattern of the "true believers" contributed to the obstruction of a nationwide democratic debate on the future of contemporary Iraq. Whether petro-imperialists believe in end-times or not, they found an ally in the Christian Right.

On the other hand, since the Saudi oil has already peaked,¹⁰⁴ Iraq is now the focal point of oil production and is becoming a strategic base for controlling the entire region. U.S. foreign policy since the collapse of the Eastern Bloc has been aimed at preventing potential competitors – be they Iraq, Iran, or Russia – from ever aspiring to a larger regional or global role.¹⁰⁵ The U.S. is planning fourteen air bases in Iraq, in areas with huge oil reserves.¹⁰⁶ Iraq has not utilized advanced technology, the

¹⁰³ Bill Moyers (b. 1934) received education in the theological seminaries in Texas and served as White House Press Secretary during the Johnson administration. He noted that "one of the biggest changes in politics ... is that the delusional is no longer marginal. It has come in from the fringe, to sit in the seat of power in the Oval Office and in Congress." He added: "One-third of the American electorate, if a recent Gallop Poll is correct, believes the Bible is literally true." Bill Moyers, "There is No Tomorrow," in: *The Star Tribune*, 30 January 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew Simmons, *Twilight in the Desert: The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2005.

¹⁰⁵ David Eisenhower, "People Before Profits," in: *People's Weekly World Newspaper*, 20 January 2005. Former Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz had outlined an underhanded plan, later leaked to the press, for a unipolar world in which the U.S. would remain as the only superpower. The Cheney-Wolfowitz plan resurfaced in late 2000, as the "Project for a New American Century," a blueprint for carving a new global order in accordance with American interests and precluding the rise of a rival.

¹⁰⁶ In addition to the American (and Coalition) armed forces, some corporations brought along mercenaries and trained the security forces of some other countries. Blackwater is the leading mercenary company providing heavily armed forces to the U.S. occupation in Iraq. It has been at the center of several fatal shootings, the most dramatic event (on 16 September 2007) being an indiscriminate shooting at people fleeing for their lives near Baghdad's Nisour Square. The shooting was unprovoked; Blackwater guards, supposedly protecting a State Department convoy, opened fire killing (reportedly) twenty-eight civilians and a three-member Iraqi family that panicked in chaotic traffic. The company is owned by Eric Prince, a reclusive right-wing evangelist who has supported the Bush campaign. The company secured at least 700 million dollars for protecting U.S. diplomats. There have been many other deadly incidents so that Blackwater has indeed a criminal record. Iraqi officials

western half of the desert is still unexplored, and only 2,300 wells have been drilled in the whole country.¹⁰⁷ One may compare this figure with the more than a million oil wells that were dug only in Texas. Being close to the surface and comparatively clean, the cost of Iraqi oil stands at only one dollar or a little more per barrel. On the other hand, its market value is increasing to over 100 dollars. Since Iraq's oil reserves are vast and production costs are very low, the profit of the controlling power is proportionally very high – some 95 billion dollars annually.

Apart from the economic interests, patronage of Israel is a part of the biblical worldview we have described earlier. A strange kind of theology, framed by 19th century immigrant clerics, is now blended into a version stirring the imagination of millions of Americans. For them, the creation of a Jewish state in 1948 was a blessing and the fulfillment of the prophesy about the return of the Jews to Palestine. It was followed by the capture of the entire Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. After all, it is from Israeli-controlled Jerusalem that Christ, in his Second Coming, will proclaim the beginning of a new era. The growth of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory can only be a corollary of that prophesy. If the Bible had also predicted the 9/11 attack, the occupation of Iraq is a warm-up act. Then, a war with Islam has to be welcomed, runs the Christian fundamentalist logic.

13. Conclusions

The nation that aspires to be more and more biblically oriented is now the world's superpower. In this sense, it is also a "crusader state."¹⁰⁸ The United States may boast of a history of secular culture, but it is fast drifting towards a darkening sentiment of organized religion. Since the missionary temper of the evangelical narrative of

sent several memoranda protesting the shootings; all were rebuffed. Paul Bremer's Order 17 (27 June 2004) has granted immunity to private contractors and the Blackwater guards are still on the streets. This is not a case of a "few bad apples." There are 181 private security companies with tens of thousands of mercenaries on Iraqi soil. See Jeremy Scahill, "Making a Killing," in: *The Nation*, 285/11 (15 October 2007), pp. 21-24. Scahill is also the author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*. New York: Nation Books, 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Leonardo Maugeri, "The Virgin Oil Fields of Iraq," in: *Newsweek*, 5 July 2004. The author is the vice-president of the Italian oil company ENI.

¹⁰⁸ Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

American Protestantism is the most distinctive characteristic of this religious world view, their self-image of "God's chosen people," endorsed by a belief in "Manifest Destiny," remained with these people since the first settlements. Although some observers may suppose that the Christian fundamentalist organizations represent only a fringe phenomenon, various research groups judge them to be powerful.¹⁰⁹ They have churches, preachers, schools, educators, publications, broadcasting networks, and television stations.

They have a strong influence especially on Republican policies. The Republicans had long enjoyed the favour of the Wall Street in the North, but later also gained considerable support in the conservative South. As fresh forces appeared, the Christian Right rose to new heights, church-government collaboration was highlighted, and Muslim lands further drew the attention of the Bible readers. For the first time in U.S. history, theological beliefs conquered the seats of power in the federal administration.

For instance, in the 2004 elections, President Bush benefited from the 9/11 attacks, getting more support from the fundamentalists. The U.S. response to the attacks had been basically a unilateralist and fundamentalist one, based on the claim to wage a battle of Good against Evil. The intervention in Iraq, the occupation and virtual dismemberment of the country, the special relationship of the occupiers with the Kurds in the oil-rich North, and the opening up of the country to Israeli interests did not diminish terrorism but breathed new life into it on the basis of growing anti-Americanism. The crusading fundamentalists, "with God on their side,"¹¹⁰ may judge themselves to be "righteous, beneficial and successful," but, in the eyes of some analysts, the combination of big capital, military expansion and the Christian missionary spirit is in itself a matter of terror.

Since American soldiers have established a strong presence in parts of the

¹⁰⁹ For example: Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the *Church and State* magazine, the First Amendment Foundation, the Public Eye think tank, and the Theocracy Watch public information group.

¹¹⁰ Esther Kaplan, *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Upon Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House*. New York: The New Press, 2004. The book is an exposé on how the Bush administration showered the far-right extremists with appointments, promoted biased "science," and transformed foreign policy

Middle East, the fundamentalists may expect to spread the teachings of their version of Christianity with more success than otherwise would be the case. But the question remains whether traditional religious authorities of Christianity will endorse the continuing military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq as “just wars” in Christian terms.¹¹¹ For instance, according to St. Augustine (354-430), wars are lawful only if they have a just cause. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) explained that peace ought to be the first aim of governments and that natural and divine laws override any contrary human command. When Spanish soldiers under Hernán Cortéz and Francisco Pizarro conquered the Aztec and Inca interiors, Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566) gained fame as an indefatigable champion of Indian rights. Francisco de Vitoria (ca. 1483-1546), although a citizen of the expanding Spanish Empire, rejected the common argument, then, that the Spanish could make war on the Indians, who refused to accept Christianity. Alberico Gentili (1552-1608) argued that religious claims were often inventions of the most greedy of men. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was shocked by the corruption of the clergy.

Bringing the topic to the present, one should underline, as pastor and scholar Jan G. Linn does,¹¹² that freedom of religion also includes freedom from religion. Christian history itself suggests that Christian extremism has caused much suffering for many who were born into that faith. Christians have inflicted enough damage in naming the “enemies of God.” The Christian Right now has hijacked the word “Christian” and has been using it trying to mold America into its own image. That movement threatens not only the separation of church and state, but also the very practice of religion by those who refuse to go to the same extreme. It hides its narrow-mindedness and prejudices behind a thin veil of religious slogans.

The Christian fundamentalists reject the Darwinian theory of evolution, brush off the fact of global warming, undermine geological assessments of fossil fuel

to serve a fundamentalist agenda.

¹¹¹ Torbjorn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992, pp. 20-22, 48-49, 52, 53-55, 55-58, 66-67.

¹¹² While serving as chaplain and faculty member of Lynchburg College (Virginia), Jan G. Linn saw first hand the alarming rise of Jerry Falwell and the Christian Right to national prominence. His book was one of the “wake up calls”: *What's Wrong with the Christian Right*. Boca Raton, Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2004.

depletion, and steer clear of population planning. Millions of Americans who believe in the biblical prophecy of Armageddon consider the devastating hurricanes, the unpredictable *tsunamis*, and the melting of the polar ice caps as signs of the end of contemporary living and the Second Coming of Christ. The rivalry between the Christian faith and universal reason is in the foreground more than ever. The contemporary questioning of the legitimacy of science and the belief in the authority of the Bible as the source of truth go much beyond the 1925 controversy in Tennessee. For Bible-dominated thinking, global warming is not a human-caused atmospheric problem. Since extremism of this sort relies on powerful interests and organizations serving them, the federal agencies sponsor more than they oppose faith-based education, faith-based science, faith-based medicine, and the faith-based war on terrorism.

We are faced with a consortium between capitalism, belligerent policy and a peculiar version of Christianity. Politicians seek to gain advantage from this neo-Puritanism. Under the circumstances, the new seal of approval to biblical prophecies and punishments makes other fringe groups of the Right appear as "moderates." The effective union of theology and "antiterrorism" conveys a much wider meaning than mere election votes. Even if President George W. Bush's popularity diminishes, or fades away on account of his "constitutional absence" from politics, biblical influence on the foreign policy of the federal state will continue, at least for some time.

In marked distinction from this trend, the authority of religion waned in Spain, Holland and Britain, former great powers whose influence in far-away lands had mounted in accompaniment of the church's drumbeat. Although some people in Western Europe still go to church on Sundays, religious control over the minds of their decision-makers or the public has very much declined in our times. The American society may reach a level of similar conversion at some point in the future. Economic downturns, political turmoil, or decline of the military may alter the domestic and the international agenda.

To the chagrin of the American Christian Right, God may do nothing to save His "chosen people" if that country pursues the present course of "imperial overstretch." The miscalculating fundamentalists may then be astonished to witness a

different kind of Armageddon. The two wars in the Middle East will probably drag on for a long time, draining the strength of the United States. American power, great though it is,¹¹³ is “not necessarily sufficient.”¹¹⁴ Expansion of such magnitude may bring down the American colossus, just as it brought down the Roman, the Habsburg, the Dutch and the British Empires. They all had a sense of “exceptionalism,” but all met disillusionment.

¹¹³ G. John Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition,” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61/5 (September-October 2002), pp. 44-60.

¹¹⁴ Michael Mandelbaum, “The Inadequacy of American Power,” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81/5 (September-October 2002), p. 62.